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Whites and the Active Representation of Racial Minority Interests

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Whites and the Active Representation of Racial Minority Interests

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ABSTRACT

Our demographics are becoming more racially diverse, yet we continue to experience persistent racial disparities with indicators of well-being. One way public administrators have responded to these disparities is to increase workforce diversity. Using the theory of active representation (Mosher, 1982), I interviewed 15 White public administrators from three local county human services agencies (urban, suburban, and rural) in Minnesota. The three counties were selected because these counties had experienced more than a 10% demographic change of people of color from 1990-2010. This study looked at the personal and organizational factors that contribute to White public administrators actively representing the interests of racial minorities in local county human services. Data collection comprised of semi-structured face to face interviews. Subjects were screened to ensure they fit the inclusion criteria. This included whether they identified as White, if their work brought them into weekly contact with racial minorities or people of color, and if they were actively engaged in efforts and activities about race. Of those who participated, 10 were female and 5 were male. The average age was 54, and the length of service ranged from 3-33 years. Subjects were asked about their personal background, what it means to be White, and examples of work experiences in which they were actively representing the interests of racial minorities.

The variables in this study include personal factors and organization factors that contribute to active representation. Personal factors were racial consciousness, major life events, and significant relationships with people of color. Organizational factors were a diverse and inclusive work environment, bureaucracy, legal and compliance issues, and supervisor support. A combination of these factors was analyzed for their relationship with weak or strong role adoption to represent the interests of racial minorities. The findings suggest that Whites did not

have to be racially conscious to actively represent racial minority interests. Patterns of active representation fell into three types: deliberate, partial, and conformist. Overall, White subjects with racial consciousness were more deliberate and effective. I also identified duality to organizational factors; factors could be facilitative or limiting. Three new factors emerged: supervisor support, leadership engagement, and external factors. Just because White subjects adopted a role to represent racial minority interests, did not mean their self-report behaviors were consistent with their beliefs about what being White means. Seeing solutions to address racial disparities may not be possible without racial consciousness which continues to perpetuate racial disparities.

This study is unique in the field because it shifted focus about active representation from a study of people of color to Whites who are in the dominant racial group, and highlighted assumptions in past studies of active representation that challenge previous research findings. In particular, this study addresses the assumption that just because people adopt a role to represent racial minority interest does not mean they are effective in working in ways that benefit racial minorities. Also, organizational factors previously identified only as limitations could actually be facilitative, such as legal and compliance issues. Further work is needed to understand and explore how to link the individual actions of White public administrators to organizational outcomes. Also, there is a need to study other factors that emerged. Primary limitations in this exploratory study included a limited sample size; results cannot be generalized to the entire population of White public administrators in local county government.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Our demographics are changing rapidly. Children today are racially diverse and more likely to grow up in a multi-cultural society. Our children are our future, and as our demographics change, this is what society will look like. Likewise, the public sector will become more racially diverse. In the State of Minnesota, populations of color will increase by 112% by 2035 and the growth in the White population projected over this time period will be 9% overall for the State of Minnesota (State Demographic Center, 2014). Populations of color have higher birth rates and are younger, which indicates that our future workers and taxpayers will be more racially diverse than our current population. In fact, the United States will be a majority people of color nation by the year 2042 (Johnson & Borrego, 2009; Policy Link, 2011).

In an era of a more racially diverse Minnesota, the failure to address the persistent educational, health, and human service racial disparities carry negative implications that jeopardizes our future prosperity and economic vitality. It calls into question the effectiveness of government to serve its own people. People of color are more likely to live in poverty, less likely to graduate from high school, less likely to own their own home, and more likely to suffer from chronic illness (Minnesota Compass, 2014). Leading predictors of the quality of our future workforce, such as high school graduation rates indicate that people of color are less likely to enter higher paying positions due to lower educational achievement as compared to their White counterparts. For example, the on-time graduation rate of African American high school students

in 2012 was only 51% as compared to the White non-Hispanic student graduation rate which was 83.9%. In addition, the on-time graduation rate for American Indians students was 45.5%. Asian Americans had the highest graduation rate of all racial minority groups at 74%, however, this was still 9.9 % lower than White students. These statistics represents just one indicator of racial disparities. Similar racial disparities exist in all other social, educational, and health indicators, which highlights a trajectory in which racial minorities continue to face barriers. The public sector needs to find ways to address the poor outcomes for people of color, because we are missing fundamental solutions that focus energy on what works to change this negative trajectory.

Leaders in different sectors in Minnesota have launched initiatives with a purpose to reduce racial disparities in multiple areas. Ten years ago, the Chief Executive Officers in the private sector came together to assess the economic vitality of the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul region formed a community effort called the Itasca Project, and raised awareness about racial disparities and economic development (Itasca Project, 2014). As a result, new entities have been created to work on closing the achievement gap, reducing socio-economic disparities, and attracting new businesses to the region. Public leaders in the seven county metropolitan area have also commissioned a report about employment disparities that has launched an initiative called "Everybody In" to reduce employment disparities (Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board, 2011). Other counties and non-profit organizations have directed efforts inside their agencies to create a culture of diversity and inclusion and to change hiring practices to increase the number of employees of color. Across sectors, there is growing consensus that reducing disparities is absolutely needed, but progress has been limited.

