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“TAKING A STEP BACK”: WHAT WHITE STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS ENGAGED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK SAY ABOUT FOLLOWERSHIP

A Chapter Style Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Student Affairs Administration and Leadership

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“TAKING A STEP BACK”: WHAT WHITE STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS ENGAGED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK SAY ABOUT FOLLOWERSHIP

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We recommend acceptance of this dissertation in partial fulfillment of the candidate's requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Student Affairs Administration and Leadership.

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ABSTRACT

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The study of followership is underrepresented in leadership literature. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to explore how White student affairs practitioners engaged in social justice work at a predominantly White public research institution experienced and navigated followership. The findings indicated that the concept of followership had not been given substantial thought prior to this study, and that the way the participants understood and performed followership was largely dependent on the salience of their White identities within the context of their work. Findings also suggested that White student affairs practitioners engaged in social justice work desired a more intentional followership practice. Recommendations for the implementation of more intentional followership practices are provided for student affairs graduate programs, White student affairs practitioners, and White university leaders.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a buzzword that connotes power and responsibility in many organizations, resulting in the misconception that followers are less important than leaders. Kelley (1998) argued that “Followership dominates our lives and organizations, but not our thinking, because our preoccupation with leadership keeps us from considering the nature and the importance of the follower” (p. 143). Followers are an equally vital yet often overlooked component in organizational structure, and leaders would not exist without them. Titus and Sanaghan (2021) presented an argument for the visibility of followership on college campuses and contended that colleges and universities would run more efficiently if they were less siloed, rigid, and hierarchical. They underscored a solid leader-follower relationship as the solution to the rigidity of departmental norms. They argued that the relationship between leaders and followers should be founded on shared values and a shared common purpose. Within colleges and universities, student affairs professionals are both leaders and followers symbiotically working to advance student success. Leaders in student affairs work are tasked with helping followers take ownership of the shared purpose and values to develop and nurture a culture of good followership (Titus & Sanaghan, 2021). Leadership development is prominent within higher education, but follower development is almost nonexistent (Baker et al., 2011).

Followership is a sparse but growing phenomenon in the literatures of higher education and leadership. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) suggested that the lack of literature stems from a misunderstanding of followership and leadership as a co-construction that occurs as a process of social interaction. The way that followership has been understood and applied to research has varied greatly, but it has historically elicited a negative connotation in relation to leadership (Boccialetti, 1995; Chaleff, 2009; Kellerman, 2008). Much of the recent literature defining followership attempts to present its characteristics and traits in a more positive and empowering light, showcasing followers as integral to the leadership process.

Followership has been defined in myriad ways, and the behaviors associated with followers have been illustrated by a variety of models. It has been presented on a continuum by multiple authors who favor the exemplary follower (Benson et al., 2016; Carsten et al., 2010; Kelley, 1988), wherein the more independent and critical of the leader a follower is, the more exemplary the follower becomes. Kelley (1992) described exemplary followers as supporters of an organization who also take control of their own work. They stand up for what is right for the organization even if it contradicts a leader's direction.

Followership has been defined as a complement to leadership (Alcorn, 1992; Howell & Mendez, 2008; Kelley, 1992) as well as taking subordinate positions within a hierarchy (Kellerman, 2008). Two prominent theoretical approaches underscore the study of followership: a hierarchical approach and a constructionist approach. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) introduced these perspectives after a significant review of followership literature. A hierarchical approach is most understood by laypeople, defining followers as people

who abide by the direction of leaders (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). A constructionist approach presents followership as part of a co-constructed system between both leaders and followers. The constructionist approach emphasizes that leaders and followers are equally important.

Despite the increasing amount of followership research, the role of the follower often goes unnoticed in higher education (Agho, 2009). There is much to be learned about the way followership is understood and the lenses through which higher education constituents experience it. Adjacent and critically important to the study of followership, Villalobos (2015) and Lee-Norman (2021) introduced the concept of *White followership* to understand the way White people are followers in settings of social justice. Villalobos (2015) introduced a model of White followership as a "means of leadership against structural White supremacy" (p. 172). He offered a framework to guide White people in developing a followership practice when engaged in social justice work, and he developed the White followership model to provide White people with roles to support racial justice efforts that are led by Communities of Color. This framework is detailed in Chapter II. Villalobos's White followership model showcases the ideal behaviors and actions of White people in racial justice settings. Villalobos (2015) asserted that by learning about the history of White supremacy, telling the truth, connecting cross-culturally, focusing on the needs of People of Color, acknowledging one's own White privilege, and asking race-centered questions, White people in racial justice settings may practice White followership.

Lee-Norman (2021) defined White followership as "a form of engagement in the work of racial reconciliation that emphasizes the Black [or BIPOC] experience and the

role of leadership in a more central position" (p. 127), and places White people as being followers who are peripheral to BIPOC leaders. In other words, White followership emphasizes White people as followers instead of leaders. Both Villalobos (2015) and Lee-Norman (2021) underscored the importance of dismantling White normativity in structures and organizations and contended that dismantling requires an understanding of White followership.

Given the high percentage of White professionals employed in higher education and student affairs in the U.S. (Bichsel et al., 2017) and the importance of unearthing the way Whiteness informs the way in which people see and experience the world, this study uses Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as the paradigm of inquiry. Applebaum (2016) described Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as "a growing body of scholarship whose aim is to reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege" (p. 2). Racial Whiteness as a phenomenon permeates higher education and student affairs (Cabrera et al., 2016). The student affairs profession is predominantly White, with Whites comprising 66% of all professionals (Bichsel et al., 2017). Yet, CWS has only recently been a lens through which higher education has been viewed. Cabrera et al. (2016) noted that racism is systemically present on college campuses and that faculty, staff, and students continue to perpetuate White superiority. The overwhelming composition of Whiteness in higher education highlights a need to employ CWS to reveal how White supremacy and privilege are being reproduced.

This study aims to explore and understand how Whiteness informs the way White student affairs practitioners who are engaged in social justice work experience and navigate followership. The remainder of this chapter introduces the significance of the

study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and offers operational definitions of terms. This chapter then presents an overview of the research design and methodological limitations. It concludes with an outline of the remaining chapters.

Rationale and Significance of Study

The study of followership is gaining traction in the field of higher education, and the importance of good followership skills has been highlighted in recent higher education texts (Titus & Sanaghan, 2021). Villalobos (2015) contended that a great majority of leadership models created in the context of social justice exist to support and develop Leaders of Color and that fostering leadership of Leaders of Color must be a priority. This study extends Villalobos's (2015) work on White followership. It is appropriate to focus solely on White student affairs professionals for a study of followership at PWIs to emphasize and maintain the prominence of leadership roles of People of Color and to be able to focus on the ways White student affairs professionals can support, without overshadowing, those leaders.

Titus and Sanaghan (2021) argued that we tended to rely on outdated and narrow-minded beliefs about followership as well as the relationships between leaders and followers. They proclaimed that more attention ought to be given to those that follow in higher education because of the impact that followers collectively have. Followership literature still pales in comparison to leadership literature (Benson et al., 2016). It has not been explored through a social justice lens in the field of student affairs, nor has it been critiqued through a lens of Whiteness studies. This study aims to expand upon the way followership is understood and the contexts in which it is practiced.

Followership studies are rare in the student affairs context, and the way that student affairs practitioners define and understand followership is unknown. Two guiding documents have been created that underscore the importance of social justice work in student affairs. The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA; 2015) introduced a framework containing 10 competencies that guide student affairs professionals in their work. One of the 10 competencies is Social Justice and Inclusion The social justice and inclusion competency places all student affairs practitioners as necessary agents of social change and demands more dynamic and participatory in recognition of all groups in relation to all other groups within higher education and student affairs (ACPA and NASPA, 2015).

In addition to the professional competencies introduced by ACPA and NASPA (2015), ACPA emphasized an action-oriented approach to social justice and inclusion within student affairs with the introduction of the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization (SIRJD; Quaye et al., 2019). The SIRJD further underscores the need to incorporate social justice work into the student affairs profession by urging student affairs professionals to understand their own identities and the way those identities create the lens through which student affairs work is enacted (Quaye et al., 2019). Nguyen and Duran (2018) provided an exhaustive list of the ways that White normativity manifests in student affairs workplaces. Their examples demonstrated how the dismissal of racial differences by employees in predominantly White workplaces maintains an environment where White professionals are unchallenged in their thinking. This study aims to unmask rather than dismiss racial differences by confronting the way Whiteness frames

followership in student affairs. A study on Whiteness and followership in student affairs is significant because the study itself is guided by the principles of social justice as proposed by ACPA and NASPA (2015) and by the SIRJD. It urges White student professionals to acknowledge their White identities as a lens through which they view the world and their work, allowing for more culturally competent practices.

White professionals have been socialized to understand and define the world through a veil of Whiteness. Villalobos (2015) contended that "relationships, decision-making processes, access to power, and information and communication structures must always be scrutinized to assure that patterns of White supremacy are illuminated, challenged, and eliminated when necessary, in a principled manner" (p. 176). In addition to contributing to followership literature and widening the lens through which student affairs practitioners view their roles as social justice advocates, this study is significant because it challenges White professionals to engage in critical consciousness by actively acknowledging how Whiteness informs their worldview.

Finally, the use of critical Whiteness studies to understand and explore followership is timely. At the time this study was conducted, Florida governor Ron DeSantis was flaunting a legislative proposal to ban "W.O.K.E." (Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees) activism and critical race theory in schools and corporations. Moreover, he had signed legislation imposing speech codes on college professors, imposed laws stigmatizing LGBTQ people, and has been an outspoken critic of drag performers. The potential frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential candidate, DeSantis's legislation could have vast and far-reaching implications on the ability of individuals to learn about and understand the ongoing effects of White supremacy in the United States.

DeSantis has been a vocal in his agenda to eradicate any beliefs that systemic injustices exist. A study that underscores Whiteness as a lens for followership illuminates the necessity for social justice work and the importance of critical Whiteness studies as an epistemology.

Problem Statement

Research on followership is limited. Followership literature describes followers as belonging to different categories based on the way they participate in the action of following. Several prominent researchers (Carsten et al., 2010; Chaleff, 2003; Kellerman, 2008; Kelley, 1992) identified exemplary followership as the ideal way that a follower may perform followership. Exemplary followership, also called proactive and appropriate followership, places followers as active participants in the process of leadership, emphasizing that leadership is co-constructed with those that follow. Kelley (1992) contended that the more engaged and independent the follower is, the more exemplary the follower becomes. He identified exemplary followers as exercising independent, critical thinking, separate from the group or leader. Benson et al. (2016) noted that proactive followers who willingly become part of the decision-making process had a great influence on leaders.

Blackshear (2004) is one of the only Women of Color to contribute to followership research. She sought to refine the popular view of followership and described an exemplary follower as someone who “sets ego aside and works to support the leader” (p. 5). Except for Blackshear’s (2004) definition, existing descriptions of an exemplary follower lack critique and are somewhat contradictory in the context of White followership as it is defined in settings of social justice by Lee-Norman (2021) and

Villalobos (2015). Contrary to exemplary followership (Carsten et al., 2010; Chaleff, 2003; Kellerman, 2008; Kelley, 1992), White followership relies on a model which centers White people as followers rather than leaders to allow prominence of, and submission to, Leaders of Color. Exemplary followers (Carsten et al., 2010; Chaleff, 2003; Kellerman, 2008; Kelley, 1992) are exemplary because of their independence and willingness to challenge leaders, whereas White followers are exemplary when they avoid working in isolation and look to Leaders of Color for direction. The discrepancy between the characteristics of an exemplary follower and a White follower illuminates a gap in followership research.

Finally, Whiteness has been studied in the context of leadership, but research lacks in the way Whiteness informs followership. Liu and Baker (2016) and Radd (2019) conducted studies to highlight the way Whiteness permeates leadership discourse. Gundemir et al. (2014) similarly exposed pro-White leadership bias which explained the underrepresentation of People of Color in leadership positions. They suggested that "typical leadership traits are more strongly associated with White-majority group members than with ethnic minority members" (Gundemir et al., 2014, p. 2). Studies that analyze White majority group members and followership traits do not exist, further highlighting a gap in research.

Critical Whiteness studies (CWS) implores an understanding of White systems that maintain and sustain White supremacy and oppression. By addressing Whiteness, itself, we can begin to understand the intricacies of those systems as a means of dismantling them. The current study seeks to bridge the gap between followership and

White followership by exploring the way Whiteness in the context of social justice work in student affairs informs the way people follow.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how White student affairs practitioners engaged in social justice work at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) experience and navigate followership. This study will explore the following research question:

1) How does the exploration of Whiteness inform the way White student affairs practitioners who do social justice work experience followership?

Research Design

Crotty (1998) detailed four distinct elements as being critical to a qualitative research design: epistemology, conceptual perspective, methodology, and methods. Each element exists as a building block for the next and provides a comprehensive guide for the research conducted in this study.

Epistemology: Critical Whiteness Studies

This study will be conducted using Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as the epistemological perspective. CWS reveals invisible social structures and systems that intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate white supremacy and White privilege by understanding the White racial experience. CWS places Whiteness as a system that exists within social, historical, political, and economic contexts. It examines the way White privilege is enacted and maintained within society and within institutions, and it challenges dominant ideologies which are frequently recreated as social norms within the context of higher education (Gusa, 2010). A critical examination of the social construction of Whiteness "shakes the foundations of racism" (Doane & Bonilla-Silva,

2003, p. 24) by disrupting complacency and unveiling the ways White people knowingly or unknowingly contribute to and perpetuate race-related problems, ultimately leading to campuses that are more socially just and inclusive. By exploring the interplay between Whiteness and followership, this study challenges the existing understanding of followership and introduces a critical approach to the way followership is experienced in the context of social justice.

Theoretical Perspective

White racial identity development is integral to understanding the way White professionals understand followership. It is important to understand how White people understand and experience Whiteness before we can understand how Whiteness informs followership. White men have historically controlled the construction of racial discourse resulting in the White racial identity being unseen in the literature (Hardiman, 2001). Kivel (2002) noted that White people were more likely to identify with other identities than with racial identity. CWS scholars urged White individuals to examine their marginalized or privileged identities within a racial context, leading to the inception of the White racial identity model (WRIM) (Helms, 1995). Helms (1995) created the WRIM to address the way racism is present in the United States and to underscore the idea that a positive White identity could only be achieved if Whiteness was critically explored (Helms, 1995). I will use the WRIM as a theoretical perspective to engage White student affairs professionals in thinking about their own White racial identities.

There are two theoretical approaches to understating followership. The more commonly known approach places followers at the bottom of a leadership hierarchy. The approach that is primarily studied by followership scholars and thus used in this study is

the constructionist approach. The constructionist approach to followership theory understands leadership and followership as a co-constructed process and system that involves both leading and following (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). It dismisses the idea that hierarchical positions are essential to leadership within an organization and underscores how individuals or groups collectively engage in behaviors that grant power and influence. DeRue and Ashford (2010) characterized followership behaviors as resulting in individuals either claiming a follower identity or granting a leader identity. Succumbing to the wishes or desires of anything by complying, obeying, or deferring are examples of follower behaviors that may grant power to a leader, while advising, correcting, or persuading in a respectful way exemplifies claiming a follower identity.

The constructionist approach to understanding followership provides a foundation for the discussion of White followership. White followership similarly emphasizes a constructionist approach but centers White people as followers in social justice settings. Because social justice is embedded in the core of all student affairs work, White student affairs professionals can assume the position of followers in social justice initiatives and should consider themselves practitioners of White followership.

Methodology: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The purpose of this study is to capture the phenomenon of followership perceived by White student affairs practitioners who are engaged in social justice work. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) seeks to understand how people make sense of events, relationships, and processes in specific contexts (Larkin et al., 2006). IPA "targets how particular people in particular contexts make meaning and interpret their experiences" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 54). Because this study critiques

Whiteness and followership within a specific student affairs and social justice context, IPA is the research methodology I deemed most appropriate for this study.

Methods

IPA interviewing is grounded in strong rapport with participants (Smith et al., 2012). I interviewed 10 student affairs practitioners who have self-identified as doing social justice work three times. The first interview sought to understand how White student affairs professionals who are engaged in social justice work came to understand their White racial identity. The second interview sought to understand how White student affairs professionals who are engaged in social justice work understand followership. The third and final interview allowed participants to reflect on the meaning of their White racial identity within their professional practice.

Definition of Terms

I have identified several key terms as important for this research. They are briefly defined here.

Exemplary Followership – Exemplary followers are actively engaged in independent and critical thinking. They are willing to challenge leaders by providing alternate solutions if they disagree with the leader (Kelley, 1992).

Followership –Followership has historically been defined as a role within a hierarchy (Carsten et al., 2010; Howell & Mendez, 2008; Kelley, 1998, 1992) and as a complement to leadership (Alcorn, 1992; Berg, 1998; Howell & Mendez, 2008; Kelley, 1992). This study defines followership as the intentional practices of subordinates that enhance the synergistic interchange between followers and leaders.

Social Justice Work – ACPA and NASPA (2015) defined social justice as a process and a goal that functions to promote equitable participation of all groups. Social justice work seeks to address issues of privilege, power, and oppression.

Student Affairs Professionals – Student affairs professionals are individuals who are dedicated to supporting the personal and academic development of students in higher education. Professionals in student affairs work collaboratively with professionals in academic affairs to support the holistic development of students enrolled at post-secondary institutions (ACPA & NASPA, 2010).

Whiteness – Whiteness in this study refers to a socially constructed racial category used to uphold White supremacy. It is a dominant cultural space with shifting boundaries that separate "those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being White" (Kivel, 1996, p. 19).

Statement of Positionality

To understand the perspectives which inform my study and my positionality as a researcher, it is important to understand the identities I hold and how those identities inform my work. In the following section I share several aspects of my life and my upbringing which create the lens through which I approach the world and this research.

At the time of this study, I considered myself a perpetual follower. I had no desire to climb the leadership hierarchy and was content in my academic advising position. My own interest in the study of followership stems from a quote from a dear friend and mentor who told me, "You don't have to climb a ladder to make an impact." I argue that those of us working directly with students can be just as impactful as those creating

policy. I realize that being a follower and not having the desire to climb a hierarchical ladder comes with a large degree of privilege, specifically in terms of my socioeconomic class. I did not seek the monetary gain that often accompanies moving up into more administrative positions because, at the time of this study, my academic advising salary was enough to support myself, my wife, and my two children. I preferred a comfortable job that allowed me to spend more time with my family despite a lower salary than people in leadership roles in my office.

More than a follower, I am a White person who also holds multiple marginalized identities. In college, I performed in a social justice advocacy group which allowed me to share my experiences as a gay Jewish person in a family of conservative Christians. Alongside my peers with other marginalized identities, for the first time, I was able to see the world as operating within systems of power. I understood that my identity as a gay, Jewish woman was situated within a racial context, and that my White racial identity was the lens through which my marginalized identities existed. The salience of those identities within my White racial context comprised my lived experience.

I am gay and I am Jewish, but I acknowledge the intersection of those identities with my own Whiteness. It is my belief that evaluating Whiteness is central to dismantling White supremacy and the systems that maintain racism in the United States. I also believe that understanding the ways that Whiteness permeates our conscious and our subconscious is integral to doing social justice work. It is essential that, as a White student affairs practitioner, I recognize the impact of my own White perspective in my work and in this research. I have a moral obligation to gain a deeper understanding of the role of Whiteness in followership surrounding the field in which I work. Because

Whiteness dominates the literature and the field, it is my ethical duty to examine how that dominance impacts the work of student affairs practitioners.

Most of the literature on followership has been authored by White scholars. I know that by conducting this research as a White woman, I am perpetuating the Whiteness of the literature and that my research may be critiqued from several angles. Critical Whiteness studies has been critiqued as a methodology because of the addition of more Whiteness into the academy. At the time of this study, critical Whiteness studies and critical race theory were being critiqued by several republican officials in an effort to have them banned completely. I believe conducting a study on the way that Whiteness informs followership aids in the creation of programs to ensure culturally competent followers. I also believe that conducting a study using critical Whiteness studies to illuminate systems of White supremacy when the epistemology itself is under such scrutiny is my own way of engaging in social justice work.

Structure of Dissertation

Chapter I introduced the topic and outlined research questions to guide the study. It provided the study's purpose and gave a rationale for its implementation. Chapter II will provide a detailed description of literature on followership, Whiteness, student affairs, and White followership. Chapter III will present the research design and introduce the methods with which the study will be conducted. Chapter IV will synthesize the findings of the study. Chapter V will discuss the study's outcomes, limitations, and provide recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter highlights components of followership and Whiteness in the context of student affairs. The review of literature contains four sections. First, I present a conceptualization of followership by providing existing definitions, models, and theories of the phenomenon that were developed by researchers who identified pathways to becoming an exemplary follower. Next, I provide an overview of Whiteness, critical Whiteness studies, and discuss the permeation of Whiteness in the field of student affairs. I conclude by uniting Whiteness, student affairs, and followership by introducing definitions and models of White followership.

Followership

Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) suggested that the lack of research on followership stems from a misunderstanding of the constructs of followership in relation to leadership. They posited that confusion occurs because leadership is rarely understood as a process that is co-constructed between leaders and followers and is instead more frequently understood as a hierarchy (Baker et al., 2011). Followership is an important area of study in the context of higher education (Titus & Sanaghan. 2021). Titus and Sanaghan (2021) argued that "by developing authentic followers, we develop authentic leaders. We make our institutions stronger and smarter --the kind of organizations that higher education, and our society in general, desperately need (para. 31)." This section will focus on

definitions, models, and characteristics and traits of followership, and it will conclude by introducing the two existing followership theories.

Followership Defined

The term "followership" has been defined in numerous ways throughout leadership literature. It has historically been defined as a role within a hierarchy (Carsten et al., 2010; Howell & Mendez, 2008; Kelley, 1998, 1992) and as a complement to leadership (Alcorn, 1992; Berg, 1998; Howell & Mendez, 2008; Kelley, 1992). The present study defines followership as the intentional practices of subordinates that enhance the synergistic interchange between followers and leaders. Influential followership scholars including Boccialetti (1995), Chaleff (2009), and Kellerman (2008) presented followership with a negative connotation and therefore much of the recent literature defining followership illustrates the concept in a way that attempts to counter that implication. Leadership cannot exist without followership, yet followership elicits concepts such as conformity and weakness (Chaleff, 2009), while leadership elicits strength and individualism.

Strength and individualism are also characteristics of followers. Alcorn (1992), Berg (1998), Howell and Mendez (2008), and Kelley (1992) understood followership as a complement to leadership. Alcorn (1992) emphasized followers as individuals with free will, while Howell and Mendez (2009) discussed followers as being influential in helping leaders achieve organizational goals and avoid costly mistakes. Kelley (1992) underscored the importance of the relationship between leaders and followers by viewing effective followership as a partnership between followers and leaders.

Contrary to being defined as a partnership between two entities, followership has been identified as part of a hierarchy that places followers at the base. Kellerman (2008) identified followers in relation to a hierarchy. Though her goal was to empower followers, she defined followers as lacking power, authority, and influence, but noted that they have an impact on people with more authority and power. While Kellerman (2008) equated followers to subordinates within a system, other researchers defined followers using less hierarchical terms. Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007) used terms such as "participants," "collaborators," and "partners," whereas Crossman and Crossman (2011) perceived the term "constituent" as being inherently neutral as a synonym for followership.

Boccialetti (1995) disregarded neutrality and introduced a hierarchical form of collaboration by describing obedience. Obedience among followers was described as having a willingness to trail leaders (Boccialetti, 1995). Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007) also alluded to obedience by defining followership as following the decisions and directives of another. Shamir (2007) also echoed obedience and noted that followers were recipients of the influence of a leader, and Kelley (1988) argued that followers carry out the orders and directives of a leader without resistance.

The collaborative relationship between the leader and the follower is integral to understanding followership as a concept because of the amount of power that followers have in sustaining that collaboration, but researchers also emphasized relationships between followers as individuals and groups. Adair (2008) identified followership as an influence relationship between both individuals and groups, and Berg (1998) similarly viewed the relationship as a collaboration beyond just leaders and followers. Kellerman

(2008) underscored the importance of relationships between followers and noted that good followership is dependent upon the relationships among followers themselves.

Followership Models

Multidimensional depictions of followers and followership have emerged over the last century to help make sense of the theoretical discussions of follower roles. These models represent the intersection of followership characteristics and followership behaviors. This section will highlight four researchers (Blackshear, 2004; Chaleff, 2003; Kellerman, 2008; Kelley, 1992) whose studies collected data using participant self-reflection, and whose models capture paths to exemplary followership. The models presented do not stem from a student affairs or higher education context, nor are they tied to organizational levels. These models are employed in this literature review to highlight various follower types, behaviors, and characteristics. None of the models present the way in which one's racial identity, social identity, one's leader, or other environmental factors contribute to follower type. In the context of my study, these models simply represent ways that followership has been understood in the literature.

Blackshear's Followership Continuum

Blackshear (2004) sought to refine and normalize the popular view of followership by stating that "belief in an organization's mission, vision, or purpose and willingness to subjugate personal interest for the greater good, loyalty, and unity of focus" (p. 3) are characteristics of successful followership. She described the Followership Continuum that addressed "five stages of dynamic and changing followership" (p. 5). Blackshear surveyed more than 300 participants and reviewed the

literature to identify characteristics of exemplary followers that exist within her continuum.

Blackshear (2004) presented the continuum in stages, which she described as being “situational and dependent on external and internal variables” (p. 1). The first stage in Blackshear’s (2004) continuum is the employee. The employee simply does work in return for a reward or benefit, usually compensation. The second stage is the committed follower who is interested in the mission of the organization and shows an increased level of commitment to the organizational idea. The third stage is the engaged follower. The engaged follower is “an active supporter, willing to go above and beyond” (Blackshear, 2004, p. 5) initial job requirements. The fourth stage is an effective follower, whom Blackshear describes as dependable and capable, and the fifth and final stage is an exemplary follower. An exemplary follower is someone who “sets ego aside and works to support the leader” (Blackshear, 2004, p. 5).

Blackshear (2004) presented the followership continuum as a diagnostic and prescriptive approach to taking the pulse of a workforce. Blackshear aimed to be able to diagnose steps needed to maximize workforce output and emphasized that conventional work performance requires a balance of followership qualities. The followership continuum was created for use as a comprehensive organizational assessment process, underscoring the idea that an individual’s followership stage is situational. Blackshear (2004) stated that “given changing working conditions, even the best employees can perform at less than their potential” (p. 10) and that “a poor performing individual can improve performance with the right attitude, skills, conditions, supports, and motivation” (p. 10).

Chaleff's Courageous Followership Model

Chaleff (2003) focused his study on observations of followers who willingly follow leaders toward unethical practices and aimed to create a model that simultaneously complemented and supported leadership. He created a courageous followership model and argued that followers must take responsibility not only for the roles of the leaders but also for their own roles, and they must do this by improving the relationship between the leader and the follower. Chaleff also noted that to improve their relationship with their leader, followers must reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes about authority. In his model, Chaleff created a two-dimensional matrix that synthesized the follower's willingness to challenge a leader and a follower's level of support for a leader. Followership styles were discussed briefly in two chapters of Chaleff's (2003) book. His followership model was created to help participants in his workshop understand their needs for growth and their strengths. He identified four followership styles: partner, implementer, individualist, and resource.

Partners are committed supporters of their leaders and are simultaneously willing to challenge policies or behaviors if they are perceived as being contradictory to organizational goals. The partner is the epitome of Chaleff's (2003) courageous follower but may still improve in both the degree of challenge and degree of support to the leader. Like a partner, an implementer supports the leader. An implementer, however, does not question the leader's actions. Chaleff (2003) noted that leaders tend to prefer implementers because they complete tasks without much direction and usually do not challenge a leader's actions. Implementers are supportive, compliant, and dependable, but Chaleff indicated room for growth in the dimension of challenge to leaders.

Individualists challenge leaders on policies and are frequently less likely to support leaders. They are often assets to groups that contain many followers who tend to blindly follow their leader. Regrettably, an individualist's lack of support of the leader may result in marginalization of the individualist. The leader and the group may find ways to isolate individualists, so to become more effective followers, individualists must find ways to give their support to leaders who align behaviors and policies with the goals of the organization. Finally, Chaleff (2003) identified the resource. The resource neither supports nor challenges a leader, and as a result, a follower who is a resource tends not to be promoted or make noteworthy contributions to their organization. They are the least likely to assume responsibility for the organization and are considered uncommitted and lackluster. The follower styles presented by Chaleff (2003) shed light on the strengths and areas of growth among participants in his courageous followership workshop to assess levels of challenge and support for leaders.

Kellerman's Follower Typology

Kellerman (2008) noted that followers are different from each other and that they may be divided into groups based on their engagement levels. She identified levels of engagement as the most crucial metric along which all followers are aligned. Kellerman posited five follower types that range from the willingness to trade one's life for a cause to doing nothing at all. The five types include isolates, bystanders, participants, activists, and diehards. Kellerman's five follower types are not indicative of rungs on a hierarchical ladder and occur at every level of an organization.

Isolates are wholly detached as followers. They know nothing and they do nothing. In an organizational context, isolates tend to do only what they must and never

more. They are detached from the organization and can be characterized as uninformed, uninterested, and lacking motivation.

Bystanders deliberately make a choice not to participate. Kellerman (2008) stated that bystanders "do nothing even when doing something is not especially costly or especially risky" (p. 97). Kellerman equated bystanders to individuals in Nazi Germany who neither resisted nor supported the Nazis. They turned their backs on the events at hand and disengaged. In today's organizations, bystanders might not say or do anything if they encounter unethical deeds within their organization.

Contrary to a bystander, a participant would act if they witnessed an unethical procedure in their organization, but only for personal gain. Kellerman (2008) noted that "participants are the fuel that drives the engine" (p. 125) and exemplified followers who supported questionable practices at a pharmaceutical company. The participant followers were not wholly committed to their leader, but they were committed to their own success and the success of the organization. They were so committed to that success that they intentionally undermined evidence that a pilot drug had lethal side effects.

Activists care deeply about each other and their leader and can be categorized as engaged and energetic. To exemplify the role of the activist, Kellerman detailed the sexual abuse scandals at the Catholic Church and spoke of followers who employed the motto "keep the faith but change the Church." The activist followers shed light on the abuse cases and advocated for the resignation of the leader who presided during the scandals. Kellerman warned of the danger of opposing leaders and encouraged them to consider the more long-term effects of clashing with people in positions of power. While

they may be staunchly committed to a cause, activists may fear the repercussions of clashing with a superior.

Diehards will stop at nothing to back their leaders' cause. Suicide bombers are an example of diehards. They will die supporting their mission. Kellerman (2008) noted that there are few diehards in society and that having too many diehards would be a detriment to society.

Kelley's Followership Styles

Kelley (1992) pioneered the analysis of followership from a follower's perspective and began his text by stating that it was about "what it feels like to be a follower and how to become a better one" (p. 1). He underscored the importance of followers as being a separate entity from leaders and emphasized that followers needed their own models that were distinct from existing models of leadership. Kelley's model identified that two behavioral dimensions existed, which served as the foundation for five followership styles. He posited that followers exist in two dimensions: independent/critical thinking and active/passive dimensions, which yield followership styles. Kelley's (1992) followership styles include passive, conformist, pragmatist, alienated, and exemplary. He identified exemplary followership as the style for which individuals ought to strive and offered ways to transition to exemplary followership from the other followership styles.

Passive followers require direction from leaders in decision making on their journey toward exemplary followership. They lack ownership of their work and frequently fail to initiate tasks. Passive followers account for five to 10% of followers (Kelley, 1992). Kelley noted that while passive followers may be stereotyped as being

unmotivated or lazy, passive followers may simply have underdeveloped followership skills. Followers who hold different followership styles may also become passive if the leader micromanages, uses fear to persuade or intimidate, or makes all the decisions for an organization. Passive followers may develop their followership skills toward exemplary, Kelley stated, by getting involved in their organization and investing energy into their job.

Like passive followers, conformist followers are guided by the planning and decisions of the leaders. They are frequently averse to conflict, take orders well, and defer to the leader for guidance. The path to exemplary followership for conformist followers includes cultivating critical thinking skills, looking at others' ideas and evaluating them, and then generating their own ideas. Conformist followers must also confront their need for structure and their fear of conflict.

Pragmatists are similarly averse to conflict. They are rule-bound and obedient and comprise 35% of all followers (Kelley, 1992). Kelley noted that pragmatists might become exemplary followers by seeking purpose in their personal lives and in their work. They might also focus on setting goals to help fulfill that purpose, or they might attempt to help others achieve their goals.

Alienated followers can appear combative but tend to think for themselves. They can disengage from their work and can often appear disgruntled or resentful. Kelley (1992) noted that alienated followers might have at one time been exemplary followers but became alienated because of broken trust or unmet expectations. These followers may become exemplary again if they overcome their resentment toward the leader and replace it with a more positive emotion. Kelley suggested that if alienated followers are not able

to progress to exemplary followers, they should consider transferring to a different department or leaving the organization.

Exemplary followers are simultaneously team players and think for themselves. They often support the goals of the organization while taking control of their own work. Exemplary followers are the gold standard of followership in an organization, comprising roughly 35% of followers (Kelley, 1992). Followers who are exemplary take great pride in their work, exceed their written job responsibilities, and they add value to their organizations. Exemplary followers also have a tremendous ethical conscience and tend to stand up for what is right in an organization.

Blackshear (2004), Chaleff (2003), Kelley (1992), and Kellerman (2008) all identified that not a singular type of follower exists and that, while followers may be characterized by traits and behaviors, there is an ideal type of follower. The authors identified follower traits and behaviors as being desirable to the organization or the leader, but the desirability of follower type was situation dependent. Followers are employed in every organizational level in the context of higher education. While Chaleff, Kelley, and Kellerman separated follower types by group, Blackshear placed followership on a continuum that captured the fluidity of work behaviors. The four authors identified as having created models of followership are similar in that they all presented a path to becoming the most desired type of follower, an exemplary follower.

Exemplary Followership

The concept of exemplary followership was first studied by Kelley (1988), who identified follower styles based on a questionnaire that detailed how a follower actively and consciously carried out the role of follower. In his study, he identified the exemplary

follower as someone who is engaged and independent. The more engaged and independent the follower is, the more exemplary the follower becomes. Kelley (1988) identified exemplary followers as exercising independent, critical thinking, separate from the group or leader. He also noted that exemplary followers are actively engaged and utilize their talents to benefit the organization regardless of organizational bureaucracy or hurdles. Exemplary followers saw themselves as equal to the leaders they followed. They were not intimidated by hierarchical forms of leadership and did not hesitate to disagree with their leaders.

Kelley's (1988) definition of exemplary followership is consistent with Carsten et al.'s (2010) findings regarding proactive followership. Carsten et al. (2010) sought to examine followers' social constructions of followership while investigating schema and contexts that contributed to those constructions. The researchers found that followership constructions existed along a continuum with such categories as passive, active, and proactive dimensions. Followers who held a proactive social construction viewed followership as being a partnership relationship with leaders rather than being based on submission or dominance. Proactive followers saw themselves as being active participants in the leadership process and believed that their role in the organization was to advance its mission.

Blackshear (2004) suggested that followership is dynamic and exists on a continuum; she identifies an exemplary follower as one who "actively chooses to set their ego aside, actively supports the leader, and also takes initiative to lead in their own work" (p. 5). Carsten et al.'s (2010) analysis of proactive followers is echoed in Benson et al.'s (2016) study of leaders' interpretations of proactive followership. Benson et al. (2016)

concluded that proactive followers who willingly became part of the decision-making process tended to have more influence on leaders than passive followers and used the term "appropriate followership" synonymously with "exemplary followership" and "proactive followership." The authors noted that appropriate followers are proactive, accountable, committed, and willing to challenge a leader's ideas.

Followership Theory

Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) provided a systemic review of followership literature that introduced a broader theory of followership into existing research. Their study was the catalyst in the development of the theoretical constructs of followership, as well as an outline for directions for future research. They introduced a conceptual definition of followership theory and noted that it "is the study of the nature and impact of followers and following in the leadership process" (p. 96). The authors developed the theoretical constructs and directions for future research using two theoretical models: a role-based approach and a constructionist approach. Followership as a concept is new in the field of leadership research, so followership theory and corresponding models are still emerging ideas. Both methods of understanding place followership in a social context; however, the role-based approach places followership in a hierarchy while constructivism does not.

Constructionist Approach

The first framework, the constructionist approach, is referred to by Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) as "the leadership process" (p. 99). This framework illustrates a co-constructed system that involves both leading and following. The leadership process strives to understand how leaders and followers co-create leadership and its associated outcomes and dismisses hierarchical positions within an organization. The basic assumption of this

framework is that leadership may only occur through a combination of leading and following.

The constructionist framework studies how individuals or groups collectively engage in following behaviors that grant power and influence. Followership behaviors result from an individual either claiming a follower identity or granting a leader identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Succumbing to the wishes or desires of another by complying, obeying, or deferring are examples of follower behaviors that may grant power to a leader, while advising, correcting, or persuading in a respectful way exemplifies claiming a follower identity. A focus on followership behaviors allows researchers to analyze patterns of leading and following to construct leadership. The leadership process framework also allows researchers to study non-following (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). *Non-following* refers to resistance behaviors and usually occurs in a hierarchical organization when a follower's attempt at leading clashes with a leader's attempt at leading, ultimately resulting in a power struggle.

Baker (2007) and Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) agreed that views on the leadership process are overwhelmingly leader-centric, disregarding followership or the role of the follower. Kellerman (2016) similarly noted that the role of the follower is underemphasized and occasionally ignored altogether. A constructionist perspective, however, places followership and leadership as complementary and necessary as part of a dynamic, relational process (Carsten et al., 2010; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). This perspective places followers as "active participants with leaders in co-constructing leadership, followership, and outcomes" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). This view of followership empowerment is still not as widely accepted among laypeople as it is among

scholars. Utilizing only a constructivist approach to followership studies may be problematic because researchers seek participants who may be unfamiliar with a foundational vocabulary surrounding followership. A constructivist view is more inductive in nature and aims to construct an organization's perspective (Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012), so laypeople who are unfamiliar with followership may lack resources to be able to define their role as a follower. Therefore, followership theory requires an understanding of both approaches, which allows for the respectful interaction of both the role-based approach and the constructivist approach.

Role-Based Approach

Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) referred to the role-based followership framework as "reversing the lens" because it "illustrates how followers' characteristics and behaviors may affect proximal outcomes of follower and leader behaviors and more distal outcomes like leadership processes and organizational effectiveness" (p. 97).

The role-based framework is intentionally ambiguous and focuses on understanding factors that influence how a follower constructs their role as a follower. The framework similarly notes ways in which the follower role can be enacted based on follower type and infers that a follower's behavior is likely influenced by how the leader perceives them, how the leader treats them, and their ability to advance within the organization (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Kellerman (2016) argued that a role-based perspective might be better utilized than the constructivism approach among laypeople in understanding followership. Similarly, Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) recognized that participants in followership studies may not be familiar with the concept of followership and noted that a role-based perspective

might provide the best opportunity for insight from participants. A role-based perspective allows followers to identify themselves as participants in the leadership process but to be defined by the behavioral demands of the job and the role that employees play in accomplishing that job (Carsten et al., 2014). The role-based approach places followership in a hierarchical context and distinguishes subordinates as having roles that are different from managers or leaders. This perspective emphasizes that "leaders and followers form an action circle around a common purpose" (Chaleff, 1995, p. 2), underscoring the idea that each member of a team has a specific role on that team.

Followership Summary

This section of the literature review began with defining followership by providing traits and characteristics of followers and by distinguishing followership as existing in both a hierarchical state and as part of a partnership. I also provided alternate terminology, emphasizing both negative and neutral connotations of followership. I offered four distinct models of followership that emerged from scholars who provided paths to exemplary followership, all of which were authors who collected data that utilized participant self-reflection. In addition to highlighting models of followership, this section of the literature review emphasized exemplary followership and presented additional authors who introduced ideas of exemplary followership into the literature. Though this study focuses on followership specifically, Liu and Baker's (2016) was highlighted to emphasize Whiteness in leadership discourse. This section concluded by exposing two distinct paradigms with which followership theory can be approached.

Whiteness and Student Affairs

Whiteness permeates student affairs, and race influences every aspect of people's lives (Cabrera et al., 2016) which means White people must see themselves within a racial narrative (DiAngelo, 2011). The power and privilege of Whiteness is embedded in legal, social, political, and economic realms and provides advantages for those who are raced as White in the United States (DiAngelo, 2011). The advantages experienced by White people have become a normalized part of society, and therefore of higher education and student affairs. Nguyen and Duran (2018) provided an exhaustive list of the ways that White normativity manifests in student affairs workplaces, including claims of reverse racism, White colleagues claiming that they are color blind, and placing the burden of fixing "diversity issues" on People of Color. Their examples demonstrated how dismissing racial differences by ignoring race altogether maintains a workplace where White professionals are unchallenged in their thinking because of the permeation of Whiteness as a dominant culture.

As of 2017, 66% of student affairs professionals in the US were White (Bichsel et al., 2017). Student affairs, like most of predominantly White higher education, is a field that is firmly rooted in White supremacy (Cabrera et al., 2016). To bring awareness of and advocacy to the pervasive Whiteness and racism that are structurally embedded within the field of student affairs and higher education, frameworks that include social justice and decolonization principles exist to guide professionals in the field (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The following section of this literature review will introduce critical Whiteness studies and highlight its importance in higher education. It will then discuss the social justice and decolonization framework and principles to emphasize the importance of understanding one's own identity within the field of student affairs.

Critical Whiteness Studies

The study of critical whiteness has recently become an academic field of study that is committed to understanding Whiteness rather than exclusively focusing on the racialized "other" (Applebaum, 2016). Applebaum (2016) described Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as "a growing body of scholarship whose aim is to reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege" (p. 2). One of the main objectives of CWS is to make Whiteness visible to disrupt white ideologies and systems of power, but the objective is not without critique. Ahmed (2007) argued that the implementation of CWS risks recentering Whiteness. Applebaum (2016) contended the importance of being critically vigilant in the way that CWS studies are conducted so that more complex and nuanced analyses of Whiteness are made visible.

CWS aims to eradicate the notion of color blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) by shedding light on invisible social structures and systems that intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate white supremacy and white privilege. Color blindness refers to White people's assignment of general insignificance to race in race-related affairs (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). White norms infiltrate society "yet appear to be common and value neutral to the social groups that benefit from them" (Applebaum, 2016, p. 2). CWS contradicts color blindness by describing Whiteness as a system that exists within social, historical, political, and economic contexts. It examines the way White privilege is enacted and maintained within society and within institutions, and it challenges dominant ideologies which are frequently recreated as social norms within the context of higher education (Gusa, 2010). The study of Whiteness is integral to dislodging its superiority and dominance.

It is well accepted that the notion of race is not guided by a biological foundation but by the social meanings that are ascribed to race. Race and Whiteness are features of social organization. Ahmed (2007) underscored Whiteness as a phenomenology by suggesting that Whiteness functions as a habit. Ahmed (2007) offered "a vocabulary for re-describing how Whiteness becomes 'worldly'" (p. 150) and defined what Whiteness *does.* Whiteness was described as ongoing, something that has been received, and something that affects how people take up space. By drawing upon her experiences of "inhabiting a White world as a non-White body," Ahmed offered a "phenomenology of Whiteness as a way of exploring how Whiteness is 'real,' material and lived" (p. 150). Whiteness, however, "is dependent for its meaning on the process of negation of what is outside its borders. For instance, Whiteness means nothing without the existence of Blackness" (Applebaum, 2016, p. 3).

White Racial Identity Development

The incorporation of White racial identity development is important in a study about Whiteness and followership because it emphasizes that individuals will have varying levels of awareness of the way Whiteness is present in their worldviews. The White racial identity model was created to address the way racism is present in the United States and underscores the idea that a positive White identity could only be achieved if Whiteness was critically explored (Helms, 1995). White racial identity models have purposefully guided CWS scholars in their research to uncover more comprehensive considerations of White identity development. Helms's (1995) model of White Racial Identity Development (WRID) identified a continuum that led to the development of an anti-racist White identity and was presented in six stages.

Stage one, the contact stage, emphasizes color blindness wherein White people have minimal experiences with People of Color, and cultural and racial differences are not important. White people in the contact stage do not perceive themselves as having biases and occasionally believe that racism is perpetuated because of the continued discussion of the existence of race. A White person may move into the next stage, the disintegration stage, when they experience first-hand the privilege that comes with being White.

Stage two is the disintegration stage in which White people become progressively conscious of their own White privilege, often struggling with shame and guilt about the possession of that privilege. When those emotions dominate the behaviors and thoughts of the individual, they may move into the reintegration stage.

Stage three is the reintegration stage which occurs when Whites have a conscious belief in the superiority of Whiteness. This stage is a result of feelings of guilt and shame, which produce the belief that the White racial identity is, in fact, superior. If the person can manage those emotions, it is possible to move to the pseudo-independence stage.

Stage four is the pseudo-independence stage. It is the first stage of constructively acknowledging racial identity. Individuals in stage four begin to understand the privileges of Whiteness. They validate the experiences of People of Color but often look to them to combat and confront issues of racism. The next stage, the immersion stage, requires people to understand how to be simultaneously White and non-racist.

Stage five is the immersion/emersion stage. Individuals attempt to connect with both a non-racist identity and a White racial identity. This stage underscores connection

with other White people who are similarly confronting issues of oppression and racism. Experiential and affective understanding are markers of stage five.

The final stage is autonomy. People in the autonomy stage have a clear understanding of their White racial identity and feel a positive connection to it while also pursuing issues of social justice. They are educated on issues of racial, cultural, and ethnic differences, they value diversity, and they acknowledge the roles they play in the perpetuation of racism.

There are limited studies on the development of a White racial identity in student affairs administrators, but there are several studies that have aimed to understand White identity development in students who will ultimately one day become administrators. Cabrera and Corces-Zimmerman (2017) studied 62 White undergraduate men at a predominantly White institution and found that most participants exhibited racial ignorance, dismissed the idea of White privilege, and had been the victims of reverse racism. The results of the study indicated a need for intervention of the university to assist White students in reflecting on issues of racism and White supremacy (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017).

Cook and McCoy (2017) held affinity training sessions that focused on identity and noted that White participants of the affinity groups were able to better understand the necessity of racial training, the importance of learning from other White people, the negative implications of color blindness, and the existence of racism. Participants noted that the concepts they learned in the affinity group contradicted many of the messages the White students received growing up (Cook & McCoy, 2017).

Cabrera (2018) and Vianden (2020) extensively studied White identity development and its prevalence in men and on college campuses. Though these authors studied Whiteness in college-aged individuals, these publications are relevant because of their impact on higher education and student affairs practitioners with whom these students work. Cabrera (2018) contended that he was not interested in the individual identity development of White college men, but instead in understanding how the lack of awareness of their White identities serves as a catalyst for the marginalization of Students of Color. Cabrera (2018) coined the term White immunity to describe the free pass that White people have that allows them to maintain freedom from systemic racism. Cabrera (2018) contended that a prominent finding of his research was that White men felt that they are the true victims of racism because they feel unfairly treated because of equity and justice-focused policies and political correctness.

Vianden (2020), like Cabrera (2018) deliberately studied White college men. His study, the Straight White College Men Project, sought to explore and understand the way White college men engaged in issues of equity, diversity, and social justice (Vianden, 2020). He cited participants as having grown up with little-to-no exposure to People of Color, and in some cases, in blatantly racist households, suggesting that an "insidious re-segregation has taken place" (Vianden, 2020, p. 177) since the 1980s. Vianden's findings were like Cabrera's (2018) conclusions in that some participants felt that they faced disadvantages because of social justice policies implemented by the school. Vianden's study implored a call to action not only to White college-aged men, but also to the educators with whom they work. He argues that straight White college men ought to stand up for issues of oppression because they hold positions of power.

Whiteness in Higher Education and Student Affairs

In 2017, the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) identified White people as holding 66% of all student and academic affairs positions (Bichsel et al., 2017). Taylor et al. (2020) contended that People of Color comprised only 22% of all professional roles within higher education and Taylor et al. (2020) noted that People of Color held only 14.7% of all administrative positions within higher education. Although these studies relied on different data sets, all three illustrate the overwhelmingly White composition of higher education.

Racial Whiteness as a phenomenon permeates higher education and student affairs (Cabrera et al., 2016). Cabrera et al. (2016) noted that racism is systemically present on college campuses and that faculty, staff, and students continue to perpetuate White superiority. These cultural practices have shaped the field of higher education and student affairs (Cabrera et al., 2016). Whiteness has also been situated as an ideology, representing the accumulation of ideas over time that serve as interpretive frameworks (Bonilla-Silva, 2013) and as a lens through which White people understand themselves.

Cabrera et al. (2016) described Whiteness as it relates to higher education by highlighting Whiteness as having five theoretical components: colorblindness, ignorance, ontological expansiveness, property, and comfort. Color blindness refers to White people's inability to see race in race-related affairs (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). The notion of color blindness "informs a great deal of interpersonal interactions, policy, and even the way scholars conduct research" (Cabrera et al., 2016, p. 21) in higher education. For example, Rankin and Reason (2005) contended that White students were more likely to

interpret the campus environment as welcoming and racially equitable than Students of Color.

Whiteness as an epistemology of ignorance underlines the way White people can willfully disregard “human suffering caused by systemic White supremacy” (Cabrera et al., 2016, p. 21). This ignorance manifests on college campuses with the belief among students of “reverse discrimination,” or the belief that discrimination against White students is more prevalent than racism against Black students (Norton & Sommers, 2011). Whiteness as ontological expansiveness refers to the dynamic of space and place. Sullivan (2006) defined ontological expansiveness as White entitlement. White people behave in a way that assumes all places and spaces are available for them to come and go as they please (Sullivan, 2006). In higher education, ontological expansiveness manifests as White Institutional Presence (WIP; Gusa, 2010), or the presentation of Whiteness as an environmental and social norm on college campuses. White students feel entitled to access any space on campus, while the access to spaces by Students of Color is either overtly or covertly restricted (Cabrera et al., 2016).

Whiteness as property was first conceptualized by Harris (1993), who described the inability to “give” Whiteness and the privileges with which Whiteness is associated. Harris (1993) contended that “a core component of Whiteness was determining who was not White and excluding them from the privileges of Whiteness” (Cabrera et al., 2016, p. 24). Higher education reinforces Whiteness as property by allowing the hegemony of Whiteness in institutional practices to remain unchallenged (Cabrera et al., 2016).

Finally, Whiteness as assumed racial comfort underscores the prevalence of microaggressions, or “the brief and common place daily verbal, behavioral, and

environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue, 2010, p. 5). Microaggressions are prevalent and often committed without conscious knowledge of the perpetrator. Cabrera et al. (2016) and DiAngelo (2011) contended that White people are uncomfortable if they are confronted about committing a microaggression. On college campuses, that feeling of discomfort leaves White students unchallenged about their racial identity, and it normalizes White linguistic violence (Cabrera et al., 2016). Each of the five theoretical components, as described by Cabrera et al. (2016), were framed in CWS as being mutually exclusive, but Cabrera et al. (2016), DiAngelo (2011), and Bonilla-Silva (2013) noted that each component mutually reinforces the others.

There is limited research on the White identities of student affairs practitioners. Bondi (2012) conducted a study that consisted of eight White students who had recently graduated from a student affairs Master's program. The study focused on the ways White students protected their Whiteness by using critical race theory as an analytical tool. White students in Bondi's study protected their Whiteness by feeling as if they had a right to learn even if it was at the expense of students of color. They also expected their own experiences to be centered in learning about race. Lastly, they maintained segregation in the classroom and in social situations.

Mata (2018) conducted a similar study that examined how White student affairs administrators who identify as women protected their Whiteness. Mata (2018) found that Women tended to minimize their Whiteness based on their gender identity. They also minimized conversations about race, and they centered Whiteness in race-related

conversations. Using other identities to minimize attention to racial issues upholds White privilege (Mata, 2018). White women in student affairs did not feel as if they had power, nor did they recognize the amount of power they had because they were White (Mata, 2018).

Positions of power within higher education are often held by White student affairs professionals. DiAngelo (2011) argued that White people can be selective in when and how they decide to address racial inequities. A White person's level of White identity development may affect the frequency with which racial inequities are addressed. Though higher education is frequently positioned as being more liberal than other organizations, DiAngelo (2011) noted that "Whites who position themselves as liberal often opt to protect what they perceive as their moral reputation, rather than recognize or change their participation of systems of inequality and domination" (p. 64). To counteract the complacency of White student affairs professionals, social justice work must become the foundation for student affairs work rather than an additive. The necessary work of engaging in social justice as a foundation of student affairs is underscored by social competencies that have been established in the field.

Social Justice as a Competency

Several guiding documents have been established to better equip student affairs professionals to engage in conversations about race, ethnicity, and privilege. The National Association for Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) updated a guiding document for student affairs professionals called the Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators to reflect the renaming of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion competency to the Social

Justice and Inclusion competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). ACPA and NASPA (2015) noted that the reason for the change was to rid the competency of the passive nature of the term diversity and to accentuate the active nature of social justice. The competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) reads

> Social justice is defined as both a process and a goal that includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups and seeks to address issues of oppression, privilege, and power. (p. 30)

ACPA and NASPA intended for this competency to underscore social justice as a lens through which to work; to bring awareness to the identities, power, and privilege that student affairs professionals hold; and to emphasize the way in which those identities impact their student affairs practice. The social justice competency argues that it is imperative for student affairs professionals to integrate the social justice and inclusion competency in every aspect of their work in student affairs.

In addition to the Social Justice and Inclusion competency included in the ACPA and NASPA (2015) guiding principles, ACPA introduced *A Bold Vision Forward: A Framework for the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization* (SIRJD) (Quaye et al., 2019). The SIRJD further emphasized the need for student affairs professionals to center racial justice and decolonization. The SIRJD urged student affairs professionals to understand the identities they hold and the way they operate through the lens of those identities. The document underlined the importance of the stories of human beings and that embedded in those stories may be hurt, fear, and pain. The authors of the

SIRJD encouraged the prioritization of action amid that fear because "lives literally are at stake" (Quaye et al., 2019, p. 9).

The SIRJD emphasizes action by providing guideposts for incorporating racial justice and decolonization into the work of student affairs professionals. Quaye et al. (2019) underscore self-awareness as the first step to being able to apply the framework to the work of student affairs professionals and then introduced nine guiding principles among which to center this work. The framework depicts the nine principles as situated within the most peripheral layer: history, and outside of the core of the framework: love. Presenting history on the periphery of the SIRJD allows student affairs professionals to recognize historical dynamics of power and positions student affairs educators as influencers across time (Quaye et al., 2019). Centering love reminds student affairs professionals to be in love with justice and to love each other. Love is fierce and love is gentle, and love means investing, helping, and challenging others to do better. Situated among history and love are the nine guiding principles of the racial justice and decolonization framework: responsibility rather than compliance, educating through problem posing, questioning the knowledges we use, emphasizing agency, developing authentic relationships, watching out for each other, centering compassion and healing, suspending efficiency and embracing dialogue, and an always becoming.

Responsibility rather than compliance underscores the notion compliance protects the university and its legal security while responsibility encompasses recognition and action. Educating through problem posing actively recenters students as holders of knowledge and honors them as liberators of their own oppression. Questioning the knowledges we use honors ways of knowing and learning and demonstrates the

appreciation of those voices in higher education communities. Emphasizing agency allows for the recognition and dismantling of unjust systems of oppression. Developing authentic relationships challenges professionals in higher education to drop their guards and become vulnerable, and to truly become committed to understanding and transparency. Watching out for each other emphasizes moving beyond fear and toward community regarding social justice centered work. Centering healing and compassion acknowledge that trauma is felt in the present. Suspending efficiency and embracing dialogue denotes that dialogue without action lacks power, and action without dialogue may reinforce negative systems. Finally, an always becoming strives to continuously grow and learn to resist normative structures and complacency.

The competencies introduced in the SIRJD embed racial and social justice work in the field of student affairs. The competencies underscore the implementation of an action-oriented approach to social justice work. Together, the SIRJD and the ACPA and NASPA guiding principles (2015) provide a framework for professionals within which to operate.

Whiteness and Higher Education and Student Affairs Summary

This section of the literature review introduced critical whiteness studies as a conceptual framework and highlighted the ways Whiteness is present in student affairs. It showcased empirical research that exists on Whiteness in higher education and in student affairs. It concluded by outlining the components of the SIRJD and by demonstrating the importance of the social justice and inclusion competency in the field of student affairs. The next section will connect the previous two sections by introducing White followership.

White Followership

White followership brings together an understanding of Whiteness and the practice of followership. White followership is an emergent concept that centers the behaviors and actions of White people in racial justice settings. This section of the literature review will define and describe White followership by reviewing the work of Villalobos (2015) and Lee-Norman (2021).

Villalobos (2015) introduced White followership as a framework to be utilized within predominantly White institutions to achieve racial justice. His work on White followership is integral to my study on Whiteness and followership because his work is contextualized within higher education. He defined White followership as the active centering of the "experiences, sensibilities, interests, methods, critiques, and vision offered by Peoples and Communities of Color who are invested in making racial justice, particularly within predominantly White and White-controlled institutions," (Villalobos, 2015, p. 167). He contended that the great majority of leadership models for racial justice existed to develop Leaders of Color and identified that development as a priority. However, Villalobos (2015) also argued that there were limited models that prepare White people to be followers in racial justice work. Like Liu and Baker (2016), Villalobos contended that leadership is inherently rooted in hierarchy and White superiority, therein making it seem expected for White people to control efforts for racial justice, even in multiracial settings. Villalobos's (2015) argued that "White students, faculty, and administrators who are grounded in the White followership framework can play an important complementary role in racial justice efforts" (p. 168). The emergence of #BlackLivesMatter has brought forth a significant realization of the struggle faced by

People of Color for racial justice and served as one of the catalysts for Villalobos's White followership framework. The movement implored the creation of leadership models that are less hierarchical and more collective and horizontal. Villalobos posited that by practicing White followership as a form of leadership, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders can openly work for racial justice.

White followership was conceptualized to provide White people with roles to support racial justice efforts that are led by People and Communities of Color (Villalobos, 2015). Several other models and frameworks exist that are like Villalobos's model. For example, White critical humility asks White people to interrogate how Whiteness shapes the way assumptions are made and how White people exist within hegemony and privilege (Barlas et al., 2012). Kivel (2006) provided guidelines for being a strong White ally and offered 13 basic tactics that White people can use to support People of Color. The development of Villalobos's (2015) White followership model drew on concepts from Barlas et al. (2012) and Kivel (2006) to develop his White followership framework. Villalobos noted that the incorporation of such concepts was instrumental in moving White people away from the symptoms of White immunity (Cabrera, 2018) that arose in the realization of the ways in which they benefit from and maintain White supremacy.

Exemplary followership (Kelley, 1998) as the most desirable follower type may be problematic in settings that strive for social justice or in settings where White individuals are following a Leader of Color. Liu and Baker (2016) contended that "'doing leadership' was inextricably linked to 'doing Whiteness,'" (p. 420), there is no empirical literature that has examined differences in racial identity and follower type, nor is there

literature that has studied whether racial identity is evident is linked to what makes an exemplary follower.

Leaders cannot exist without followers, and as such, followers cannot exist without leaders. This study focuses solely on followership, but Liu and Baker's (2016) study on Whiteness and leadership is integral to understanding the way Whiteness has been present in dominant leadership discourse which shape our idea of leadership. Liu and Baker (2016) sought to examine the ways Whiteness was prominent in leadership discourses throughout the media. Discourse analysis was used in Liu and Baker's (2016) to expose how leadership is a process that is co-created between social agents. The results showcased White people's domination over others and the environment, mastery over their surroundings, self-sacrificing proclamations, and assertions of a legitimacy to lead on behalf of other racial groups (Liu & Baker, 2016). The study also highlighted the media's role in preserving White privilege and power. Liu and Baker's (2016) study presented Whiteness as being embedded within leadership and leadership discourse and serves as a foundation for understanding the ways Whiteness may also be embedded in the understanding of followership.

Radd (2019), like Liu and Baker (2016) studied Whiteness as a discursive practice but centered her work in education and social justice. She contended that discursive Whiteness is often invisible and therefore fails to challenge and disrupt racism. She urged school leaders to heighten their awareness of the practice of discursive Whiteness "to more fully realize antioppressive pedagogy and leadership education," (Radd, 2019, p. 672). Villalobos (2015) echoed Radd (2019) and Liu and Baker (2016) in the notion that the characteristics of mainstream leadership are rooted in White supremacy. He asserted

that leadership ultimately favors the ideas of power-over-people, competition, and material gain. He contended that "an important function of the mainstream leader is to help maintain social constructs and organizational structures for control that become malleable only when absolutely necessary" (p. 175). Gundemir et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative study that further problematizes Whiteness and leadership. Their study concluded that an implicit pro-White leadership bias existed among participants, and that leadership traits such as ambition and decisiveness were more strongly associated with members of White-majority groups than with ethnic minorities in Western societies. Results of this study offered insight into the underrepresentation of People of Color in leadership positions.

While the connotation of a mainstream leader may convey social constructs and organizational structures that uphold discursive Whiteness, this study aims to uncover the contributions of followers. Many mainstream leaders attempt to micromanage voices on the margins to maintain power and preserve the status quo. The White followership model continues to be developed to "assure that mainstream leadership models don't tarnish the intent and actions of Whites attempting to work in collaboration for racial justice and conversely, derail critical racial justice leadership and organizing by People of Color" (p. 176).

Kezar et al. (2008) researched the way college presidents played a role in perpetuating oppression on college campuses. The study yielded three key findings about the role college presidents play in advancing initiatives for diversity and equity. The first finding suggested that there needed to be horizontal leadership, stressing a non-linear leadership model. The second finding noted that interconnectedness among stakeholders

including faculty, staff, students, boards, and administrators, placing emphasis on individuals who comprise the student affairs staff. The third finding highlighted the importance of using specific human resource strategies to support faculty and staff in their efforts to promote equity (Bolman and Deal, 2013; Kezar et al., 2008).

The importance of horizontal leadership that stresses a non-linear organizational model for advancing equity (Kezar et al., 2008) is echoed by Villalobos (2015). A non-hierarchical practice is emphasized in the White followership model, “meaning that relationships, decision-making processes, access to power, and information and communication structures must always be scrutinized to assure that patterns of White supremacy are illuminated, challenged, and eliminated, when necessary, in a principled manner” (Villalobos, 2015, p. 176). While the emphasis of a non-linear leadership model and a collaborative working environment is critically important, it is also important to understand how the racial identities of White student affairs professionals inform the way they follow.

Villalobos introduced six principles of White followership: investing in followership, doing homework, showing your cards, connecting, practicing acts of followership, and being strategic. Investing in followership requires unlearning history to understand White supremacy at every level and that action must be taken beyond acknowledging one’s own White privilege while doing homework requires learning the history of the effects of White supremacy and critically engaging with other White people about racial and social justice without conflict. Showing your cards requires authenticity and telling the truth. It means avoiding self-congratulatory titles while dismissing fear or failure as barriers to commitment. Connecting is showing up and being visible by finding

groups that offer reciprocal, cross-racial relationships. Practicing acts of followership means asking about the needs of People of Color and focusing on those needs as the priority. It also means checking one's own desire to be recognized. Being strategic requires using a racial justice frame and race-centered questions, exposing hierarchies and double standards, and avoiding working in isolation.

White followership has also been discussed in the context of the multiethnic church. Lee-Norman (2021) offered a similar definition of White followership. Lee-Norman (2021) proposed the definition of White followership as

> a construct that addresses racist power imbalances and the limited subjectivity of White power due to White supremacy. White followership is not simply the inversion of Black-centered leadership. The two work in tandem toward the intended outcomes and vision. White followership denotes both a role and a relationship toward an emphasis, or centering, of Black leadership and experience. White followership, specifically, denotes a form of engagement in the work of racial reconciliation that emphasizes the Black experience and the role of leadership in a more central position. White followership is also categorized as a role in terms of defining characteristics, as expressed in Blackshear's definition of an exemplary follower, in relation to the context of racial reconciliation. (p. 127)

In her dissertation, Lee-Norman (2021) discussed the way in which Whiteness infiltrates multicultural Christian communities by maintaining White dominant structures despite being led by leaders who are Black. Lee-Norman sought to address the lack of experience and skills among followers White congregants, the followers, to yield power and culture to another cultural power arrangement (2021).

Lee-Norman (2021) utilized Blackshear's (2004) definition of an exemplary follower to frame her research. Lee-Norman's research developed the construct of White followership to provide a solution for White congregants to employ toward racial justice. Though tailored specifically to leadership in religious settings, Lee-Norman discussed the pervasiveness of Whiteness and the challenges that White normativity brings to Black senior leadership. When White congregants were given positions of power, they often failed to act. Programs that were intended to add cultural value to the church were not seen through. The church catered to White cultural norms to avoid making White congregants uncomfortable. While none of the actions or practices of White congregants that perpetuate White supremacy in the church were intentional, Lee-Norman (2021) noted that they are reflective of White normativity.

Taylor (2019) also found that Black pastors of multiethnic churches witnessed the unwillingness of White people, particularly White men, to follow their leadership. Similarly, there were challenges faced by Black pastors of multiethnic churches that were experienced in the implementation of the church's vision. Lee-Norman (2021) outlined a methodological dilemma that detailed how Black pastors must lead culturally diverse congregations by not only inspiring congregants to practice justice, but to do so in a way that interrogates White normativity within the church and probes the way in which Whiteness permeates the ideologies and theologies of each congregant. Lee-Norman (2021) indicated that the domination of Whiteness presents a dilemma in leading with integrity and cultural humility, and it does not mean that "simply employing a Black pastor will remedy the ills of White normativity in its structure and organization" (p. 75).

Dismantling White normativity in structures and organizations means understanding the construct of White followership. Framing White congregants as followers within leadership addresses the need to center Black leadership and "is not meant to become another version of the White savior complex that positions White people remedying a problem" (Lee-Norman, 2021, p. 127). Student affairs practitioners are undoubtably problem solvers within higher education. This section combined the previous sections on followership and Whiteness in student affairs by presenting Lee-Norman's description of White followership in a multiethnic church and Villalobos's (2015) White followership model for White student affairs practitioners engaged in racial justice.

Chapter Summary

There is a dearth of literature on followership and an even greater gap in the literature on followership as it pertains to higher education. This chapter presented an overview of followership, Whiteness, and White followership. Titus and Sanaghan (2021) asserted that we can only achieve flexibility and resilience if followers act like leaders and have the ability, authority, and resources to make important decisions without having to ask permission. The review of literature has shown that Whiteness is prominent in leadership discourse but is largely understudied in followership discourse. It has demonstrated that exemplary followership as it is understood in existing followership literature may be contradictory to the definitions of White followership.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter outlines the methods I used to conduct the study. It addresses the ways I conducted the research to answer the research question: how does the exploration of Whiteness inform the way student affairs practitioners who do social justice work experience followership. This chapter begins by addressing the study's paradigm of inquiry.

Paradigm of Inquiry

I employed Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as the paradigm of inquiry. Applebaum (2016) described CWS as "a growing body of scholarship whose aim is to reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege" (p. 2). It aims to eradicate the notion of "color blindness" (Bonilla-Silva, 2021) by uncovering the ways in which White norms infiltrate society. Color blindness refers to the general insignificance that White people assign to race in race-related contexts (Bonilla-Silva, 2021). This study used CWS to uncover the complex and nuanced components of Whiteness to understand how it informs the way student affairs practitioners experience followership.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The qualitative research tradition houses a variety of methodologies aimed at uncovering lived experiences. This study employed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), a derivative of phenomenology, to "target how particular people in

particular contexts make meaning and interpret their experiences" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 54). IPA research focuses predominantly on the meaning-making activities of selective participants whom the researcher selects to offer insight into the topic of study. In contrast to phenomenology, which focuses on the experience of consciousness as a phenomenon occurs, IPA focuses specifically on how a phenomenon is interpreted by the participants in a specific context. Further, in IPA, "the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (Smith & Osborn, Date, p. 41). This dissertation study aimed to explore the phenomenon of Whiteness as it informs followership within a social justice and student affairs context, therefore deeming IPA the most appropriate research methodology.

IPA is a phenomenological approach in that it requires a detailed examination of a participant's experience and lifeworld (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Like other studies that are phenomenological in nature, require participants to speak about their interpretation and perception of a phenomenon. The responses and interpretations of the common phenomenon allow the IPA researcher to attempt to understand the experience of the participant who is engaged in the phenomenon. The objective of the researcher is to interpret the meaning of the participant's world (Pietkiewicsz & Smith, 2014). IPA has three philosophical foundations: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith et al., 2012). The methodology analyzes how research participants interpret experiences while simultaneously accounting for the researcher's interpretation of those experiences.

Phenomenology proposes that participants must venture beyond simply recounting everyday experiences by reflecting upon them to unearth their essence (Smith et al., 2012). Hermeneutics make sense of the complex relationship between language,

interpretation, and action. By engaging in reflection of experiences rather than recounting, participants interpret the meaning behind the experiences; therefore, making it a hermeneutic experience. An idiographic approach underscores the idea that experiences of phenomena are unique to the individual who is experiencing them and that they cannot be described or predicted by general law. The idiographic underpinning of IPA stems from the researcher arriving at unique insights rather than broad group generalizations (Smith et al., 2012). While IPA is not opposed to making general claims for large populations, the detail with which IPA data is analyzed emphasizes the personal experiences of human nature, understanding that no single law dictates how experiences occur (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

Hermeneutic research in phenomenology occurs when the researcher makes subjective interpretations of experiences or phenomena. When an IPA researcher attempts to make meaning from participant interviews in which the participants are also making meaning, it is described as "double hermeneutic." The participant makes meaning of the experience first, and then the researcher decodes the meaning to understand the participant's perspective. For example, in the context of my study, this may include participants making meaning of their White identity and their identity as a follower in student affairs. The hermeneutic essence of the study allowed me to engage in the interpretative activity that aimed to capture the essence of the meaning of the experience (Smith et al., 2012). As the researcher, I decoded the meaning making process by immersing myself in the data to understand the experiences of each participant.

The hermeneutic, interpretative nature of IPA requires detailed and time-consuming analyses to understand the essence of the meaning of the experience. In this

study, I aimed to understand the conscious and unconscious experience of what it means to my participants to be White and to be a follower in the context of student affairs. The time-consuming analyses limits the number of participants who may be involved in the study. The number of participants in an IPA study is based on the depth of each case, the meaning that can be generated from each case, the amount of comparison desired, and the time constraints of the researcher (Smith et al., 2012). I took all factors into consideration when selecting the number of participants.

Because of my positionality as a White student affairs professional at a predominantly White institution, I sought a research methodology that allowed for collaboration between myself and the participants. As a postmodernist, I am aware that I cannot separate the value and influence I bring, nor can I separate the meanings I assign to my own experiences. My own background and the backgrounds of participants in this study cannot be overlooked, as IPA derives meaning from social experiences (Smith et al., 2012). IPA research procedures account for both the interpretive processes of the participants and the researcher. For example, this study focused on the experience of my participants' interpretation of Whiteness and followership, and it also focused on how I interpreted my participants' experiences. It honored the voices and narratives of the participants as well as the meanings they derived from experiences as the participants understand them.

Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research is conducted to understand the intricacies of an activity or a social setting as it is viewed from the perspective of the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). It aims to understand the question of "what" by also conceptualizing the

"how" and the context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) contended that the research approach should follow the research problem, and that the most appropriate approach will be best aligned with the problem. I attempted to ask meaningful questions that elicited expansive responses to understand an experience. Because my study sought to understand the lived experiences of White student affairs professionals as followers, qualitative methods were a well-aligned approach. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) emphasized qualitative research as having the ability to empower the stories of silenced voices. This qualitative study was additionally framed by CWS, which aims to interrogate Whiteness in the examination of racism (Gusa, 2010). While the voices of White student affairs professionals are the antithesis of silenced, this study asked those practitioners to unmask their own Whiteness to explore how racial privilege has shaped their practice of followership in a particular context to eradicate the notion of racelessness.

Qualitative research does not focus on causal relationships; rather, it seeks to understand the quality of the experience. This study will examine each participant's experience in-depth and then interpret their interpretations of the experience (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2014). In qualitative research, the researcher does not focus on the truthfulness of the participant's interpretation of meaning. Instead, the point is to understand the participant's experience as they describe it.

Procedures

Sampling

IPA studies require a purposeful sample based on participants' capacity to provide "access to a particular perspective on the phenomenon under study" (Smith et al., 2012,

p. 49). The sample of my study included White student affairs practitioners who had been in their position for at least one year. They self-identified as being committed to social justice. Given the idiographic focus of IPA, it is important to identify a mostly homogenous group. A study with an ideographic focus denies that an experience can be generalized or explained by law. A homogenous group of participants is important so the researcher can eliminate as many identities in the experience as possible. In my study, identities included gender, racial identity, years in profession, area of employment, commitment to social justice work, and supervisory experience.

My study sought to recruit participants who identify with any gender, but because I will focus on the interpretation of Whiteness, participants must have identified as being White. The participants in this study worked in offices that serve social justice related missions such as gender and sexuality centers, multicultural student centers, academic advising offices, and social justice hubs. Participants had no direct reports. Supervisory responsibilities may have affected the way participants understood or interpreted followership, so I decided to eliminate an intentional leadership role as a variable. This allowed for the composite data to reflect the most accurate depiction of the phenomenon. All participants were employed by Flagship University, a large, predominantly White research university in the Midwest. At the time of data collection, I was also an employee at Flagship University. I worked in a building that was located one mile from central campus. Most student affairs offices are located within central campus. At the time of data collection, my position fell into the category of Academic Affairs, and therefore it was unlikely that I knew or had worked with any participants. Any participants that were

familiar to me or those with whom I had worked in the past were not selected as participants.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis aims to interpret a phenomenon that all participants have in common. The detail with which the phenomenon is analyzed is best captured with a small number of participants (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2014). In this study, I recruited 10 student affairs practitioners who fit the above criteria. The participants in the study were selected purposefully to ensure that the group of participants is relevant to the problem (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2014). I utilized expert nominators to select participants. The use of expert nominators, or referrals from individuals who have been identified as being connected to ideal study participants, allowed for purposeful sampling that resulted in the homogenous group this study sought.

Recruitment and Site Selection

Flagship University places an institutional emphasis on staff and faculty to engage in social justice work. The division of student affairs houses the Office of Inclusion Education that seeks to foster social justice to create a place where all people feel like they belong. Each school and college within Flagship University offers its own statement on social justice. The university is predominantly White. In 2020, 65% of the student population and 78% of faculty and staff identified as White (Academic Planning and Institutional Research, 2021). White professionals who work in diversity-related positions, such as employees of multicultural centers, diversity officers, and advisors of social justice-related student organizations are members may be participants of my study. They will be recruited by emailing expert nominators who are employed in those areas or who are employed in the Office of Inclusion Education asking them to identify potential

participants (Appendix A). My expert nominators reached out to student affairs professionals at Flagship University who meet my sampling criteria to request participation.

Data Collection

Smith et al. (2012) and Smith (2017) provided detailed guidance for qualitative studies that utilize IPA. Data collection for the present study leaned on Smith et al. (2012) and Smith (2017) in conjunction with literature on relevant topics and data collection methods. I took particular care in the way I sequenced and presented data collection so that it was in accordance with IPA literature.

Qualitative research interviews allow participants to share their stories and discuss topics that are relevant to the research questions so that the researcher may answer the research questions during analysis (Smith, 2017). Interview questions in this study were carefully constructed in advance to elicit the lived experiences of White student affairs practitioners' experiences with followership and with Whiteness. Qualitative interviews try to understand the world from a participant's lived experience, they reveal how participants make sense of that experience, and they explore what the experience means in the participant's social world (Kvale, 1996). Seidman (2006) noted that participants need to explore the beginning, the middle, and the reflective end of their biographical accounts of their experiences. Employing a three-series, in-depth interview technique allowed me to collect rich, detailed descriptions of the experience participants have had, and the meanings the participants made of those experiences (Seidman, 2006). As a result, sample interview questions included probing about the emergence of the visibility of Whiteness through familial interactions and values, the journey that resulted in a social

justice position at Flagship University, lived experiences as a White professional in a social justice position, and the learning that has resulted from being a White person in a followership position within the context of social justice.

The interview protocol (Appendix A) began by sharing the purpose of the study, ensuring permission by the participants, and attaining general information about each participant. Smith et al. (2012) suggested creating between 6 and 10 open-ended questions that result in an interview that lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. Interview questions should be artfully crafted in their phrasing to avoid confusion and to allow me to answer the research questions of the study based on the interpretations and discussion of the interview questions.

Once participants were identified, I began data collection. Data collection included the implementation of three one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with each participant. IPA research allows the participant to lead the conversation and to create a dialogue with the researcher (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith et al., 2012). The semi-structured interviews did not utilize a script but allowed participants to answer freely from a series of interview questions. Smith (2017) urged an approach to qualitative data collection that is both systematic and rigorous, but which also allows for creativity and exploration. Interviews took place via the online platform Zoom. Zoom allowed for ease of access to the interview recordings. After all interviews were recorded, I used the transcription service OtterAI to secure a more accurate transcription of the Zoom recordings.

Semi-structured interview questions are exemplary in IPA research because “IPA researchers wish to analyze in detail how participants perceive and make sense of things

which are happening to them" (Smith & Osborn, 2004, p. 57). The interview had a flexible schedule, and I established a good rapport with participants. I built rapport with my participants by finding common ground surrounding our employment at Flagship University. The flexibility and rapport allowed for participants to share their experiences freely and allow them to highlight the concepts and meanings they deemed important. Interview questions in IPA occurred with minimal prompting (Smith & Osborn, 2004) which allowed for free-flowing dialogue.

The first round of interview questions prompted participants to reflect on their own White racial identity by narrating their personal racial and ethnic life history. The second round of interview questions prompted participants to speak about their experiences with followership, giving them an opportunity to connect their life history to the current context of their experiences as followers in a social justice position within student affairs. The third round of interview questions asked participants to reflect on the meaning of their lived experiences and their professional practice. The three interviews (Appendix D) were completed over a two-month period, and each interview took place two-to-three weeks apart which allowed participants to reflect on each interview without losing connection to their context (Seidman, 2006).

Life History Interview

Interview one consisted of questions that assisted the participants in the exploration of the historical context of their own racial identity. I asked them to narrate their experiences with family, friends, and their community as it related to the development of their personal racial and ethnic identity. The questions focused on how participants came to understand the construction of Whiteness, ultimately establishing a

context for their lived experiences and the experiences of those around them (Seidman, 2006). The topic of this study was to understand and explore the way Whiteness informs followership, so the goal of interview one was for participants to narrate events in their lives that led them to their current role as a follower.

Lived Experience Interview

Interview two included questions that provoked participants to provide details about their lived experiences as followers in their roles at the time of data collection. I began the second interview by offering a brief definition of followership. Questioning resumed by asking the participants to recount a day in their life so I may gain a comprehensive understanding of their lived experience (Seidman, 2006). I asked participants to provide details about their work as followers social justice positions. Interview two connected the personal with the professional, deeming it important for participants to reflect on the way their racial identity influences their followership practice.

Reflection of Meaning Interview

The third and final interview asked participants to connect the intellectual part of their lives to the emotional part of their lives (Seidman, 2006) by reflecting on their own lived experiences as White followers. Reflection allowed participants to assign meaning to their experiences as well as navigate the impact those experiences have on their current and future actions as White followers. This interview provided the opportunity for White followers in social justice roles at Flagship University to make new meaning of the ways their racial and ethnic biographies have led them to their roles at the time of data

collection, and it allowed them to understand and explore the interconnectedness between the personal and the professional.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began in the recruitment phase as I collected information about the participants. This was done via the use of expert nominators, employees at Flagship University who were identified as leaders in the Office of Inclusion Education. I asked employees in this office to recommend White student affairs practitioners who were engaged in social justice work on campus. I sent an email (Appendix A) and a Qualtrics survey (Appendix B) outlining the parameters of my study to the expert nominators and kindly asked them to forward the email and survey to any qualified participants. Seventeen participants filled out the Qualtrics survey and I selected the first 10 participants who responded.

Transcription was the initial step in the analysis of interview data. This procedure was time-consuming and labor-intensive, especially because IPA research typically results in lengthy interviews. I used Zoom's transcription service to transcribe the interviews, but later uploaded interviews into OtterAI for more accurate transcription services. Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) recommended marking the transcripts with notes such as pauses, mishearings, or speech dynamics. I did this using OtterAI's software. Smith et al. (2012) noted that IPA is a dialogue between participants and the researcher and that it is, at its core, a subjective process. Smith (2017) outlined eight distinct steps to IPA data analysis procedures which I closely followed to ensure a quality analysis of data. The following steps detail the way I used Smith's (2017) protocol for IPA data analysis.

Step 1: Review Case One

Smith (2017) asserted that the researcher should become intimately familiar with each case before progressing to the next. A case will consist of all the data from one participant. To begin step one, I read and reread the first case so that I was able to accurately understand their experience. The review of the case also entailed listening for pauses, laughs, and watching for bodily gestures. This process helped immerse me in the data to be able to recall the atmosphere and environment in which the study was conducted. I collected more detailed data each time I reviewed the transcripts and audio which allowed me to focus on multiple aspects of the study, including language, context, and content. I recorded all emotional responses that are elicited from either the participants or myself.

Step 2: Take Notes

Smith and Osborn (2007) referred to step two as a "free textual analysis" (p. 67), meaning there are no rules about what I should comment upon, and there is no requirement to divide the text into distinct sections to assign comments to each section. Rather than printing paper transcripts as suggested in IPA, I uploaded my transcripts to AtlasTI, a qualitative coding software that allowed me to also take notes on the transcripts. I took notes after thoroughly reading and reviewing all of case one. I typed in the margins of the transcripts to annotate specific language, phrases, or significant data that may result in themes. Because IPA research highlights the researcher's interpretation of the participant's interpretation of an experience, the notes in my journal, as well as the writing in the margins of the transcripts also become data. It eventually required the transformation of initial notes into themes. I made sure that stage two produced detailed

and comprehensive notes that reflected the source of the material and captured the essence of the participants' experiences. My goal was to formulate a "concise phrase at a slightly higher level of abstraction which may refer to a more psychological conceptualization" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 12).

Step 3: Find Themes

This step required me to work more closely with the notes that were created in step two rather than the original transcript. Finding themes requires the researcher to note connections between the notes in the margins that have begun to emerge in previous stages. Smith et al. (2012) suggested that themes should be manipulated to explore their connections. This process should be done through physical mapping to identify superordinate themes which should be grouped together according to conceptual similarities. Physical mapping mimics the image of a pyramid that depicts the development of themes. Subordinate themes are grouped at the bottom of the pyramid, and each superordinate theme emerges from the grouping of subordinate themes. Each similarity should be given a descriptive label (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Saldaña (2016) suggested that initial finding of themes should take place on hard copies of the transcripts because, in smaller studies, it promotes increased ownership and understanding of the data. Because my study had 10 participants, I chose to leave my transcripts and notes in digital form. I found initial themes using the program AtlasTI and then I created an excel spreadsheet in which I organized the themes. I found AtlasTI to be cumbersome in IPA because of the need to find themes in each case independently, but it allowed me to easily find initial themes.

Step 4: Cluster Themes

I clustered the themes that emerged throughout steps two and three of the analysis using Microsoft Excel. This process revealed cohesive superordinate themes. When a theme resembled a likeness to another theme, I connected the data to better articulate the theme. I did this by color coding the initial themes in Excel. Smith (2017) noted that, as in step 3, each theme should be supported by words or phrases that are derivatives of the original transcripts and from the participants' own words. My Excel table contained both themes and quotations from each participant, so I was able to easily support themes with quotes. This step required a close interaction between myself and the text. It was my responsibility as the researcher to make sense of the words of the participants so that themes could be clustered, but it was also my responsibility to be consistently checking my own sense-making against what my participants have said (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Step 5: Repeat Steps 1 through 4

I repeated steps 1 through 4 for each case. The review process for one entire case was completed before I moved on to the next case as suggested by Smith (2017). This method of reviewing cases allowed for a blank slate for each case and avoided having previously found themes affect the analysis of subsequent cases. Each case revealed unique themes that were supported by the transcripts.

Step 6: Group Themes Across Cases

Upon completion of transcription and analysis across all cases, I reviewed and connected themes that were consistent across all cases. This process was called grouping (Smith, 2017). The process of grouping themes across cases was conducted within an Excel spreadsheet. Each case had a tab across the bottom of the larger spreadsheet. Smith and Osborn (2007) recommend utilizing the cut and paste functions to simplify the

grouping process, which is exactly what I did. I also printed materials to allow for physical movement of themes as suggested by Smith and Osborn (2007) but found it more manageable to cut and paste within Excel.

Step 7: Place results into a Table

The results of the analysis were placed into a final table format to create a visual representation of the themes that emerged from the data. This step allowed me to find overlapping themes and adjust as necessary. Overlapping themes, or clusters, were given a name and represented superordinate themes across all cases. All superordinate themes were named after a verbatim quote from a participant that I felt accurately represented the theme. Smith and Osborn (2007) stressed the importance of avoiding the theme selection simply based on prevalence within the data. Other factors such as richness of particular passages and how themes help illuminate other aspects of the experience were also taken into account.

Step 8: Compile Final Themes

This portion of data analysis was a narrative describing the data that emerged from the themes. I expanded upon what was presented in the table and used direct quotations from participants to highlight common themes. The final themes in step 8 represented the result of my data analysis.

This study followed the eight steps for IPA data analysis as outlined by Smith (2017). The implementation of this method of data analysis guided this study in being ethical, trustworthy, and credible.

Standards of Rigor

The following section will detail the adherence of this study to standards of rigor. It will highlight ethical considerations and trustworthiness as the standards of rigor by which my study will be evaluated.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers are morally bound to conduct studies in "a manner that minimizes potential harm to those involved in the study" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 200). Like all qualitative studies, this study aimed to produce a compelling and ethical research design by adhering to ethical considerations, including honesty, confidentiality, responsibility to the participants, and reciprocity.

I asked each participant to sign an informed consent form (Appendix C) which notified the participant of the scope of the study and asked permission to participate to underscore honesty in this study. I made the parameters and purpose of the study clear to all participants. Because issues of ethics may arise in any part of this study, I established safeguards that protected the identities and rights of the participants. I respected the privacy of the participants by ensuring that any information I collected was kept confidential and anonymous. This included the use of pseudonyms of participants and the removal of all identifying data. I stored all data on my personal laptop in an encrypted file that only I had access to. All participant data will be destroyed by three years after the study's completion per IRB requirements.

I ensured responsibility to my participants by doing accurate work, thorough research, and sharing the results of the study, as well as interview transcriptions and notes with them. I practiced reciprocity with my participants by allowing them the opportunity

to engage in personal reflection and by offering a $50 Amazon gift card after completion of the second interview.

Trustworthiness

It is especially important in IPA to not misconstrue the lived experiences of the participants in the study. Lincoln and Guba (2000) proposed specific criteria for the evaluation of trustworthiness in qualitative research. The criteria include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

"Credibility refers to whether the participants' perceptions match up with the researcher's portrayal of them" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 202). The eight steps outlined by Smith (2017) accounted for the possibility of twisting the words or meanings of the participants which is why the transcription and detailed review of each case is prescribed in IPA research. A detailed review of cases also underscores prolonged engagement, which allowed for an in-depth relationship between the participants, the data, and me. I utilized member checks by emailing participants their final transcripts to review before coding or analyzing any data, as well as after final codes and analyses had been completed. My chair assisted me in the process of identifying and naming themes.

Dependability

I created an audit trail by documenting each piece of the research process in a way that was logical and traceable. I ensured that the data I collected and analyzed pertained directly to my research question. I presented a clear rationale for the choices I made to portray a research design that was easily understood and accessible to the readers of my study. I used member checks to ensure dependability. This included having peer

debriefers and the members of my committee review and provide feedback on the coding I performed and the subsequent themes that emerged from the coding. The process of multiple constituents coding the transcripts reduced the potential bias of solely myself collecting and analyzing the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Confirmability

IPA research acknowledges that my own interpretations of the way the participants have interpreted the phenomenon would be present in the data, and confirmability establishes that my findings and interpretations reflected the data that was collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). This study has documented my individual biases and prejudices that may have influenced the way this data was interpreted and the way the study was conducted. I continuously audited my own self-awareness by participating in bracketing, suspending my own experiences as I conducted this study. Each method I used as a researcher was deliberately described in detail to provide clear parameters should future researchers choose to replicate this study.

Transferability

This research was bound by the contextual parameters of White student affairs professionals who practice social justice work in higher education at Flagship University. This study was conducted with a high level of detail and a thorough analysis of data to provide rich descriptions of the experiences of my participants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter identified the methodology that was used to conduct this study. I used interpretative phenomenological analysis to understand the way Whiteness informs followership in student affairs practitioners at Flagship University who are doing social

justice work. I used a qualitative research approach with critical Whiteness studies as an epistemological paradigm to uncover the way Whiteness underscores the way the world is perceived. I collected and analyzed data using the methods outlined by Smith and Osborn (2007), Smith et al. (2012), and Smith (2017). This study was conducted ethically, and it employed various levels of review to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and research process.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter organizes the data to present the research findings. The purpose of this study was to understand how White student affairs practitioners who are engaged in social justice work at a predominantly White institution experience and navigate followership. I used interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2017), a double hermeneutic methodology that also acknowledged my own interpretation of the experiences of the participants.

My research was guided by the question: How does the exploration of Whiteness inform the way White student affairs professionals who do social justice work experience followership? I intentionally selected participants for this study who had self-identified as having already critically explored their own Whiteness because of their commitment to social justice work. This chapter begins with a detailed description of each participant. The rest of the chapter provides a thematic description of the findings.

Participants

I selected 10 self-identified White student affairs practitioners who were engaged in social justice work at Flagship University, a large, predominantly White, research university, for this study. All 10 participants held master's degrees, were between the ages of 26 and 34, and had under 10 years of post-graduate degree work experience and held positions without supervisory authority. They are depicted with pseudonyms in Table 1. Despite a predominantly homogenous sample, each participant carried unique

personal characteristics illustrating diversity among the participants. Those attributes are described in this section of the chapter.

Table 1

Participant Information

Name	Self-Identified Gender	Area of Work	Years of Post-Graduate Degree Work Experience	Years in Current Position	Self-Identified Racial Identity
Adam	Man	Outdoor Education	9	Between 1 and 5 years	White
Collin	Man	Community Engagement	5	Between 1 and 5 years	White
Mary	Woman	Academic Advising	4	Between 1 and 5 years	White
Elizabeth	Woman	Career Advising	5	Between 1 and 5 years	White
Andy	Man	Pre-College Programming	6	More than 5 years	White
Jeremy	Man	Academic and Scholarship Advising	7	Between 1 and 5 years	White
Heather	Woman	Career Advising	4	Between 1 and 5 years	White
Nathan	Man	Academic Advising	8	Between 1 and 5 years	White
Walter	Man	Social Education	8	More than 5 years	White
David	Man	Academic Advising	3	Between 1 and 5 years	White

Andy

Andy is a White man who grew up in a small town on the eastern coast of Wisconsin. His immediate family consisted of a mother, a father, two older half-sisters, and two younger brothers. His father worked in construction during the housing crisis in the mid-2000's before abruptly leaving that career to become a pastor. Andy recalls his family being "pretty firmly working class," as neither construction nor pastorship generated substantial income. He identified as having grown up in the church, though

religion was not a significant part of his life at the time of his interview. Andy claimed he "never missed a Sunday for…all of my middle and high school years" but never identified as religious. He recalled his father's involvement in "church politics" as being overwhelming to him, which created resistance to religion in general. Because his father was the pastor, he had "a lot of different responsibilities to a lot of different people." Andy's witness to his father's less-spiritual commitments deterred him from the religious aspect of going to church.

Andy's hometown was predominantly White, but it had a significant Hmong population which Andy thought may have been the catalyst for his current interest in Asian American history. Andy's partner is a Hmong woman. He was able to share a fascinatingly large number of facts with me about Hmong history. He shared about Hmong immigration to his town, which at the time of the interview had the fourth-largest Hmong population in Wisconsin and tenth in the country

At the time of data collection, Andy was employed in a pre-college enrichment program supporting middle and high school students who had been identified as low-income and potential first-generation college students, many of whom were Students of Color. Andy had done a considerable amount of reflection on his own White identity and was the most vocal about his intentional social justice advocacy work and the way his identity shapes the work he does. Andy challenged me on the topic of this research. He told me that his first response to hearing about my research was, sarcastically, "Great. Another White person interrogating Whiteness." He shared with me the numerous works he has read that employ "critical Black studies, queer color critique, Chicano studies, critical refugee studies," and affirmed that "all these different things are actually critical

Whiteness studies, right? Because their main focus is Whiteness and its impact on People of Color." Andy became more welcoming to the idea of my questioning as we continued to speak, and he ended up seeing important value in this work.

Collin

Collin is a White man who also identifies as gay. He grew up with his mother and father in a small, mostly White town in northern Wisconsin close to Michigan's Upper Peninsula; he described the area as being "very much in the woods." As a child, he watched a lot of TV and was actively involved in youth football, but he also spent a considerable amount of time in the forest with his dog. When he was in eighth grade, Collin's parents divorced, and Collin and his father moved south to an area that was "significantly more diverse," but only in that "it had... a Latino and Hmong population." Admittedly Collin "didn't really meet them or... get to know [any Hmong or Latinx residents]." He just "knew of their presence."

Collin's relationship with each parent was vastly different. He had always had a very positive relationship with his father, and at the time of this interview, Collin and his father were very close. He credited his father for his unconditional love for Collin despite the challenging relationship both had with Collin's mother.

Collin and his father had a strained relationship with Collin's mother because of her struggle with her own mental health. Collin perceived her as being a bit of a recluse, and as having a savior complex. He felt that she always sought out people who were "less than her because she feels so less-than." He conceived of the possibility of being presently committed to community engagement work because of the drive to combat the saviorism that was frequently demonstrated by his mother.

At the time of data collection, Collin was employed in an office that facilitates public service endeavors. The office "serves the university and supports community engagement in a variety of capacities." In his role, Collin supported community engaged scholarship and research but identified much of his work as "faculty development and support." He also teaches a graduate-level course on best practices for community engagement and community scholarship, and he spends a great deal of time liaising with community partners about the decolonization of community-based research and how to approach that research more critically.

Nathan

Nathan is a White man who spent the beginning of his upbringing in a White suburb of a large city in Wisconsin. He only lived there until he was three, but he has always identified as being "from there" because his grandparents and cousins lived there. When he was four, he moved to another predominantly White suburb in northeastern Wisconsin. He lived with his mother, father, and younger sister.

Nathan admitted to being involved in sports despite being a "benchwarmer" on his baseball team but reflected on the incredible level of support he received from his parents. His father showed up to watch every game he played. Nathan's father was a radio salesman until he retired, and his mother was an elementary school teacher. Middle and high school were not great experiences for Nathan. In middle school, his best friend moved away, he felt socially awkward, and he was the target of frequent bullying on his long bus ride. Nathan struggled socially, but he was athletic, which he recalled as being the "thing that kept [him] going." High school was similar. He commented,

“Academically, it was fine... I did fine in all my classes, but like, I struggled to find a group of friends. I think I really needed an alternative crowd.”

After college, Nathan followed in his mother’s footsteps and became an elementary school teacher. A few negative experiences in his school led him to exit the profession and transition into higher education. At the time of this interview, Nathan was an academic advisor in a STEM field in a department that has a significant number of resources dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. When I asked Nathan about his present-day family during our interview, he told me without prompting, “I live with my wife, she’s White just like me, and I’ve got two little White boys.” His willingness to include the race of his partner and his children indicated to me that Nathan was aware that I would eventually be asking him more racially pointed questions.

Heather

Heather is a White woman who grew up in a college town in Iowa. She described the town as being “a special place. It’s like this little idyllic small town. It’s got a college there, and it’s in a valley, and there’s this river that runs through it, so like, really, there’s lots of beautiful scenery.” Despite the beauty of the town, Heather only returns when she needs to visit her parents.

Her family consisted of what Heather referred to as the “standard.” She commented, “you know, mom, dad, brother, me. Four-person average. Got the one of each and my parents were done.” She told me that her parents were amazing people and that she appreciates them more as an adult as she raises her own children. Heather’s father was a stay-at-home dad during the day while her mother worked part-time as a

therapist. Heather has fond memories of her father being the only dad on her school field trips.

Heather went to college close to home at a private, predominantly White institution where her friends were mostly White. Barak Obama and Hillary Clinton were both vying for the democratic presidential nomination when Heather was in college which led Heather to have conversations with her friends and then-boyfriend about "who was more electable, a woman or a Black man?" It was the first time she had had a racially or politically centered conversation with people who were not her parents.

Heather's mother's family is Lutheran, and she thought that doing a term of service after college with a Lutheran organization would provide her with an opportunity to learn more about Lutheranism while simultaneously providing an opportunity to serve others with structure. Heather's background in service work paved the way to her current position as a career advisor in a department that strongly values diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Her position involves advising students, visiting classes to learn curriculum content, and building relationships with faculty members in her department. Heather also teaches a one-credit career development course every semester.

At the time of data collection, Heather was married and had two children of her own who were on the waitlist for a dual-language immersion school. Her children also had a Spanish-speaking nanny.

Jeremy

Jeremy is a White man who grew up with his mother and father in an affluent suburb of Washington, DC. Jeremy acknowledged his privileged upbringing within seconds of his first interview. Without prompting, he stated, "I had access to a really good education. I

am an only child, so, you know, I received a lot of opportunities, a lot of attention from my parents." Jeremy recalled not having to experience any kind of adversity in his upbringing that "shook his worldview." He spoke of his childhood as being a "comfortable, upper-middle class, privileged upbringing."

Jeremy's parents are both lawyers, and they are both highly educated. He recalled, "you know, [your parents] have this certain idea of what success looks like, and you're obviously an adolescent, but you start internalizing some of that." High school was a positive experience for Jeremy. He went to a Quaker high school, though Jeremy's family were not Quakers, and subsequently had exposure to more diversity than other high schoolers in his area. Jeremy commented that "Quaker values, broadly speaking, hue nicely to what we consider diversity, equity, inclusion type values."

Jeremy's positive experience with education led him to pursue his master's degree in higher education, administration, and policy at a large university in the Chicago area. His first job out of graduate school was the result of networking with fellow graduates. Jeremy became career advisor for students who identified as underrepresented, lower income, many of whom were Students of Color. Jeremy added, "To be fair, I didn't have any strong inclination to get into diversity, equity, inclusion work; I just wanted a job." Jeremy's job, though, ultimately paved the way to his current position as an employee in a diversity, equity, and inclusion office in a STEM-centered department. Jeremy manages a scholarship program for students with marginalized identities. Part of his position is direct student advising, part of it requires programming, and part of it is "kind of that boring, behind-the-scenes stuff of just scholarship administration."

Mary

Mary is a White woman who was born in Wisconsin but moved to New York state for the first part of her upbringing while her father finished his doctorate. When Mary finished school, she, her parents, and her younger sister moved back to a small, predominantly White town in southwestern Wisconsin. She lived in a "sort of standard farmhouse situation, but in town, not in the country," and spent most of her time playing outside. Mary's mother was a librarian, and as a result, books were an enormous part of her childhood.

Mary attended a medium-sized high school where she became highly involved in 4-H, a youth development organization, which had a profound impact on her life and allowed her to participate in an international exchange program that involved spending a summer in Japan. The more I spoke to Mary, the more I was able to understand the way 4-H deeply shaped her life. She was able to incorporate an experience from her time in 4-H into nearly every question I asked her.

Mary's summer in Japan was very memorable. As a White person in Japan, Mary felt like a movie star, a phenomenon that was "difficult for me as an introvert." She stayed with a host family who had kids around her age which was helpful in her socialization in a new culture. Her experience in Japan and her involvement in 4-H was the catalyst for her eventual career in international education.

In college, Mary was still working for 4-H, coordinating the exchange programs in which she had once participated. She also studied abroad in Malaysia and Singapore over a winter term but disliked the experience compared to her time in Japan doing homestays with 4-H. After college, Mary lived in Tokyo for three years and worked in

international education. Today, Mary is an academic advisor in a large department where she has a vast caseload of students.

Walter

Walter identifies as a White man. He was part of a large family and spent most of his formative years in a predominantly White suburb outside of a larger city in the Midwest, though admitted to not even thinking about the diversity of his neighborhood as a child. He noted "I wouldn't have been able to tell you this growing up, but I don't really remember seeing anyone who wasn't really White-cis-het." His family was moderately affluent, and his parents had good jobs despite neither finishing college in the traditional timeline. His mother never finished at all, and his father dropped out and returned to finish his degree many years later. In high school, Walter was active in both choir and forensics, and he remembered both student groups being overwhelmingly White.

The choir and forensics groups that Walter was involved in "tended to be pretty liberal." He recalled an incident in high school where "someone wrote an anonymous letter-to-the-editor for the school newspaper about being queer, about being gay at the high school, and then there was a conversation amongst students about that." Walter added that the conversation revolved mostly around who wrote the letter and less about its contents, but that the student groups in which he was involved were "totally supportive of queer students anyway."

Walter began college in Minnesota but later transferred to a large school in Wisconsin. He decided to focus his classes on what he believed would help him to become a history teacher. Throughout his undergraduate career, Walter was highly

involved in the student union. His involvement with the student union ultimately led Walter to pursue a career in student affairs.

He obtained his master's degree from a university in South Carolina and is currently employed as an advisor in the student union at Flagship University, where he guides students on social education. At the time of data collection, Walter lived just outside of a large city in the Midwest with his partner. They were expecting their first child.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a White woman. She was the only child in her family and has always had a great relationship with her parents. Elizabeth's mother had been a labor and delivery nurse for many years, and her father did "something in environmental engineering that I don't even know, even though I've had to explain it multiple times." She acknowledged having a very privileged upbringing despite her parents having grown up very poor. Her parents eventually both went into careers that were very positively impacted by the economy and began making "more money than they ever could have dreamed of making." She grew up in a predominantly White suburb of a larger city in Wisconsin, where she felt like she received a well-rounded education:

> Growing up and going to the schools that I went to, they always, you know, I would say, for Wisconsin schools, they did a good job of educating about slavery, and history and racism and a lot of those issues, and then when I was in college, I took a lot of political science courses, so, you know, learning about White saviorism, and issues like that.

After graduating college, Elizabeth traveled to Europe, where she began teaching English to young French people.

Teaching English in France sparked Elizabeth's interest in working in higher education, so her "logical next step" was to find a graduate program that allowed her to combine her love of travel with her love of education. Elizabeth enrolled in a graduate program that allowed her to work in many offices centered on international education. Today, Elizabeth is employed in a career center where she works to find internships for students at grassroots organizations. Elizabeth and her coworker won a campuswide award for social justice initiatives and she works hard to incorporate awareness of her White identity and White privilege in all the work she does.

David

David is a White man who grew up in a middle-class, predominantly White suburb outside of a large city in the Midwest. He remembers "never having to worry about food or clothing." David's father worked in a correctional facility, and while this is something David can reflect on now, he did not realize how impactful having a father who worked in corrections was on his understanding of race. His mom worked in after-school education until they became too taxing for her. She currently works in healthcare.

David is dating a woman who identifies as Hmong, so discussion about racial identity is a common occurrence in their home. David's girlfriend frequently reminded him of his White man privilege by talking to him about instances where she has faced racial discrimination. Those conversations have been eye-opening for David, because "as a White guy, sometimes I don't notice stuff like that or I don't really experience it, but she has to experience stuff much more than you'd think, so it's really eye-opening to hear about it from her."

David received his undergraduate and master's degrees at the same institution in the Midwest. His experience in his graduate program in student affairs was the catalyst for his present-day social justice work. In graduate school, he was an intern in the sexual assault and prevention office, where he began to understand some larger societal injustices. Today, David is an academic advisor in a department that highly values social justice.

Aaron

Aaron identifies as a White man who grew up just outside of a larger city in western Wisconsin in an area that he would describe as "more rural and all White." He referred to it as a "good neighborhood." Aaron was the youngest of three brothers who were all six years apart. The loss of his father when Aaron was just 14 years old had a tremendous impact on the respect Aaron has for the work his mother did raising three children.

Aaron grew up Catholic and went to religiously based elementary and high schools, though he did not think of attending Catholic school as any different from a public school except for the requirement of wearing uniforms and going to church during school. Aaron recalled his high school experience being "I would say, ninety-five percent White kids with a handful of... Hmong students that, you know, transferred in because they were leaving Laos."

Learning about ecology was important to Aaron, so he attended college at a smaller, predominantly White institution in Wisconsin, where he studied Wildlife Ecology and subsequently met his partner. Aaron and his partner have two children. He is a self-proclaimed "outdoorsy person," which is why he is happy in his current position as

an advisor supporting student groups in Flagship University's outdoor recreation department.

Findings

Interpretative phenomenological analysis required a multilayered analysis of each case. Detailed reviews of interview transcripts and my own notes yielded three superordinate themes, each with three supporting subthemes that synthesized how participants understood their experiences as White people who are followers within the context of social justice work in student affairs. The participants were intentionally selected for this study because of their White identities, their lack of supervisory responsibility, and their self-acknowledged commitment to and employment in offices that center social justice work. I assumed that participants resided in the later stages of Helms's (1995) white racial identity model because of the self-identified intentionality with which they centered social justice in their student affairs work.

The themes I identified were based on intentional, case-by-case interpretation of the data from each interview. The transcripts obtained from data collection revealed three themes. The titles of each theme and subtheme are verbatim quotes from participants that illustrate the content of the theme. This section of Chapter IV describes the superordinate themes: "I'm not the unicorn"; "lead, follow, or get out of the way"; and "following in a different way." Table 2 describes themes and corresponding subthemes.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes	Description
“I'm not the unicorn”: Self-Actualization of Whiteness	• Absence of racial discourse • Looking to others • Centering social justice	This theme describes the ways participants have understood racial whiteness through their lived experiences.
“Lead, follow, or get out of the way”: Perceptions of Followership	• Following a leader • Doing followership • Contextual following	This theme discusses followership definitions, behaviors, and actions as they were understood by participants.
“Following in a different way”: Exploring White Followership	• Identity informed following • Centering followership	This theme provides contextual bases for the performance of what participants defined as "good" followership.

“I’m Not the Unicorn”: Self-Actualization of Whiteness

The first superordinate theme encompassed participants’ self-actualization of their Whiteness. The theme’s title, “I’m not the unicorn,” captured Nathan’s experience as he grappled with the realization that, as a White man whose racial identity is thoroughly represented across his office, he might not be as sought after to serve on search committees as his coworker who was not White. This was a defining moment for Nathan:

> So I’ve learned... I’m not the unicorn. My one coworker, she was a woman, and she was not White, and she called herself the unicorn. She’s like, “Are you

> serving on this hiring committee or this hiring committee or this hiring committee?" I told her no, and she's like "Oh, that's right, you're not the unicorn because I have these identities that they want to have represented on committees."

Nathan described that moment as being transformational to him because he understood the situation as being potentially harmful to his colleague and because, for one of the first times in his career in higher education, he became acutely aware of his own Whiteness, and of the saturation of racial Whiteness in his office. Nathan seemed to be realizing that his colleague may have been more sought-after for her involvement on that search committee than White employees to give the illusion of diversity within his office, and to give the illusion of diverse viewpoints on the committee.

The experience of self-actualization of Whiteness was not unique to Nathan. The ways in which participants came to realize their Whiteness was a natural focal point of the study. I designed the interview questions explicitly to explore the experience of racial Whiteness for participants throughout their lifespan as a majority race member in society. I summarized participants' experiences of racial Whiteness by categorizing data into three subthemes: absence of racial discourse, looking to others, and centering social justice.

Absence of Racial Discourse

This theme captured the way participants understood racial Whiteness based on the presence or absence of racial discourse. All 10 participants discussed being raised in predominantly White neighborhoods with little racial discourse with their parents, having White friends, and attending White schools. Six participants could not recall intentional conversations about race with their families during their pre-college years, which

normalized societal Whiteness for participants. Jeremy's experience exemplifies that the lack of conversation about race in his household was still formative. He provided this insight into his own racial upbringing:

> My parents, they didn't, I don't think they really taught me about race. Yeah. Well, and I guess, you know, you can always make the argument that, you know, it's still teaching, right? Like, the lack of teaching is also a type of teaching in and of itself.

Jeremy's father instilled in him that "everything is just a meritocracy." His father firmly believed that "you work your ass off and get what you deserve." David's parents also never explicitly had conversations about race, but some of the messages his mother sent were, in David's opinion, racially coded. His mother referred to neighborhoods with many People of Color as "not being the safest part of town." Neither David nor Jeremy understood that discourse as being intentional, but both understood that subliminal learning about race occurred from those interactions. The impact of familial conversations on the understanding of racial Whiteness was not unique to David and Jeremy.

Collin also did not remember having conversations with his parents about race, but recalled his first interaction with someone who was not White:

> The story that always comes to mind when I think about this would have been Elementary school. My parents were still together, and my dad had a sales show, so my mom and I went with him. I remember my mom stopping to talk to a homeless person who'd been asking for money and they were a black man. My

mom didn't say anything about race that I can remember, but like, it's a permanent memory for some reason.

I asked Collin why he thought that memory might have been so profound for him. He found the experience memorable because of the way he perceived his mother to have a savior complex, not necessarily because the man she spoke to was Black. He told me he "could tell that there was a sort of pitying mindset that was coming up for her in that interaction, and something about that was influential in my mind." Collin's memory of that experience centered more on the actions and behaviors of his mother than on the race of the man he perceived her to be pitying.

Like Jeremy, David, and Collin, Nathan's family also did not overtly speak about race. When he told me about the Hmong family who lived next door to him, Nathan said "I didn't think about them being an Asian family. It was never a thing. It didn't matter really. It's just, yeah, yep. There they are. The neighbors." When I asked Nathan why he might not have thought about race, he responded "because they were my friends," indicating that it was not okay with Nathan to be friends with someone while also acknowledging race.

The development of a White identity prior to attending college was, for some participants, shaped largely by a lack of racial discourse. Other participants were able to recall more intentional discourse about race prior to college, but much of it occurred only when they were positioned among people or groups who were non-White. Four participants had White parents who conveyed messages, both overtly and covertly, about race.

Four participants had families who did engage in limited racial discourse. For those participants, messages conveyed by parents about race were both positive and negative. Andy, Heather, Elizabeth, and Mary had parents who intentionally engaged in racial discourse with their school-aged children, but the conversations usually stemmed from learning about non-White individuals and not about Whiteness itself. Andy, who lived in an area with a large Hmong population, noted, “I think I’ll give credit to my parents. They were willing to have a lot of conversations that I think other White parents that I know won’t have, but it was because there were so many Hmong people around us.” Andy’s partner was a Hmong woman. Andy’s father’s sister was married to a man from Hong Kong, so when Andy introduced her to them, “they had already crossed that bridge.” Andy believed that his parents had already been acclimated to interracial marriage and to the introduction of Asian women into their family.

Andy has been with his partner since he was fourteen years old, and her Hmong racial identity “really influenced the types of conversations I’d have with people.” He told me about the “specific racialized rhetoric” of his local radio station, a rhetoric that perpetuated White supremacy with occasional overt racism. He noted that most of the people in his small community listened to this radio station, including police officers, which in his opinion impacted the way police treated non-White residents.

Heather was appreciative of her parents’ willingness to talk about racial differences. She recalled how her dad, a library employee, “would bring us to the library and introduce us to student workers, and they had... some event every year on campus that we always went to where it was... featuring different cultures on campus.” She spoke highly of her parents again when she recalled the veracity with which they talked with

their children about cultures and language, largely to correct her grandparents, who normalized words that were overtly racist. Heather described her grandparents as being "of a different generation."

Most of the conversations that Mary and her family had about race stemmed from children's books. Mary's mother focused her library career on children and young adult literature, and Mary recalled having conversations about books where there were "depictions and illustrations and stories about... you know, African American folks." Elizabeth's best friend was a girl from India. Both Elizabeth and her mother were deeply interested in learning more about Indian culture. Elizabeth recalled:

> Every time I would talk to her, I'd learn more from her about her background and her history and everything. I think my mom was on the same page about being really interested in trying the food and getting to know her family and wanting to kind of be a resource for them as well, especially as I got into high school.

In high school, Elizabeth's family hosted an international student from China which was the catalyst for many other conversations about race between Elizabeth and her parents. Both Elizabeth and Mary engaged in racial discourse with their parents only when they were juxtaposed against non-White people. In other words, Elizabeth and Mary's families did talk about race, but they only talked about race when it differed from Whiteness, demonstrating racial othering.

Several participants had the ability to recall specific details about People of Color. Walter's town was predominantly White, but "there was someone who was married to a man from Mexico." Several other participants talked about racialized experiences that were engrained in their memories and referred to People of Color by using their first

names. Mary has distinct memories of going to a predominantly White school but frequently hearing the name of the one Native American student, "his last name was like, White Eagle," over the loudspeaker, while Nathan noted, "I'm pretty sure there was this one kid named Steve who was probably from one of the Native American tribes." Aaron "had a really good friend, his name was Keith, you know, he's a Black guy, and he's super cool." Telling me the first names of People of Color with whom they had come in contact was another example of racial othering.

Participants' limited engagement in race-related discourse with their families, communities, and their schools normalized Whiteness as a culture and race. I found myself wondering how 10 participants with a relatively low level of exposure to intentional discourse about racial Whiteness from their social networks came to learn about their own Whiteness and have careers that centered on social justice. I asked each participant about the events or experiences that served as the catalyst that propelled them from having little-to-no intentional racial discourse to working in a position that prioritizes social justice. For almost all participants, their engagement with racialized experiences in college was a turning point in their exploration of Whiteness, a phenomenon presented in the subsequent subtheme.

In all these examples, participants acknowledged that racial discourse with participants' parents either did not happen or happened only when positioned around People of Color. That lack of discourse perpetuated the notion that Whiteness was standard or normal and that anything outside of Whiteness was different.

Looking to Others

This subtheme describes the ways in which participants learned to identify their own Whiteness. The overt acknowledgment of Whiteness consistent with a higher stage of White identity development was, for all 10 participants, a product of collegiate educational intervention. Participation in college courses, affinity groups, or learning communities were eye-opening experiences for several participants.

For Collin, Heather, Walter, and David, college was their first exposure to more significant racial diversity. David had this to say about his college experience:

> Yeah, I would say college was kind of that big "aha moment" of, you know, connecting things, learning more, you know, on the journey to cultural competency. It became important to be able to at least say "okay, maybe I don't exactly understand, or I'll never understand, but here's my best way to step back and try to see things from a certain perspective or point of view."

Collin enrolled in a Gender and Women's Studies class during his freshman year in college and said this about his experience:

> It was really about storytelling. I think we did probably a week on each "ism," you know, ageism, sexism. But through that I got to really meet people and meet diverse people and have conversations about their stories, and it didn't feel like much of a burden because it was intentional and part of the class. That was the first time I, like, really talked about that stuff with anyone.

When I asked Heather about the first time she truly understood racial differences, she had this to say:

> I feel like it started in college, though I wouldn't necessarily put a pinpoint on a specific moment. That's definitely where, like, I had more exposure both in the

> students I had as friends and the students I was in classes with and the content of the academics.

Walter felt overwhelmed by his first course with racially centered academic content. He said, "My first semester I took a seminar class essentially called something like "Racing Empire." Race was involved in that, and I was not ready for that." When I asked him what he meant when he said he was not ready, he had this to say about learning about colonialism for the first time:

> The class was like, pushing on the awareness or definitions for like, imperialism, colonialism, and going beyond that. It was formatted like "this is a colony and we are calling it colony" versus, like, culturally, we are *making* [emphasis added] this a colony, and we're not letting them do their own thing but we're not really doing anything for them or with them either. I just remember that whole concept being very new to me, and there wasn't any build up to it because I wasn't even processing the stages of getting up to that.

Walter felt overwhelmed by the content of the class but eventually realized that he was glad that his professor had pushed in the way that she did. He felt that it helped him understand the importance of the material.

For Nathan and Elizabeth, college was the first time they had thought about their own racial Whiteness. Andy and Mary had been exposed to significantly more diversity in their upbringing; though, like many other participants, college was an opportunity for them to deepen their learning about racial differences.

Aaron talked about a specific history course as being a place where "civil rights and activism and like it was like really hammered in," while Collin spoke about finally

being able to learn the vocabulary that related to several important new concepts he had been thinking about:

> College was when I started... taking a lot of classes and learning the words. I had... learned so much that freshman year. I took a Gender and Women's Studies class, and these classes just expand your worldview. I think there was so much I realized I was missing.

Collin had opportunities in college to be in diverse spaces, something he had craved growing up in a rural White town. He explained that the vocabulary he learned in college also helped him to have conversations with his father. He said, "I share with him things I learned and he's like, receptive, but he's got a lot of friends where he lives who are more right leaning, and he's just not a very vocal person, but he's receptive." Collin acknowledged that, though his father could learn the vocabulary to talk about social justice issues, he would never challenge one of his friends about them.

Andy also learned vocabulary in college. He and I spoke about a time he and his White friends admittedly appropriated Black culture. He described a time when he was sixteen years old driving through his neighborhood "blasting rap music, and we just took Black culture and whitewashed it." He and his friends referenced the rapper 50 Cent as they argued about whether they could get shot nine times and still be alive. I probed Andy about when he came to realize that their appropriative behaviors were problematic, and he responded:

> I would say education has given me the vocabulary and the understanding to say... specifically, what was happening, to talk about things like appropriation and how it actually works. The understanding of... why we shouldn't do this, the

> consequences. I mean, the short answer for me would be college and... meeting people who are impacted negatively by those privileges that you hold.

Several participants took a seminar class in college specifically focused on issues of identity and social justice. Mary recalled her experience in a course:

> I did do this... special seminar where it was really focused around topics of... race, and maybe there were other topics in there, too, but I do remember that being a space where there were some pretty heavy discussions around race and privilege and identity and things like that.

The seminar courses at the undergraduate level were integral in the exploration of Whiteness, the understanding of privileged and marginalized identities, and the terminology to describe them.

Learning about privileged and marginalized identities began in college, but many participants have taken advantage of learning opportunities in their present-day careers. Jeremy sought out community-based seminars about White privilege; Elizabeth, Heather, Nathan, and Walter participate in social justice-based book clubs; and all 10 participants have attended campuswide diversity-related events that underscore the importance of recognizing White privilege.

Several participants (Jeremy, Nathan, Aaron, Heather, David, and Collin) have participated in White affinity groups affiliated with their places of employment or within the community. Nathan had a positive experience as a participant in a White affinity group:

> I had just never even thought of being White before. I knew I was a guy and that being a guy came with privilege, but this group was, like, life-changing because it

> helped me to talk about being White and steer away from, like, White guilt or whatever.

Aaron said, “I didn’t really reflect on Whiteness at all ‘til more recently in that whole-year group, and that really brought out a lot of these things.” Jeremy, David, Heather, Nathan, and Collin had similar experiences, but Andy, an outspoken outlier, vehemently disagreed with White affinity groups:

> You would never find me in a White affinity group. I feel like if I were to join a White affinity group, I would actually be betraying the principles that I hold so deeply. I do not think there’s a White identity that is based, at the current moment, on anything other than exerting power over non-White folks, and because of that, I’m not celebrating that shit, period.

Andy even went as far as saying, “It is impossible for me to not see White affinity groups as, in some ways, the spiritual successor to things like the Klan.” Despite Andy’s aggressive disagreement with White affinity groups, he agreed that some White people “actually learn from them.”

For all participants, a specific educationally focused intervention allowed them to gather a more in-depth understanding of their own White racial identity. The acknowledgement of that White identity allowed participants to intentionally orient themselves toward social justice initiatives.

Centering Social Justice

This subtheme describes the intentionality with which participants acknowledged their White identities and the resulting social justice mindset that accompanied that acknowledgement. For most participants, this intentionality was demonstrated by the way

they oriented themselves toward social justice initiatives in their careers. This subtheme also describes the way participants placed Whiteness at the forefront of their work.

Jeremy demonstrated his own White orientation as he thought deeply about his motivation for learning more about his own Whiteness:

> Part of me was saying... I need to be doing something as a White person who works with Students of Color. I need to be pushing myself because it's not enough to just say like "oh, I know my biases; I can be inclusive." I truly believe that if we don't push ourselves as White people to really interrogate these things, then we stand no chance of truly advocating for anyone who is marginalized.

Though he is opposed to White affinity groups, Andy, who also works with many Students of Color, had a similar experience:

> I've been so lucky because I'm able to connect with students in a way that uses my Whiteness, and my interrogation of that Whiteness is something that I think gives them permission to interrogate their own identities as well.

Intentionally learning about racial Whiteness by participating in seminars, classes, and affinity groups have allowed several participants to feel better equipped to work in a social justice context in their present-day careers. Heather, a career advisor who works with many underrepresented students, said this about her work:

> I am teaching students how to navigate systems, and sometimes I'm teaching students who [understand that navigation] quickly because it was also built for them, and other times it's for students who it wasn't built for them. And so, it's like, um, yeah. Here's how you do it in this kind of way, but it doesn't *have* to be this kind of way.

Heather liked to explain to her students that the navigating systems, including preparing for and applying for jobs, is often understood by people who share a culture. Heather was aware of cultural Whiteness and how it permeates many professional arenas for students.

Collin and Walter engaged students in public service work, and both spoke about social justice and diversity presentations and workshops they had attended. In his own work, Collin said he tries to "encourage students to engage in those things, too, so they can build their own portfolio of resources" while Walter frequently found himself having to navigate the pros and cons of student-selected events and speakers that may have been harmful to minoritized student groups. Walter worked in the student union, occasionally with students who held different political and social beliefs than his own. If a student group desired to bring a speaker who would create a harmful environment, Walter needed to use his own judgement to determine whether such an event could be part of the university.

Andy, Collin, and Jeremy intentionally used their Whiteness in their jobs to connect with students and to teach them about identity. Andy taught a social/emotional learning and identity course to a class of Students of Color. When I asked him what it was like to be a White person teaching a course on identity, he told me about the multiple positions he had leading up to teaching this course. He was a camp counselor, a resident assistant, a residential mentor, and then a lead residential mentor, which he felt gave him "a unique ability to engage with students because they know me before they ever step foot in my classroom." He also had this to say:

> My Whiteness becomes irrelevant as we go through the courses on identity. I think one of the things that the program emphasizes is cultural humility, and the

> program has really incredible students. Every pupil advocates for themselves. We drill [advocacy] into them, and they drill that into us. You will have cultural humility imposed on you whether you like it or not.

I asked Andy to elaborate on what he meant when he said that his Whiteness became irrelevant. He told me that, because they would openly discuss the multiple social identities of every pupil in the program, Andy's Whiteness became enmeshed, not a focal point. I questioned whether Andy's students felt the same way.

Collin was intentional about "naming my own Whiteness" and about "naming that it influences our work." He works closely with students who are passionate about serving the community, and in that work, Collin "makes sure to build in opportunities for students to bring in issues that are important to them." For example:

> One part of that is to do a regular learning equity moment as part of our team meetings, and the students facilitate those meetings, but I bring in a lot of resources I've gleaned from my years in the field, like grad school too. I shared some race talk chapters with them, reflection prompts, those sorts of things, and I try to encourage students to, like, engage in those things as well, so they can build their own portfolio of those sorts of resources.

Collin thought it was important to teach his students about his work on acknowledging his own White identity and hoped that his students, too, would begin to understand their own identities.

When Jeremy first began his position, he was self-conscious about his own Whiteness. He "questioned all the time, whether I should be in this role as a White, cis-het, highly educated, upper-middle class male." As he continued to explore his own

Whiteness, he emphasized the importance of White people needing to do diversity and social justice work. He uses his own Whiteness to teach other White people in his office how to be advocates for Students of Color:

> I think it actually is important for White people to be doing social justice and diversity work. It not only signals to other White people in the organizational culture that this is something they need to care about, but it's important to show people that it needs to be the labor of those who aren't already oppressed. It also signals to students that there are White people who are actually invested in their success and who actually understand how messed up things can be when it comes to experiences of marginalized students on campus.

Jeremy began his position with several reservations about being a White person in his role, but the more he learned about how to use his Whiteness to teach other White people, the more comfortable he became. While Jeremy, Collin, and Andy all described the intentionality with which participants acknowledged their White identities and discussed how participants used their White identities to teach others, for most participants, the acknowledgement of their White racial identity was integral in the intentional social justice work that was implemented in their day-to-day responsibilities.

The theme "I'm not the unicorn" described the way that participants came to acknowledge, understand, and ultimately use their Whiteness in their work. All participants felt that interventions provided by and through education gave them the tools and the vocabulary to acknowledge their Whiteness within familial, community, and vocational contexts. Education, however, did not teach any participant what it meant to be a follower.

“Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way”: Perceptions of Followership

The second superordinate theme revealed three subordinate themes: following a leader, doing followership and contextual following. This superordinate theme was titled after Elizabeth’s senior yearbook quote, “Lead, follow, or get out of the way.” Elizabeth offered unique insight into followership that nicely summarized the definitions provided by other participants. Unlike the other participants, followership was a concept she had thought about before.

Subthemes within this theme describe participants’ definitions, behaviors, and actions associated with followership practices. I intentionally did not offer any initial definitions of followership. My goal in understanding the way participants understood the performance of followership first required participants to come up with their own preliminary definitions of what it meant to follow. I later articulated followership as being the intentional actions of subordinates to draw out more detailed and explicit experiences. Followership interview questions occurred in the second round of interviews, apart from the questions during the first-round interviews, which were centered on racial identity, but several participants chose to integrate race into their discussion of followership.

The first subtheme describes the way participants understood followership. Consistent with the literature on followership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2014), all participants referenced followership as being either contradictory to leadership or as being subordinate within a hierarchy. The next subtheme, doing followership, makes sense of the way followership behaviors are performed based on participants’ understanding of the

contexts in which they are present. The final subtheme, contextual following, describes how participants understood followership behaviors situationally.

Following a Leader

This subtheme describes how participants defined followership in relation to leaders or leadership. David's thoughts about leadership and followership nicely summarize the content of this subtheme. When asked about followership, David referenced leadership and said, "I guess the idea of status quo comes to mind... oh, it's easier to follow. My boss told me I need to do this, so I need to do this because of... the inherent power dynamic of leadership." When I asked David what he meant when he talked about the inherent power dynamic of leadership, he responded, "that's what I picture a leader to be, to be the one giving the directions, and the follower is the one who follows them." David's use of the term "inherent" exemplifies that his understanding of followership has been engrained for some time.

For most participants, the term "follower" was difficult to define separately from the word "leader." Collin first referred to followership as "taking the lead from a director," underscoring that someone higher on a hierarchy oversaw telling him how to perform and what to do. Nathan defined followership as "a person who follows the leadership of other people." Nathan's use of the word "people" implied that multiple entities could be giving him direction. Walter initially defined followership as "willing to…concede decision-making to a leader or some authority figure for whatever reason." By using the word "concede," Walter implied that being a follower meant giving up power or authority to a leader. David trusted that people in leadership roles "in the bluntest sense, know what they're doing" so that "followers can do what they need for a

particular role or assignment." These participants believed that a leader was responsible for providing direction about how to be a follower and that leaders and followers were two distinct entities.

Like Collin, Nathan, Walter, and Jeremy referenced leadership but did not use the term "leader." Jeremy commented, "To me, followership is... there's always someone who's going to be my boss telling me what I should or shouldn't be doing. And that's kind of like, to me, what it means to be a follower, is to do the job that someone else has created for me essentially." Jeremy's interpretation of followership limited both the creativity and the scope of his role.

Aaron told me that my recruitment of him for this study had prompted him to start thinking about followership. Aaron discussed a positive relationship between leaders and followers:

> I've thought about it a little bit, or at least I've tried to. How you define followership is like, leaders are the ones that follow the best, right? Like they empower others to do the work and give them the tools they need. Sometimes a CEO makes a lot of money because I think they empower others, so they're actually... letting others lead and then kind of following that lead and making sure, I guess, like everyone's staying within the lanes.

Aaron's understanding of followership was almost completely contradictory to Mary's view, which labeled followership as inherently negative. She noted, "it makes me think of... just following the status quo and not questioning things that are harmful. My instinct is to say that it's not a good thing; like you're just sort of blindly following." I asked about the ways in which she feels like she is a follower in her job, and she told me that "it

isn't a choice for me to follow, I just have to follow because that's what [her boss] tells me to do. I do what the team tells me I have to do." Mary referenced leadership in her definition of followership, and she also described he willingness to take direction from her leader and her team. The feeling of being a subordinate was not unique to Mary.

Several participants understood followership as being in a hierarchy. In addition to defining followership by positioning a follower with a leader, seeing followers as subordinates within a hierarchy was pervasive throughout the study. For example, Collin recognized that "sometimes there are powers at play or things delegated," while Nathan, who viewed himself as a follower, had this to say about followership:

> I'm a participant, or like, an employee; I'm not like a faculty member. I'm an academic advisor, which, on the hierarchy of important positions, is pretty much the bottom according to how I determine the hierarchy to be. A follower is someone who's going to do something based on direction, like, "Hey, go mop the floor, followers."

Nathan recognized followers as being the least important position on a hierarchy, also implying that mopping the floors was the least important job in a workplace. His view on the hierarchical structure of followership nicely summarized this subtheme. I asked Nathan to expand on his janitorial reference:

> I mean, hey, okay I'm going to mop the floor because he told me to. A follower is a subordinate, it's just the person who's on a lower hierarchical level based on an institution or business or wherever you're at. It can be age-based, you know, many things can make you be a subordinate in a hierarchy and that's a follower.

Mary also referenced subordinates and believed, like Nathan, that the term had more of a negative connotation:

> A subordinate, right, like when you throw that word "sub" in there, it kind of lessens the credibility. A subordinate has maybe not as much voice as a follower would have. I guess a subordinate is a follower in that respect, but a follower is not always a subordinate.

Heather, Elizabeth, David, and Aaron also referenced followers as positions within a hierarchy and believed that their own followership behaviors might be limited based on their position within that hierarchy. Aaron for example, recalled his desire to be more creative during his time working in retail:

> It was a hierarchy. There was the owner, the general manager, the assistant managers, you know, you assume the owner is the main leader or the CEO or whatever, and you just do your position. You can have room for creativity sometimes, but most of the time it's like, this just needs to get done. We're doing inventory, this is how we do it. There's not much room to be creative and that's what I like to do.

Elizabeth recalled her experience coordinating internships within the greater community. She described herself as being a subordinate in a hierarchy but described her external constituents as being the leaders. She talked about needing to look to others for direction:

> It was a lot about knowing my place and following their lead by asking questions. "Where do you need support? What kind of projects do you want to have an intern working on? Who would be supervising the intern?" We were definitely

> very much in the subordinate or follower role in a lot of ways that the community didn't even see. We did the administrative nightmare stuff.

Heather and David are both academic advisors and had aspects of their positions that were dictated by people in positions above them in their respective hierarchies. David noted that "when I have to do stuff with scholarships, I'm basically just waiting for [his boss] to tell me what to do." Similarly, Heather added "There are times when I'm just waiting for direction on some of the more tasky-things. I don't make the big-picture decisions, I just follow them because I'm in more of a subordinate role, I guess."

These participants defined followership as being largely bureaucratic. Aaron referenced followership as being a "cog in the wheel in the machine" and emphasized, "that's just... you know, me contributing to the mission or whatever of like, your division." Like Aaron, Heather understood followership by referencing herself as being "in the system functioning bureaucratically." The definition of followership was understood by participants in relation to leaders and within a hierarchy. The self-perceived behaviors associated with followership coincided with those definitions. The following subtheme describes behaviors associated with followership.

Doing Followership

Participants defined followership both semantically and behaviorally. The title of this subtheme, extracted from Walter's commentary, references "doing" followership behaviors. Rather than focusing on *what* followership meant to participants, this subtheme centers on *how* followership was enacted. Participants described the act of collaborating with others as the most widely self-perceived followership behavior. When participants were asked how they follow, many of them talked about the collective work

they do at the center of a shared vision. Most participants noted that sharing a vision with stakeholders was integral in setting expectations about their own followership behaviors. For example, Walter noted:

> Having a shared vision makes it easier for me to do the thing, and having an understanding of... what the goal is, helps me by... giving me a reason for doing it. It helps me work with others who are also followers because if you have an understanding of what you're following, you're able to hopefully convince others of its importance.

Several other participants referenced collaboration by talking about being part of a team. Elizabeth indicated that she "collaborates with campus partners from different departments so we're all on the same page about what we're offering in terms of programming," while Mary said this about collaborative followership behaviors:

> It's important to work with your coworkers to understand the goals and the vision, right, for the group. The customer is always right. In this case, the students are our customers, so we all need to be on the same page if we all work in different areas. It's great if your talents align with what you're doing so you can collaborate and be an active participant in the group setting.

Many participants understood the mission or vision of their department as being the "greater good." For example, Andy believed that "for me, being a follower is being informed enough and understanding what the greater goals of the program are that you can navigate. Andy equated following to learning:

> I think the biggest thing in following is to always see things as an opportunity to learn rather than to assume that you've already got it all figured out. Oh, I could go learn from this person; I can go follow this person.

David spoke about the mission of his advising team and recalled his followership behaviors as he worked with students. He said, "the student knows their experience best, and I'm following that. I'll be at their level of like, okay, what is the experience like for you, or asking them to help me understand."

Many participants discussed their followership behaviors regarding their role at the university. Jeremy articulated his experience working within his office:

> I have primarily viewed my role as sort of just advancing the status quo... making sure the program runs, making sure that to... whatever extent, students are happy, generally, from what I can gauge by the services that I'm providing them. I'm not really rocking the boat.

Collin coined the term "conscious follower":

> I think I try to be a conscious follower and not just from the perspective of one person. I might... work with one person or something like that, but I'd try to ensure that I'm bringing in ideas or perspectives from others that I've worked with and realize that there's not just... one answer and one method.

Collin's goal to be a conscious follower echoed several other participants' perceptions of "good" followership. Andy understood good followership as "when you can be on the same page with somebody and solve the issues without making them do it." Similarly, Nathan shared, "a good follower has to have a conscience. I have to think if I take this action, what are the results?"

Elizabeth used the term "effective" follower:

> I think, you know, a follower of an ideological value kind of oriented situation is someone who asks a lot of questions and who, you know, dedicates their energy and their support intentionally and thoughtfully and isn't just, you know, along for the ride. I think that's the best way to be an effective follower.

In these examples, participants articulated that a shared vision and working toward a common goal demonstrated good followership. Several other participants spoke about traits that would make someone a good follower or a bad follower, all of which were context dependent. The next theme describes the ways followership behaviors are enacted based on the values of the participants and the contexts in which participants were following.

Contextual Following

Several participants acknowledged that the performance of followership would vary based on the context in which behaviors were performed. I was interested to know participants' experiences and perceptions of good followership and how contextual followership behaviors were approached.

Jeremy initially described a good follower as someone who "kind of just gets done whatever tasks you put in front of them," but like several other participants, the perception of good followership evolved:

> Okay, that was my initial thought about that's what a good follower is, but I just had this other thought emerge where I just countered that a little bit. Actually, maybe a good follower would be more skeptical and would exhibit a kind of healthy skepticism.

This evolution of his perception of followership was not unique to Jeremy. Many other participants categorized followership behaviors as either "good" or "bad," depending on the situational context.

Several examples were given by participants to demonstrate good followership. Heather talked about her involvement in working at the campuswide career fair and said, "I just show up and help with a career fair. Cool. And so... I'm a good follower in that literally everything I am doing, I'm just doing the job that has been assigned to me." However, when asked if she has ever contradicted that kind of obedient followership behavior, she said, "Oh yeah. I've definitely stuck my nose in a couple of things that aren't and shouldn't have been my business, but I was like, I care about this, and I think you should be better." When I asked Heather if that was also good followership, she agreed that it was.

Mary immediately thought of situations where good following might look different:

> I mean, I think, you know, following is probably going to be super subjective based on the context, right? If you're a good follower in a professional setting, verses are you a good follower in a family situation, you know, that would sort of be like a traditional thing where the father leads the family or something, or in a religious context, so yeah, it's probably very context dependent.

David also talked about good followership being context dependent and was one of the only participants to reference himself as a follower as he worked with students:

> I'm a different kind of follower with students because I guess then students are the leaders. I would say I'm a follower in the sense of, you know, the student

> knows their experience best, so kind of being at their level and being like, okay, I might have my ideas of what works, but let's see what would work best for them.

David's realization that his followership style would be different when he worked with his students was like Elizabeth's response. As she described her endeavor to bridge students with the community, Elizabeth first identified good followership as getting permission from her supervisor, talking to someone who had been in the role longer, and seeking support by way of funding and capacity. As Elizabeth thought more about the contexts in which she followed, she had this to say:

> I think that's one of the biggest mindsets I had to change after becoming an advisor. When you start advising, you kind of feel like, oh, I'm supposed to be the person with all the answers, but once you've done that for a while, you realize how ineffective that actually is and how much you really do need to follow the student as much as possible in the conversation.

Like Elizabeth and David, Walter also contextualized good followership. When I asked Walter about the characteristics of a good follower, his first response was, "Well, I guess it depends on the situation." He elaborated, "If you're looking for a follower of like, an ideological or value-oriented situation, then a good follower is someone who asks a lot of questions." Aaron also made the statement, "good followers are not always followers." I asked him to elaborate:

> I'd say asking really tough questions, having really difficult conversations at some points, being willing to disagree when appropriate, and raising alternate perspectives make a good follower. And I think, depending on the rest of the

> group, they may not value that, so I think an effective follower is someone who understands the value of followers.

Aaron was defining followership as a behavior, outside of a hierarchy and outside of leadership.

"Following in a Different Way": Exploring White Followership

I intentionally recruited White participants whose work centered in social justice, and as such, I wondered how a particular followership behavior was deemed by White participants to be good, specifically within the context of their social justice work. This theme evolved predominantly as the result of findings from the third interview which combined the exploration of Whiteness and participants' interpretations of followership. The way followership was practiced in the context of social justice was, for almost all participants, based on the way they understood their Whiteness. An excerpt from Elizabeth's commentary summarized this theme as she described being a White person who is also a follower:

> Following can become mindless. As a White person, I don't have to question followership. As a White person who works in a White institution within a White system, once you start to learn about that and be critical of that you can understand that you should be following in a different way. You should be following more intentionally. You have this obligation of questioning and listening.

I probed what Elizabeth meant by, "following more intentionally." She elaborated:

> Depending on someone's positionality and depending on power dynamics, a White person who is following needs to adjust the way they're following depending on who they're with or what they're doing.

This theme describes the way the participants' understanding of their White identity guided their followership practices. Participants' White identities were at the forefront of this theme as they navigated what it meant to be a White person and a follower. The two subthemes that emerged from this theme, Identity Informed Following, and Centering Followership detail the way participants used and acknowledged Whiteness while following People of Color and the way participants desired to employ followership in the context of social justice work.

Identity Informed Following

This subtheme emphasizes the ways in which participants perceived their followership practices were informed by their White identities. Participant responses about identity-based following stemmed from either conscious acknowledgement of social justice work or from work with Students of Color. Collin, whose commentary summarizes this subtheme, said, "I'm like, a White, cis, man, right, so I think, when I'm in a space of People of Color, I think I should be following the lead of others in that space."

Most participants noted the importance of taking a step back and silencing their own dialogue when working with People or Students of Color to avoid perpetuating White supremacy. For example, Andy, who works predominantly with Students of Color, thought, "It's more about learning from People of Color in those situations. I think about, you know, what it means to work through these spaces as a White guy, and it's really

about being quiet." Andy prided himself on his own interrogation of Whiteness. He initially said, "I think I am a follower in almost every aspect of my life." He added that as a White person who has interrogated his own Whiteness, he has "difficulty following people that I feel embrace certain tenants of White supremist culture." He also said this about following Black leaders:

> I actually find oftentimes that I'm struggling to follow particularly Black male leadership, but also sometimes Black female leadership, because I feel as though they dismiss or perhaps misunderstand the needs of particularly Southeast Asian and Latinx students, and particularly immigrants and refugees within those categories. They take Blackness and the experiences of Blackness to stand in for every Person of Color.

After that statement, Andy was at odds with himself. He seemed to be grappling with the fact that performs Whiteness with me and the way he might perform Whiteness in public or around People of Color. He seemed as if he was consciously reflecting on his Whiteness in real-time. He added:

> I also, along with these thoughts, have the understanding that, as a White guy, it's not my place to be critiquing this in the way that I might critique it if I had a different identity. There's a difference between what I feel and what I say, and that's had really interesting impacts of what it means for being a follower.

Andy viewed himself as a follower as a White person among People of Color differently than he way he viewed himself as a follower among other White people. Because of his White identity, he was willing to educate other White people. Also because of his White identity, he intentionally silenced dialogue that may attempt to educate People of Color

because “I am good at doing what I’m told, especially in positions where I might perpetuate White supremacy.”

Like Andy, Jeremy occasionally chose to remain silent if he perceived himself to be perpetuating Whiteness. Jeremy worked for a diversity and inclusion office and saw himself as a follower in everything he did. He began his first interview by telling me, “I feel like I’ve been a follower pretty much my entire life; like, I really do not identify with being a leader.” When I asked Jeremy to talk about the way he saw himself as a White person following People of Color in his office, he recalled advising appointments. He said:

> As a White guy who follows Students of Color, it’s really hard to, you know, look a Black female student in the eye and be like “I don’t think you’re trying hard enough” or “I really think you need to revisit how you’re studying for these classes.” It’s really hard to navigate because, ultimately, I still fundamentally believe that even if I’m doing the student a disservice, I’d rather not say anything than be another voice that they somehow internalize.

In this scenario, Jeremy is employing followership behaviors by staying quiet despite his behavior being potentially harmful to the student.

Mary, who frequently had conversations with international students about American social justice issues, said this about being a follower:

> When I am having conversations that are specifically about, like, social justice, or conversations about race, I think that taking that step back sometimes and just taking it as more of a listening opportunity and a learning opportunity. Take the moment to just kind of shut up and let other people do their thing. As a White

> person who is a follower, you need to be a better White person in that scenario, and that means just be quiet and "follow."

Elizabeth discussed the work she did in the community with nonprofit centers. She talked about the need for herself, a White woman, to give up the power and control to do things her own way and to focus more on listening:

> I know that I will never have a complete understanding of the way that someone who is different than me in any way functions in the world, so being open to learning and listening as much as I possibly can is important.

Elizabeth reflected on her own Whiteness and the ways she could use her White identity to bring others to light. She grappled with knowing exactly how much to involve herself and her ideas in different situations. She elaborated:

> I think it's really important for me as a White person to take on the risk and use the privilege of being White to shed light on other perspectives. But it's complicated because there are times when I should speak out and times when I shouldn't. It might just mean taking a step back and making sure that you aren't as visible and present. So it can be kind of scary, and I think that's why it can be scary for White people to engage in this work because it's very easy to get it wrong. But that's okay.

Like Elizabeth, Mary and Aaron acknowledged that speaking out, stepping back, and having conversations about race can be difficulty or scary. Mary noted, "as a White person, it can be uncomfortable talking about race, but that's part of never having to talk about it, so that's why it's uncomfortable." Aaron said:

> For me, stepping into a space where I'm going to be the only White person can be scary, especially if we're talking about something social justice related, but the more I learn about the history of Whiteness, it's like, yeah, it can be scary, but you still have to do it.

Despite an initial fear from some participants, staying quiet and learning from others was important to a good followership practice. The next subtheme describes how participants desired to use good followership practices to enhance the social justice work in which they engage.

Centering Followership

Eight participants cited a desire to engage in followership to uproot and dismantle systems of oppression within their work in social justice. Interviews stemming from the discussion of followership elicited responses that demanded action. The subtheme Centering Followership describes the willingness of participants to employ followership practices in their daily work. The title of this subtheme stemmed from Heather's commentary as she talked about her endeavor to make an impact by encouraging Students of Color to apply for the jobs they desired. She spoke of wanting to diversify the pool of student candidates for job representatives present at the career fair but being let down by the lack of diversity of recruiters at the career fair. She wondered how she could make an impact if the demographics of the people on the board, committee, and participants at the career fair were all White. She noted, "I'm trying to create some influence in whatever sphere I'm engaging with." I asked her if she believed that creating influence in those spheres was followership. She responded:

> I think part of it is, like, that role model piece that is following. I don't *have* [emphasis added] power necessarily, but here's who I can talk to and here's who does have power. It's about being a role model and then empowering others to also be a role model, and that's something that's impactful with students.

Collin wished to see followership enacted more explicitly for himself and for his office. He acknowledged that he and his coworkers lacked certain followership behaviors in their workplace:

> I think something I'd like for our center to get to is ensuring that we are more, in a sense, followers of the community. So again, taking lead from those in the community who are doing work, who recognize what the needs are because we are in an ivory tower.

Collin was passionate about setting a followership goal for his office. Because his position works so closely with community constituents, he noted that "taking lead from those in the community who are doing work" might mean being aware of how White supremacy can manifest and perpetuate challenging systems.

Collin was not alone in his desire to bring the perpetuation of White supremacy to the forefront of social justice work. Andy agreed that White staff should be the initiators of conversations about White supremacy in the workplace. He worried that, because White staff did not grow up having conversations about White supremacy with family or peers, the conversation would never be had:

> A lot of people just don't talk about [White supremacy] because they've never talked about it, so in turn, it's just not talked about. White people have to talk about race and the way Whiteness dominates everything, and we have to be

> comfortable talking about race as if it’s a normal thing to talk about. Part of that conversation, though, is White people knowing when to shut up and not talk, and that’s being a good follower, and White people, especially where I work, need to do that more.

Andy noted that, in his work, he openly talks about racism and White supremacy, but wished his colleagues who were not in offices that center social justice had more open conversations about it. Similarly, Aaron stated, “yeah, in my office we can all be better followers, especially with, like, Students of Color and Staff of Color. Like, we can listen and watch more.”

Commonalities existed among over half of the participants that followership behaviors are contextual, and that, in settings of social justice and diversity work, White people should not be recognized for the work they are doing. For example, Elizabeth won an award for her commitment to social justice and described “having a lot of complicated feelings about winning as a White woman at a predominantly White institution. She acknowledged that she has a “genuine, personal, deep commitment” to the social justice work she does, but still felt conflicted. She and several other participants felt that White people should not be recognized for the social justice work they’re doing but do the work anyway.

Aaron, Walter, and Jeremy all addressed of their commitment to performative action within their scope of work. In other words, they acknowledged that their intentional behaviors that decenter Whiteness in their office would be prevalent. Additionally, all adamantly stated that they would never be the director of a program that serves underrepresented students because it would not be appropriate for a White person

to serve in that role. Walter commented that "as a White person, sometimes stepping back from your investment and understanding your role as a follower is what's best." Aaron described a situation about his own work in a program that serves primarily Students of Color that depicted Walter's sentiment:

> I was talking with a staff member who said that when they were in [this program], they had told the old director that *they* were going to be the director one day. It made me reflect, and I had a moment where I thought about [this program] as an organization, an organization that I have given many years to, but I had a moment of understanding that was really hard to swallow, which is that, even if I could, I should *never* be the director of this program.

Jeremy echoed Aaron's sentiment:

> We are sort of conditioned to just... keep growing on this ladder, and you know, you're assistant director, you're director, you're dean, you're president. And you want to climb that financial ladder, too, but as your awareness as a White person grows, well, who should like, actually be represented as directors in this organization? Not White people.

While Jeremy and Aaron had once thought of themselves as leading an organization, the increased awareness of their White identities made them understand that there was already an oversaturation of Whiteness.

The way the participants understood their Whiteness in particular situations determined the performative actions of followership. Participants enacted followership based on the contexts in which participants found themselves, their proximity to Leaders of Color, and the intentional social justice work they performed.

Chapter Summary

After reviewing the data, I identified three key themes from the 30 interviews with the participants. “I’m not the unicorn” captured the ways participants have understood racial Whiteness through their lived experiences. It described the way participants learned about their own Whiteness, their experiences with educational interventions that ultimately guided their understanding of their own racial identities, and the way their Whiteness is performed in the context of their work. “Lead, follow, or get out of the way” illuminated definitions, behaviors, and actions of followership as they were understood by participants. It described the way participants understood the role of followership in relation to leadership. Findings in this theme indicated that participants described followership as having an initially negative connotation and that participants described the contextual bases for the performance of what participants deemed as “good” followership. ““Following in a different way:” Exploring White Followership” expanded on the performance of followership by illuminating how followership behaviors were shaped by the participants’ understanding of their own Whiteness. This chapter concluded by highlighting ways in which participants desired to employ good followership practices in their work.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study collected and analyzed the followership experiences of White student affairs practitioners who were engaged in social justice work. I conducted this study using critical Whiteness studies as the theoretical framework and used interpretative phenomenological analysis, a double hermeneutic methodology, to facilitate data collection and analysis and to allow for the exploration of followership experiences for White participants in the context of social justice work at Flagship University. The double hermeneutic nature of interpretative phenomenological analysis recognized my own interpretation of the participants' sharing of their experiences as followers within social justice contexts in student affairs.

Chapter V summarizes the study by reexamining its problem statement and purpose. I revisit the research question and published literature and provide an overview of the study's findings. I then offer an analysis of the study's findings and address the research questions by placing the findings in Chapter IV in conversation with existing literature and theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter II. Lastly, I propose recommendations for professional student affairs practices and offer suggestions for future followership research based on the findings of this study.

Summary of Study

At the time of this study, research on followership was limited, but the study of followership was gaining traction, especially in the field of student affairs (Titus &

Sanaghan, 2021). Critical Whiteness studies implore an understanding of White systems that maintain and sustain White supremacy and oppression and was the lens through which this study was conducted. Whiteness has been studied in the context of leadership, but research lacks in the way Whiteness informs followership. This study intentionally addressed both areas by exploring how White student affairs practitioners who were engaged in social justice work experience and navigate followership. I addressed the following research question to guide this study: How does the exploration of Whiteness inform the way White student affairs practitioners who do social justice work experience followership?

The review of literature provided a foundation for the study by illustrating an overview of followership, Whiteness, and White followership. It underscored the notion that Whiteness is prominent in leadership discourse but largely understudied in followership discourse. The literature showed that exemplary followership as it was understood in existing followership research could be contradictory to the way White followership (Villalobos, 2015) has been defined. The review of literature also presented studies of Whiteness in student affairs, and it underscored social justice work as a core performance competency that guides the field.

I recruited participants using expert nominators who were employed in Flagship University's Office of Inclusion Education, or who were employed in multicultural centers, diversity offices, and who advised social justice-related student organizations. I identified 10 White student affairs practitioners who self-reported their involvement in areas of social justice. Participants engaged in three semi-structured interviews with me. I used Smith's (2017) detailed IPA protocol, reviewing each case multiple times to identify

themes, to commence data analysis. Analysis of the data resulted in three superordinate themes.

In this chapter, I present an exploration of findings that are structured on the three superordinate themes identified in Chapter IV. In the next section of this chapter, I analyze the research findings by connecting them to the theoretical frameworks and existing literature.

Discussion of Findings

This section connects the findings of the study to the existing literature related to Whiteness and White identity development, followership, and White followership by offering conclusions based on the findings presented in Chapter IV. I analyze the experience of Whiteness and the experience of followership for student affairs practitioners who are engaged in social justice work by examining lived experiences of racial Whiteness, discussing their definitions and behaviors associated with followership, and understanding the actions associated with participants' desires to have a good followership practice. The first conclusion addresses the exploration of Whiteness while the second addresses the way participants understood followership. The third conclusion most thoroughly answers the research question by simultaneously addressing Whiteness and followership.

Exploration of Whiteness

"I'm not the unicorn" captured the ways participants understood racial Whiteness through their lived experiences. The theme was intentionally titled "I'm not the unicorn" to represent the experience of one participant as he became aware of his own Whiteness at work. This theme represents the way all participants came to understand their own

Whiteness. It demonstrated lived experiences of each participant and supported the validity of the subordinate themes relating to White identity development. Helms's (1995) model of White racial identity development identified a continuum that led to the development of a positive, anti-racist White identity. This theme told the story of my participants' development toward a positive White racial identity. It demonstrated that participants had spent time critically exploring their Whiteness despite early upbringings that lacked any kind of racial discourse and that an educational intervention was critical in their racial identity development.

Normalizing Whiteness

Evidence from my findings suggested that all participants had journeyed beyond the first five stages of White identity development (Helms, 1995). The sixth stage, the autonomy stage, was demonstrated by the fact that all 10 participants were, at the time of this study, committed to social justice efforts; educated on issues of racial, cultural, and ethnic differences; and acknowledged the roles they play in the perpetuation of racism. Despite their commitment to social justice at the time of this study, all 10 participants began their journey having not realized their own racial Whiteness. Cabrera (2018) and Vianden (2020) extensively studied White identity development and its prevalence on college campuses. Though both authors studied Whiteness in college-aged individuals, their publications were consistent with my findings on the pre-college and early-college experiences of my participants. Vianden (2020) cited his participants as having grown up with little-to-no exposure to People of Color, consistent with the findings in my study. Vianden (2020) argued that individuals who had proximity to injustice were more likely to fight against injustice. Despite my participants having grown up with little-to-no racial

diversity in their towns, schools, or families, they acknowledged learning about race and racism because of their proximity to People of Color.

All participants grew up in predominantly White neighborhoods and normalized Whiteness by their ability to recall names of Peers of Color and specific instances where they interacted with People of Color. This normalization of Whiteness and "othering" of non-White individuals is demonstrative of racial segregation (Bonilla-Silva, 2013) and similarly exemplifies Applebaum's (2016) claim that Whiteness "is dependent for its meaning on the process of negation of what is outside its borders" (p. 3).

The normalization of Whiteness experienced by several participants in their pre-college and early-college upbringing was further corroborated by Ahmed (2007) who underscored Whiteness as a phenomenology by suggesting that Whiteness functions as a habit. Mary's memory of hearing a Native American surname over the loudspeaker at school and labeling it as an "other," Aaron's recollection of a Black person named Keith, Nathan's experience with "one Black kid named Steve," and Walter's experience with a neighbor who was married to "a man from Mexico" further exemplifies Ahmad's (2007) Whiteness as a phenomenology. Vianden (2020) further exemplified this phenomenon by discussing "White is norm." In his text he wrote about the way White, male students were widely represented on campus allowing them to blend in with their surroundings and go largely unnoticed. White, male students felt a feeling of comfort and a sense of fit because their skin was like 85% of skin at their schools. The ability of my participants to be able to recall specific details of People of Color demonstrates the invisibility of Whiteness.

Educational Intervention

This subtheme and the previous subtheme further exemplify Applebaum's (2016) notion of Whiteness meaning nothing "without the existence of Blackness" (p. 3). This subtheme also largely underscores the results of Cabrera and Corces-Zimmerman's (2017) study which indicated a need for intervention of the university to assist White students in reflecting on issues of racism and White supremacy. For all participants, development toward a positive White racial identity was the product of educational intervention. Such interventions either occurred at the undergraduate level in the classroom or at the post-college level as a professional development opportunity.

My findings echoed the conclusions of Cook and McCoy (2017) who held identity-centered affinity training sessions that resulted in White participants being able to better understand the necessity of racial training, learn from other White people, process the negative implications of color blindness, and see of existence of racism. Bonilla-Silva (2006) asserted that moments of racial awakening may be challenging given that racism is omnipresent. Most of my participants admitted to having challenging experiences about racial awakening, but the experiences still resulted in a positive, more social justice-oriented positionality that remained with them into their professional careers.

For most participants, college was their first exposure to more significant racial diversity, and subsequently, it was the first time they had thought about their own racial Whiteness. This concept aligns with much of the existing literature on Whiteness. It can be best described by McKinney (2005) when she described Whiteness as a "prompted" identity, wherein people who are White do not actively think about their racial identity unless they are prompted to do so. Andy summarized the experience of several

participants when he contended that he "didn't really reflect on Whiteness at al 'til more recently in that whole year [White affinity] group." For many of my participants, the exposure to more diversity and the realization of racial Whiteness was the catalyst to learn more about social justice and racial disparities and to eventually incorporate social justice work into their careers.

Desiring Social Justice

All participants of this study were employed in social justice work in some capacity within the field of student affairs and viewed themselves as also being advocates of social justice. This indicated that participants had done at least some amount of interrogation of Whiteness and had at least a baseline understanding of the way Whiteness manifests in the field of student affairs. This subtheme explored the way Whiteness was acknowledged and performed as part of the participants' positions in student affairs. DiAngelo (2011) noted that "Whites who position themselves as liberal often opt to protect what they perceive as their moral reputation, rather than recognize or change their participation of systems of inequality and domination" (p. 64). While it was evident that the experiences and endeavors of all 10 of my participants did not fit exactly into DiAngelo's (2011) narrative, participants did believe that their overt social justice work was important in protecting their moral reputation. Their dedication to the acknowledgement of their White identities within the context of their work was imperative in upholding their reputations of being social justice advocates. All my participants, who actively engaged in social justice work, were willing to recognize and change the way they participated in such systems, especially systems within student affairs and higher education. The fact that several participants would opt to not apply for

a position that would be better suited for a Person of Color is demonstrative of social justice work that recognizes participation in unequal systems. They were willing to break the cycle of inequality and domination by stepping away from leadership roles and into followership roles.

The field of student affairs is guided by several documents that underscore the importance of the overt integration of social justice work. The National Association for Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) published a document that contains core competencies for student affairs professionals. The intent of the social justice competency is to underscore social justice as a lens through which to work; to bring awareness to the identities, power, and privilege and student affairs professionals hold; and to emphasize the way in which those identities impact their student affairs practice (NASPA & ACPA, 2015).

All participants demonstrated an understanding of the social justice competency. This was best summarized by Jeremy when he commented, “I truly believe that if we don’t push ourselves as White people to really interrogate [biases and privilege], then we stand no chance of truly advocating for anyone who is marginalized.” Quaye et al. (2019) introduced the *Framework for the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization* (SIRJD) which further emphasized the need for student affairs professionals to understand the identities they hold and the way they operate through the lens of those identities. It appeared that several participants understood the identities they held as they oriented themselves toward social justice initiatives.

Summary

Results from the 10 participants in this study echo the findings of several researchers who studied college-aged and pre-college White students (Cabrera, 2018; Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Vianden, 2020) in that, pre-college, most participants exhibited racial ignorance. As participants progressed through college and enrolled in courses or affinity groups offered by their universities, their understanding of their own Whiteness and their ability to reflect on issues of racism and White supremacy began to emerge.

Understanding Followership

Only two out of 10 participants had given concrete thought to followership before their participation in this study. The fact that followership had largely been underemphasized by participants aligns with several followership scholars (Baker et al., 2011; Benson et al., 2016; Kelley, 1998; and Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Baker et al. (2011), Benson et al. (2016), Kelley (1998), and Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) all contended that followership was largely underrepresented and dismissed in organizations and deserved more attention within existing literature. The fact that only two out of 10 participants had ever thought about followership prior to this study largely underscores the significance of this study: to expand upon followership research to emphasize its importance in relation to leadership literature. I made this conclusion by exploring the way participants perceived the meaning of followership and their own followership behaviors. In Chapter II I presented Uhl-Bien et al.'s (2014) systemic review of followership literature which yielded a broader theory of followership. It introduced two theoretical models to understanding followership: a role-based approach and a constructionist approach. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) aptly named the constructionist approach to followership "the

leadership process" as it illustrated co-constructed systems that involved both leading and following. The constructivist approach sought to understand how leaders and followers exist symbiotically and dismissed any semblance of a hierarchy, while the role-based approach focused on understanding factors that influence how a follower constructs their role as a follower. Followership scholars recommended using a combination of both lenses to analyze followership data because the constructionist approach to followership is not commonly understood by laypeople. I analyzed the data for this study using both constructionist and role-based lenses.

Leaders and Followers

The findings of this study revealed that participants understood followership as being dependent on a leader. The quote from David and the title of this subtheme used the word "inherent" to depict how participants saw leadership and followership as being innately connected. This connection of followership to leadership aligns with Kelley (1992) who noted that society expects individuals to obey leaders and subsequently rewards obedience. Many participants used phrases that implied concession of decision making, giving up power, and following a status quo that seemed to have made followership less important than leadership and implied a negative connotation. About half of my participants initially perceived followership to be negative, which is consistent in the way followers have historically been described in existing literature (Boccialetti, 1995; Chaleff, 2009; Kellerman, 2008).

Most participants thought of followership as being complicit in taking direction from leaders, which also underscores the confusing nature of the constructionist approach of followership to laypeople. The way several participants understood followership and

followers as taking the direction from and being inferior to leadership and leaders is consistent with the literature presented by Boccialetti (1995), Carsten et al. (2010), and Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007) who suggested that followership was the result of the decisions and directives of another. Shamir (2007) contended that followership was based in obedience and noted that followers were recipients of the influence of a leader. Though no participant outwardly used the term "obedience," participants described their understanding of followership as being compliant and doing what they were told. Mary exemplified this obedience when she stated, "it isn't a choice for me to follow, I just have to follow because that's what [her boss] tells me to do." Most of the existing followership literature that I presented in Chapter II described pathways to exemplary followership. This demonstration of outright obedience illustrates followership types that are contradictory to what Kelley (1998) or Chaleff (2009) would describe as exemplary.

The obedient, leader-dependent nature of the way participants perceived followership was consistent with the way Carsten et al. (2010) described passive followership. Carsten et al. viewed such passivity as "submitting without resistance" (p. 55). This inherently negative view of followership also aligned with Kellerman (2008) who defined followers as lacking power, authority, and influence. Jeremy best summarized this passivity when he stated "there's always someone who's going to be my boss telling me what I should or shouldn't be doing. And that's kind of like, to me, what it means to be a follower." Jeremy's notion of taking direction obediently from a leader was shared by several other participants and aligns with Shamir's (2007) description of follower's being the recipients of the influence of a leader.

Participants also understood followership as being part of a hierarchy or a system. Some participants realized their bureaucratic position as being responsible for the way they understood followership in addition to their relationship with a leader. While the power relationship between leader and follower remained unchanged, Collin referenced “powers at play” that dictate followership. Like Collin, several participants also realized societal norms and systems that are responsible for the perception of followership, indicating a certain compliance in societal rules and order.

The perception of followership existing on a hierarchy is largely consistent with the literature presented by Kellerman (2008). Kellerman’s approach to followership was to shed light on the fact that hierarchies exist not only among leaders and followers, but among followers themselves and among greater systems of power. Kellerman (2008) contended that seeing organizations “from the bottom up rather than from the top down” (p. 93) could shape the way followers performed in certain situations. In other words, if leaders viewed followers as being equally as important to the organization, followers would function better, more efficiently, which would make the organization run more efficiently and encourage better morale for followers.

Though not overtly negative, some participants did feel that their position within a hierarchy was limiting which may have negatively affected the way they understood followership. Several participants voiced concerns about a lack of flexibility in their roles due to their hierarchical position. The perception of being limited by a hierarchical structure aligns with Howell and Mendez (2008) who argued that organizations that promote a rigid hierarchy are not conducive to followers with independent role orientations.

Performing Followership

The way participants understood the performance of followership aligned with several followership models. Contrary to the previous subthemes that outlined participants' perceptions of followership, participants understood the performance of their own followership behaviors to be inherently positive and goal oriented. Participants widely understood their followership behaviors to center on collaboration, and they believed their behaviors were dictated by a shared vision. The commitment to collaboration aligns with Blackshear's characteristics of successful followership.

Eight participants referenced teamwork and collaboration, aligning with Berg's (1998) followership model which wholly centered on collaboration. Berg (2008) argued that the leader-follower relationship should be a partnership, and that this kind of relationship is the key to releasing the "vibrant, colorful follower present in each of us" (p. 51). The way participants understood good followership behaviors aligned with the literature on exemplary followership. Kelley (1998) identified the exemplary follower as someone who is actively engaged, and who utilizes their talents to benefit the organization. Participants reflected on moments during which they were practicing good followership. Collin was able to coin the term "conscious follower" while several other participants used terms such as "effective" and "intentional." These terms echo what Kelley (1998) would consider an exemplary follower.

Participants described followership behaviors as being guided by the desire to achieve a common goal or a shared vision, which aligns with both Kelley (1998) and Carsten et al. (2010). Kelley (1998) contended that a follower's willingness to act in accordance with a common goal demonstrates commitment to the organization and to

something outside oneself. Working toward a greater good was important to all 10 participants indicating that all demonstrate a commitment to their organization. Carsten et al. (2010) described following a shared vision as "mission conscience," a concept that allows followers to focus on the greater purpose of the work. It was refreshing to learn that my participants demonstrated such a strong commitment to their careers and the students and staff with whom they share their visions.

Followership is Context-Dependent

Kelley (1998) noted that the exemplary follower the gold standard of followership in an organization. In this study, however, the organizational contexts in which participants practiced followership were fluid. Participants identified good followership behaviors as being changing depending on the contexts in which they were performed. Several participants experienced a personal evolution as they discussed their perceptions of good followership with me. Some of my participants even contradicted themselves in the same sentence. Jeremy, for example, initially believed that good followership was exhibiting obedience, but after a pause, he acknowledged that a good follower might have a bit of "healthy skepticism." This indicated to me that he was thinking about different followership behaviors in different situations.

Having contextual bases for the practice of followership aligns with Blackshear's (2008) followership continuum. In her continuum, Blackshear acknowledged that the various stages of followership were "situational and dependent on external and internal variables" (p. 1). Kellerman (2008) also described various historical contexts in which followership behaviors would present differently. While many participants recalled being at career fairs, working with students, or being in a family setting, Kellerman (2008)

identified historical events such as the Holocaust, political events involving pharmaceutical companies, and religious scandals. Kellerman (2008) identified various roles played by individuals during these events and labeled them as follower types. Like Kellerman (2008), my participants were able to understand followership behaviors as having different traits in different situations.

Although participants were able to recognize the followership behaviors would differ based on the context in which they were performed, no participant intentionally brought up work with People or Students of Color or social justice work as one of the contexts. Several participants brought up family contexts, professional contexts, sports, and used business metaphors, but participants did not think about diversity conferences, moments of activism, or their own participation in affinity groups or diversity-related seminars as being contexts for followership without my prompting.

Summary

Participants understood followership as being related to leadership and as being situated within a hierarchy. They were also able to articulate their own followership behaviors, specifically collaboration and sharing a vision. They understood that good followership would present differently across different contexts. Despite being able to see followership behaviors as being contextually fluid, and despite all participants describing themselves as being actively engaged in social justice work, no participant willingly offered social justice work as a context for the performance of followership without being asked. The final section describes how participants understood followership in the context of social justice work.

White Followership

This conclusion combines the first two themes and offers insight into the way participants understood White Followership. In the previous theme, I noted that participants did not contextualize themselves within the realm of social justice work. This theme underscores the idea that followership is performed in a unique way when social justice work is intentional. In this theme I use the term "White followership." It is important to note that this term was coined by Villalobos (2015) and Lee-Norman (2021). White followership centers the behaviors and actions of White people in racial justice settings. While I understand that racial justice is different from social justice, I chose to expand the criteria of the study to social justice to collect more robust data. This section demonstrates that participants indeed see social justice work as a context for good followership practices, and that the acknowledgement of Whiteness is impactful in the structure of that practice.

All participants understood that working in the university system had certain privileges for White employees, and that an understanding of Whiteness ought to guide the way followership is enacted. This was exemplified by Elizabeth when she discussed various privileges she holds. She understood that, as a White person in a White system, she should be following more intentionally. For Elizabeth and several other participants, that intentionality meant centering questioning and listening instead of leading. This kind of followership behavior closely resembles Shamir's (2007) definition of followership, which contended that followers were recipients of the influence of a leader.

Above collaboration and sharing a vision, questioning and listening became the notable traits of exemplary followers which directly contradicts Kelly's (1998) notion that an exemplary follower challenges or works independently from a leader. The

following subthemes most aptly address the way the exploration of Whiteness informs the way White student affairs practitioners who do social justice work experience followership.

The Importance of Not Leading

All participants were able to articulate the way Whiteness informed followership, and Collin's commentary summarized their thoughts. He noted, "I'm like, a White, cis, man, right? So I think when I'm in a space of People of Color, I should be following the lead of others in that space." Collin's understanding of followership in spaces of People of Color aligns with both Villalobos's (2015) and Lee-Norman's (2021) definitions of followership, wherein White people working toward social justice efforts ought to work alongside People of Color rather than seeking leadership opportunities in those efforts.

Chaleff (2003) and Kellerman (2008) would label Collin's lack of traditional leadership in spaces with People of Color as undesirable. Chaleff (2003) argued that the most desirable follower, a partner, is willing to challenge policies or behaviors if they are perceived as contradictory to organizational goals. Kellerman (2008) developed a follower typology based on situational enactments of followership. Kellerman (2008) would likely label Collin as a bystander based on his intentional unwillingness to lead.

In Chapter IV, I shared Jeremy finding it difficult to navigate an advising appointment with a Black woman student. He fundamentally believed that, even if he were providing the student a disservice by staying silent and listening to her, telling her to study differently or to try harder could be doing the student an even greater disservice. Jeremy was aware that being a White man giving advice to a Black woman may result in causing harm to the student. Telling the student that she needed to study differently or try

harder, in his mind, negates factors outside of academics that may have been inhibiting the student's ability to perform. While Jeremy believed that stepping back and not offering the student advice may have been a disservice, offering advice that its irrelevant to the student's root issue may cause even greater damage.

It was evident in my findings that participants understood the importance of not leading in certain contexts, for example, when participating in a diversity forum or when listening to concerns from a Student of Color during an advising appointment. Liu and Baker (2016) contended that "'doing leadership' was inextricably linked to 'doing Whiteness,'" (p. 420), further underscoring the importance of White student affairs practitioners' use of White followership practices in social justice work. Several of the White followership practices exhibited by participants were representative of White critical humility (Barlas et al., 2012) and White allyship (2006), perhaps as a result of the educational interventions discussed in the first theme and because of their demonstrated continued commitment to learning. For example, Elizabeth acknowledged that, as a White woman, it was important for her to "use her own White privilege to shed light on other perspectives." This willingness of participants to acknowledge their own White privilege is also demonstrative of the "investing in followership" tenet of Villalobos's (2015) White followership model.

Several other characteristics of Villalobos's (2015) model were apparent in my findings. Participants described good White followership behaviors for White people in settings of social justice as needing to be quiet, listening, and learning. Mary commented "you need to be a better White person in that scenario, and that just means be quiet and 'follow.'" Three participants admitted to being scared to act in accordance with actions

that facilitate social justice such as speaking out or stepping back when they deemed it appropriate but having the willingness to embrace the fear and engage in conversations anyway. Villalobos (2015) encouraged White followers to dismiss fear or failure as barriers to the commitment to social justice. The actions performed by participants indicate that, even though they were not familiar with Villalobos's model, they were already familiar with concepts of a good White Followership practice.

Following Intentionally

Several participants cited a strong desire to engage in an intentional followership practice that was rooted in social justice. This was encouraging, as many participants had not intentionally thought of a followership practice prior to data collection. I noted earlier that several participants desired to center questioning and listening in their White followership practice. The concept of listening to decenter Whiteness is prevalent in the literature. For example, Vianden (2020) discussed that, for White students, "developing consciousness and empathy won't happen unless Whites learn how to listen and follow rather than to speak and lead." (p. 175).

Several participants noted wanting to uproot and dismantle systems of oppression and White supremacy in their own work, showing a continued commitment to social justice work and the willingness to engage in White followership. Nearly all participants articulated a future for their office that was grounded in a collective vision of the office's goals. In her commentary, Heather discussed wanting to make an impact for students of color as she pursued an endeavor to diversify a pool of student candidates. She understood that, though she lacked power to control the demographics of the recruiters, she could employ followership practices by being a role model, engaging with other

White people about the importance of diversifying the pool, and empowering others to do the same. The desire to engage other White people in social justice and diversity efforts aligns with Villalobos's "doing homework" principle of the White followership model and is reminiscent of many tenets of White critical humility (Barlas et al., 2012) and White allyship (2006).

The way participants performed or intended to perform White followership closely demonstrated aspects of White critical humility (Barlas et al., 2012) and White allyship (Author, 2006), but contradicted much of the research presented by Gundemir et al. (2014), Liu and Baker (2016) and Radd (2019) by demonstrating an intentional awareness of their own Whiteness and of discursive Whiteness in general. Two participants overtly dismissed their desire to climb a hierarchy, negating what Gundemir et al.'s (2014) referred to as having pro-White leadership bias. Several participants not only stated a lack of desire to be recognized for the work they do, but they also said they would turn down a high-ranking position in an office that centers diversity, because, as Jeremy stated, "as your awareness as a White person grows, well, who should actually be represented as directors in this organization? Not White people." Villalobos contended that "an important function of the mainstream leader is to help maintain social constructs and organizational structures for control that become malleable only when absolutely necessary" (p. 175). The willingness of my participants to dismiss leadership positions when a Person of Color would be better suited demonstrates their desire for the eventual decolonization of leadership.

Summary

It was evident that participants understood following to look differently in settings where they were actively centering social justice. My findings indicated that participants had a desire to enact tenets of White followership into their student affairs practices. While previous themes outlined following as being obedient, exhibiting a healthy skepticism, and serving a leader, this theme highlighted questioning and listening as being important White followership behaviors. I also discussed participants' commitment to followership in settings of social justice by highlighting that several participants would dismiss a leadership position in the context of social justice work. In the next section, I explain how the results of this study may be used to inform student affairs practices, and how this study may be used as to inform future studies on Whiteness, followership, and White followership.

Recommendations for Higher Education Practice

This study sought to uplift followership and highlight the importance of intentional followership practices in higher education. Most of the existing followership literature that I presented in Chapter Two described pathways to exemplary followership, but the findings of this study have shown that, in the context of social justice work in student affairs, exemplary followership is context and identity dependent. Kelley (1998) and Chaleff (2009) described exemplary followership as standing up for what is right for an organization even if it contradicts a leader's direction. This study indicated that, for White student affairs practitioners who center social justice in their work, an exemplary follower also practices obedience, collaboration, listening, and questioning.

The practice of followership is very nuanced and must be understood from several perspectives and in several contexts. In this section, I offer recommendations for White

student affairs practitioners, especially for those working in functional areas not overtly centering social justice work. These recommendations should provide White student affairs graduate programs, White student affairs practitioners, and White university leaders the tools to decolonize leadership and to engage in an exemplary White followership practice.

Student Affairs Graduate Programs

I intentionally begin the section of recommendations with student affairs graduate programs so that an early intervention on identity-based following in graduate school ultimately leads the field of student affairs to be populated with identity-conscious followers who are student affairs professionals and university administrators.

Vianden's (2020) research implored a call to action not only to White college-aged men, but also to the educators with whom they work. The evidence in this study suggests that White college-aged individuals of any gender have the capacity to become an advocate for social justice in student affairs if given the education. The experiences articulated by my participants demonstrated that most of their education and training related to racism and social justice came directly from higher education, underscoring the need for mandatory training for all divisions of student affairs, not just those who intentionally do social justice work.

Graduate student affairs programs need to not only offer courses on multicultural education, but also incorporate strategies for identifying unequal policies within the field. Graduate programs should begin by stressing the idea that, upon completing their programs, graduates should not be contending for positions that ought to be held by People of Color.

White student affairs graduate students would benefit greatly from learning about and adopting the tenets of Villalobos's (2015) White followership model. Several student affairs graduate programs incorporate the concept of followership into a leadership course within their curriculum, but it is my recommendation that Villalobos's (2015) White followership model is specifically taught in every student affairs curriculum.

This study has shown that the exploration of a White identity can lead to followership behaviors that change based on the context in which that person is following. The implementation of Villalobos's (2015) White followership model into a higher education leadership course would concretely exemplify the kind of followership behaviors that should be performed by White people in the context of racial and social justice.

White Student Affairs Practitioners

Though White student affairs staff were the subjects of my study, not all White student affairs staff is intentionally engaged in work that centers social justice, and not all White staff has done the level of critical exploration of Whiteness as the 10 participants in this study. These recommendations are for all White student affairs staff in higher education, regardless of the office in which they are employed.

Liu and Baker (2016) contended that "'doing leadership' was inextricably linked to 'doing Whiteness,'" (p. 420) underscoring the need for student affairs staff to focus more on "doing" followership to decolonize leadership. White student affairs staff, all of whom are followers, ought to adopt followership practices, especially in social justice contexts and when among Staff or Students of Color. Vianden (2020) recalled his experiences teaching in the college environment for over 20 years and underscored White

men as being the most "confident, vociferous, and frequent speakers (p. 175)." The same is true for White student affairs staff whose voices tend to dominate most meetings (Steele, 2018).

Incorporating a more intentional followership practice means learning from the participants in this study and adopting a listening-first, talking-second approach to meetings. Identity-conscious following means understanding the way Whiteness permeates student affairs and intentionally stepping down to decolonize it. Student affairs leadership is overwhelmingly White. Several of my participants acknowledged that they would not enter a leadership position that was in an office that centered diversity or social justice, but arguably all offices within student affairs should center diversity and social justice.

Hiring practices need to center on the recruitment and retention of Staff of Color. Student affairs as a field needs to develop a culture of followership that is equally as notable and regarded as the culture of leadership so that White student affairs practitioners stop trying to climb a leadership ladder. For many universities, this may mean steering away from internal promoting and hiring to fill vacancies. In the field of student affairs where many professionals are stretched thin and burned out, departments need to prioritize hiring leaders who do not perpetuate White culture over hiring internal candidates who require less training. Departmental directors need to recruit and hire People of Color, but beyond hiring, departmental directors need to *be* People of Color, further underscoring the importance of emphasizing followership over leadership by White university administrators. Followership does not have to be inherently negative.

White student affairs staff should strive to be followers, and followers should be something White student affairs staff want to be.

White University Leaders

The findings of this study revealed that participants understood followership as being dependent on a leader, and Liu and Baker (2016), Radd (2019), and Villalobos (2015) contended that the characteristics of mainstream leadership are rooted in White supremacy. I implore White university leaders to continually engage in ongoing professional development that includes understanding White supremacy culture. While this dissertation study has shown that several White student affairs staff who are employed in social justice work have either been exposed to this kind of professional development through their education or have intentionally sought it out, several university leaders do not have student affairs backgrounds, do not work in areas of social justice, and have likely not spent time intentionally exploring Whiteness as a phenomenon.

Like White student affairs staff, White university administrators also need to be conscious of hiring practices that promote internal candidates out of convenience instead of hiring qualified People of Color. I also recommend that assessment needs to be conducted regularly to evaluate the way policies and procedures of the university uphold White supremacy.

In addition to assessment and policy evaluation, the participants in this study have proven to be incredibly well-educated White followers. Engaging student affairs staff who intentionally do social justice work in higher-level administrative conversations is integral to the creation of culturally competent university policy.

Too often, higher level policymaking meetings occur only at the upper administrative level and fail to include the highly educated, culturally competent student affairs practitioners, such as the participants in this study. Student affairs practitioners are charged with implementing such policies but rarely have a voice in their creation. The participants in this study were White educators who demonstrated a high level of White identity development and already exhibited several tenets of White followership (Villalobos, 2015). It is the voices and ideas of these student affairs practitioners that universities need to be on search committees and policy initiatives.

Like White student affairs graduate program facilitators and White student affairs staff, top White University administrators also need to adhere to Villalobos's White followership model. Adherence to this followership model will require the university to do a complete compensation overhaul for two reasons.

First, the White followership model (Villalobos, 2015) emphasizes a non-hierarchical practice, meaning that "relationships, decision-making processes, access to power and information, and communication structures must always be scrutinized to assure that patterns of White supremacy are illuminated, challenged, and eliminated, when necessary, in a principled manner" (p. 176). The hierarchy of university leadership and the top-down decision model employed by many universities is problematic, especially because an overwhelming majority of college presidents and boards of regents are White.

Second, Kellerman's emphasis of bottom-up leadership. Kellerman (2008) strongly emphasized that seeing things "from the bottom up rather than from the top down" (p. 93) could shape the way followers performed in certain situations. In other

words, giving power to followers can increase the performance of followers which would increase the performance of the organization. Therefore, followers would ultimately become the decision makers, or what mainstream society would consider the leaders, and they ought to be compensated accordingly: equal to leaders.

It is my assumption that several White student affairs professionals choose to climb the hierarchical ladder because, in student affairs, the compensation increases as you ascend toward higher leadership positions. If higher education valued followership as much as it values leadership in terms of both notoriety and compensation, the desire for White student affairs practitioners to ascend the leadership ladder would diminish. Additionally, higher education could prioritize social justice over capitalism, and allow for People of Color to ascend into positions once coveted by White people.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

A study which considers social justice work is limited by the social climate and by the ways individual professionals define the work and how they conceive of themselves engaging in it. I began conducting this study amid multiple racially charged and social justice focused events; in particular, the verdict of the Kyle Rittenhouse trial, the trial surrounding the shooting death of an unarmed 25-year-old Black man, Ahmaud Arbery, the insurrection at the Capitol on January 6th, 2022, and amid several race-related mass casualty events. This study concluded during a time when prominent Republican lawmakers were loudly fighting to eradicate critical race theory and critical Whiteness studies from educational curricula and organizations. Flagship University has historically been a politically active campus in the realm of social justice issues that have been catalysts for campus demonstrations. This may have affected participants' interpretation

of social justice work which limits the transferability of results of this study to campuses that do not emphasize social justice work as being integral to their history.

I conducted this study using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), wherein I interviewed 10 White student affairs professionals who were engaged in social justice work at Flagship University to understand the way they conceptualized followership. I interviewed each participant three times, each interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. This approach relied on participants recollecting their lived experiences and subsequently relied on my own interpretation of those experiences. In my initial survey tool, I sought to recruit participants who served in offices that deliberately centered social justice work such as LGBT centers or multicultural student centers. It became evident during data collection that participants perceived the kind of social justice work their offices conducted very differently.

This was a limitation of my study. I relied on the intent with which participants centered social justice within their work, and on the intent with which their offices centered social justice despite the kind of services the offices offered, resulting in varying levels of empathy and advocacy wherein some participants were more outspoken about social justice work than others. Vianden (2020) noted that one of the biggest problems in social justice work are when Whites claim to be "too evolved or too arrived to engage with those of us who are not as far along" (p. 163). This limitation could have been mitigated had I been more specific on the wording of my recruitment tool and subsequently dismissed participants who did not work in social justice offices directly. I chose to keep the 10 participants I had selected because all of them had indicated a personal commitment to social justice in their work.

I engaged in this study with participants who all worked at the same large, predominantly White research institution in the Midwest, an institution which places an institutional emphasis on staff and faculty to engage in social justice work. This was also a limitation of my study. A much different picture of White followership may be painted had this study been conducted at an institution in a different region or at a university that does not value social justice efforts in the way Flagship University does. Private colleges and universities that are not bound by state governing bodies may also produce different perceptions of White followership. Other institutions may not attract student affairs staff who value diversity work, they may not outwardly center social justice, and they may not value the kind of collaborative decision making that is consistent with intentional followership practices.

Like leadership, the practice of followership is nuanced, and therefore the possibilities to extend research on identity-based followership are vast and far-reaching. Future research could replicate this study with White student affairs professionals outside of Flagship University, with White student affairs professionals who do not work in offices that center social justice, with White college presidents or deans, or with White students in a classroom setting.

Researchers could extend this study by exploring identities other than the White racial identity. Identity-informed followership could be the catalyst for an infinite number of subsequent studies. Further, this research could be extended by expanding the research site beyond student affairs and beyond higher education. Followership research ought to be as abundant as leadership research. It must be uplifted among leadership literature because of the necessity of followers in organizations everywhere.

Conclusions

In this study, I sought to extend the work of Jesse Villalobos (2015) on White followership by researching the way Whiteness informed the followership practices of White student affairs professionals. I addressed a gap in research as it pertained to followership by seeking to understand the way a particular social identity informed the way people follow. I employed a double hermeneutic phenomenological approach to make meaning of the way 10 White student affairs professionals at Flagship University understood their experiences. I used expert nominators from the Office of Inclusion Education to identify 10 White participants who centered social justice in their work and office.

I closely followed Smith's (2017) detailed steps to IPA data analysis, reviewing each case thoroughly before compiling themes across cases. The analysis of themes across cases revealed three superordinate themes, each named after verbatim quotes from participants pertaining to that theme: "I'm not the unicorn"; "lead, follow, or get out of the way"; and "following in a different way." Themes centered on coming to terms with Whiteness, perceptions of followership, and the exploration of a White followership practice, respectively.

The findings of this study provide insight into the lives and followership practices of White student affairs professionals who center social justice in their work, but the results should not be generalized as they reflect solely the experiences of the 10 individuals who participated in this study. Despite the lack of generalizability of the results of this study, there are concrete steps that can be taken by university staff to

realize followership as having value, and White followership as integral to the decolonization of the institution.

White people must engage in a White followership practice using Villalobos's (2015) model as a tool and the recommendations of this study as a guide. Specifically, student affairs graduate programs must more intentionally incorporate identity and followership work into their curriculum. White student affairs staff have the responsibility to learn about the value of followership and engage in a good White followership practice while refraining from climbing an organizational hierarchy when People of Color are better suited for those positions. They must engage in fair and equitable hiring practices rather than internally promoting incumbents out of convenience. University administrators must not only scrutinize policy that perpetuates White supremacy, but they must also engage student affairs staff who are not traditionally at the table with leadership. Though far reaching, university staff must demonstrate the value of followership by equitably compensating leaders and followers. Leadership must not equate to compensation, and if it does, then followership must also equate to compensation. We in student affairs and higher education must begin to decolonize leadership by showcasing the value of followers and leaders alike.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Recruitment Email

Dear colleagues,

I am requesting your assistance in identifying individuals who may be interested in engaging in my dissertation study. I am looking to recruit participants who are willing to share their experiences about Whiteness and followership (the intentional practice of subordinates) in positions involving social justice in student affairs. At your convenience, could you please forward the information below to individuals in your office or others on campus who may fit the participant criteria?

Thank you in advance for your time,

Molly Censky

Study on Whiteness and Followership – looking for participants!

Dear colleagues,

My name is Molly Censky. I am currently employed in the School of Nursing at UW Madison, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse. I am writing to you because you have been identified by a colleague as a potential participant in my dissertation research aimed at understanding the way that Whiteness informs followership (the intentional practices of subordinates) in student affairs professionals who work in social justice settings.

This study uses critical Whiteness studies as a lens to through which to conduct this research and as such, I am seeking White student affairs professionals who are willing to engage in a series of three interviews over a period of six weeks. These interviews will begin in May and conclude before August of 2022. The time commitment is as follows:

1. Interview 1: 60-90 minutes
2. Interview 2: 60-90 minutes
3. Interview 3: 60-90 minutes

Participants will be selected based on the following criteria:

a. Identifies as White
b. Employed at UW Madison in Student Affairs
c. Employed in an office with a social justice focus
d. Has no direct reports/supervisees
e. Has held their current position for at least one year

All participant identities and any other identifying information will be kept confidential and only used in aggregated, thematic analysis. An informed consent will be provided and reviewed with each participant. Participants will receive $50 upon completion of the third interview. Participation is completely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without penalty.

My study seeks to understand the way Whiteness informs followership in student affairs. I would love to talk to you about your experiences.

Thank you so much for your consideration! To express interest in this study, please click here: **Whiteness and Followership in Student Affairs Participation Survey**

Sincerely,
Molly Censky

APPENDIX B

QUALTRICS SURVEY

Qualtrics Survey

You have been identified by a colleague as a potential participant in my dissertation research aimed at understanding the way Whiteness informs followership in Student Affairs professionals who work in social justice settings. This study uses critical Whiteness studies as a lens through which to conduct this research. I am seeking White student affairs professionals who are willing to engage in a series of three 60-90 minute interviews over a period of six weeks. These interviews will begin in May and will conclude before August of 2022.

All participant identities and any other identifying information will be kept confidential and only used in aggregated, thematic analysis. I will provide you with an informed consent and review it with you. Participants will receive $50 upon completion of the third interview. Participation is completely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without penalty.

I am looking so forward to talking with you about your experiences!
Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate!
What is your name?

In which department or office do you work?

What is your job title?

Do you supervise any professional staff?

- No
- Yes

How long have you been employed at UW Madison?

- Less than 1 year
- Between 1 and 5 years
- More than 5 years

What is your racial identity?

- White
- Any racial identity other than White

What is your email address?

Thank you again for your willingness to participate. I will contact you if you are selected as a participant!

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

Protocol Title: White Followership: How Whiteness Informs Followership in Student Affairs Professionals

Principal Investigator: Molly Censky

Emergency Contact: Jörg Vianden

Purpose and Procedure

1. The purpose of this study is to explore how White student affairs practitioners engaged in social justice work at predominantly White institutions experience and navigate followership. In this study, followership refers to the intentional practice of subordinates.

3. I will participate in a series of three interviews lasting 60-90 minutes each.

4. The total time requirement is a maximum of 4.5 hours over a 6-week period.

5. Interviews will be conducted using the online video conferencing platform Zoom

Potential Risks

1. Interview questions may cause discomfort or emotional distress

2. Interview questions may feel offensive or interrogative

3. Names of institutions and participants will be protected, but unique experiences and stories shared may hold inherent political, reputational, and career risks

Rights and Confidentiality

1. My participation is voluntary. I may withdraw or decline to answer any question without consequences at any time.

2. I may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without penalty.

3. The results of this study may be published in journals or presented professionally using aggregated or deidentified data only (unidentifiable).

4. All information will be kept confidential using pseudonyms and numbered codes, in a password protected file securely stored behind a firewall at UW Madison.

5. All identifying information, including information that may be obtained from direct quotations and data that may identify other employees will be removed from all data points including transcripts and field notes.

Potential Benefits

My participation in this study may encourage feelings of empowerment and self-awareness and may lead to increased job satisfaction. My participation in this study contributes to the broader understanding of Critical Whiteness Studies.

Participants will be given $50 to Amazon upon completion of the third interview

Questions regarding study procedures may be directed to the principal investigator, Molly Censky at censky.moll@uwlax.edu or at [redacted] or to the dissertation chair, Dr. Jörg Vianden, Professor of Student Affairs Administration at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse at jvianden@uwlax.edu or [redacted]. Questions regarding

the protection of human subjects research may be directed to the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (608) 785-8044 or at irb@uwlax.edu.

Participant___________________________________ Date____________________

Researcher___________________________________ Date____________________

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

The purpose of this interview series is to co-construct the experiences of 6 to 8 White student affairs professionals who practice followership in social justice work.

Research question: How does the exploration of Whiteness inform the way White student affairs practitioners who do social justice work experience followership?

The first meeting with each participant will address life experiences that have contributed to their understanding of what it means to be a follower, how their understanding of Whiteness may be impacting their role as a follower in student affairs and social justice work, and the influence of their friends, family, and community on their journey.

Prior to asking the first interview question to each participant, I will discuss all sections of the informed consent form. This discussion will include:

- The focus of my project
- My interest in their stories
- The methods I will use to collect data
- The rational and significance of my study
- Issues of confidentiality Their rights as a participant in research

Focused Life History Interview Questions

1. Invite each participant to share their story about the lived experiences that have influenced their understanding of Whiteness and followership:

    a. *Narrative Beginning* that will introduce (1) life experiences that have made Whiteness visible as a construct, (2) path to a position in social justice work in student affairs, (3) experience of followership:

    - Who you are: the life experiences that contributed to the recognition of Whiteness and the ways in which racial identity have impacted you.
    - What historical contexts have shaped your values and beliefs about race? How have they shaped your views about race? How have those beliefs and values changed over time?
    - How did you end up working in a social justice position at UW Madison?

- What do you think it means to be a follower in your job? Who do you follow?

Transcripts from this interview will be emailed to participants for review prior to beginning the second interview. The beginning of the second interview will allow time for feedback.

Details of Experience Interview Questions

2. I will invite each participant to share details of their lived experience as a follower in their social justice position at UW-Madison.

b. *Narrative Middle* that addresses how participants are making meaning of their current experiences with (1) followership, (2) construction of White identity at UW Madison, (3) impact on department:

- What have your experiences been as a follower?
- What qualities and values do you identify as important in being a good follower?
- What relationship do you see between racial privilege and the qualities that are required for being a good follower?
- What do you do daily that demonstrates good followership?
- How do you think followership relates to the success of the population your office serves?
- What challenges do you face being a follower in your workspace?

Transcripts from the second interview will be emailed to the participants for review prior to the third interview. The beginning of the third interview will allow time for feedback.

Meaning Making Interview Questions

3. Invite each participant to share how they make meaning of their White identity and their experience as a follower in social justice work at UW-Madison.

c. *Narrative End* that will (1) focus on the emotional and intellectual connections between personal experience and professional practice, (2) inform future action, (3) continues the story:

- In what ways might your boss see you as an effective follower?
- What might make someone an ineffective follower?
- Given what you said about your journey to your position in social justice work at UW Madison, what do you think it means to be a White follower?
- What are your personal goals for good followership practices in your office and with the students you serve?
- What professional results do you expect from good followership practices?
- What have you learned about yourself as a White person who is a follower in a social justice position at UW-Madison?

Closing: Thank you so much for sharing your story with me. I know this was a significant time commitment and I have really appreciated our time together. I will send you your final transcript for review, and in the meantime, if you have any other experiences, thoughts, or reflections that you would like to share, please feel free to email me.

I will share a written summary of themes that have emerged as I have interpreted each of their stories. Sharing the summary of themes with participants will serve as an additional means of member checking.