Increasing workforce diversity is one way that public organizations have tried to improve service outcomes for racial minorities. Diversity efforts focused on diversifying the workforce have emphasized hiring, retention, and promotion pipelines for racial minorities. The assumption of such efforts is that racial representation in government will increase the cultural competency of services, bring in diverse perspectives, and reduce disparities. The other common strategy is to provide training, either to improve cultural competency skills or address racism. However, many of these efforts stop short of identifying and removing structural obstacles which include policies, procedures, and practices and getting to the underlying social norms and belief systems that reflect the dominant White culture.

Social equity is asserted as a core value in public administration (Fredrickson, 2010). A tenant of this the belief is that achieving racial equity should be a goal in public administration. There is no biological basis for racial differences, but race as a social construct continues to assign value in a hierarchy that benefits certain groups and not others because of skin color. Public employees use their administrative discretion to implement public policy, design programs, and to deliver important services. In the field of public administration, the theory of representative bureaucracy posits that active representation of racial minority interests is link to achieving racial equity and representation can be seen as *a means of achieving equity*. An assumption in the theory of representation is that if those in government share the same social origin and belief system as those who are being served, the rights of minorities will be represented and realized in public administration. Yet, despite efforts to increase diversity for decades in the workforce of public bureaucracies, people of color and women are few and far between in upper ranks of government than White people or men (Wise, 1990; Riccuci &

Saidel,1997; Riccucci, 2009). Therefore, if we want to place our hopes on the few people of

color who may reach these upper ranks, we will be waiting longer than we want.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Race is a powerful socializing force, and racism effects all of us, whether we choose to

believe it or not (Alkadry & Blesset, 2010). Consistent evidence racism is alive exists in the

persistent racial disparities we experience and in the testimonies and life experiences of those

who witness to direct acts of discrimination and race prejudice coupled with the power of public

institutions. While scientists have failed to establish any objective basis for differences among

races, the social construction of race is real (Alexander & Stivers, 2010). People of color and

poor White residents were ignored and left to die during Hurricane Katrina (Gould, 2007).

Historical examples of unethical experimentation with Black people such as the Tuskagee

Experiment point to the failure of public administration. The underlying belief system about the

inferiority of Black people enabled such tragedies to occur. According to Feagin (2010),

centuries of White racial framing and counter-framing of those in power created the conditions

that we see today. It took us three centuries to create the racial legacies of today, and it will take

concerted effort, time, and commitment to change this White racial frame. As an example, Black

people were counted as three-quarters of a man in the Constitution and the extermination of

indigenous peoples was seen as acceptable public policy. Subsequent public policies followed

along with implementing such policies that continued to disenfranchise people of color, women,

and those who were poor. Women and people of color were excluded from the full rights of

citizenship until less than 50 years ago. Yet, even so signals of progress and positive gains have

occurred. The first President of the United States who is African American was elected, and restitution to Japanese-Americans interned during World War II has occurred.

White males have dominated the power structure in government since the U.S. Constitution codified race, gender, and income inequalities into its foundation. Though attempts to achieve more equity in outcomes for people of color have been numerous, we are not there yet. We need even more change to achieve an equitable state and to increase cultural competency in public administration (Selden & Selden, 2001; Fredrickson, 2005; Farmbry 2009; Woodridge & Gooden, 2009; Alexander & Stivers, 2010; Norman-Major & Gooden, 2012). Studies of representation of women and racial minorities in public administration still show that few achieve upper level administrator ranks (Selden, 1997). Despite growing demographic diversity, the ranks of public administration do not reflect these broader changes.

If we want to improve outcomes and reduce racial disparities, we need to deeply examine the personal and organizational factors that contribute to White public employees who do decide to champion the interests of racial minorities. People of color have not been in the majority nor have they had the social power to affect outcomes, and yet some gains have still been made in public administration. Therefore, the concept of active representation may help us to understand how the interests of racial minorities were represented by those in the dominant culture despite their absence in positions of power in public administration. We need to look to where hope is alive and demonstrable action had happened. Public administrators in upper ranks typically have had more discretion to affect the public and its citizens through how they make decisions, design programs, and distribute resources (time, money, or people). However, even front line workers can define, shape, and deliver services to allocate resources and affect the public good (Lipsky,

2004). As such, the lens or belief system from which any White public employee operates can be considered official action and affects how the public is served.

In the public sector, it is human services that are most sensitive to race and its social dynamics. Ensuring that trash is removed from city streets does not require the same level of cultural competency and expertise as delivering mental health services because it is not undergirded by a deep seated value system that requires direct personal interactions with public employees. In human services, public employees are primarily dedicated to serving people, and judgments about service are based on staff expertise and their own belief system. Authorizing resources that impact the human condition is a daily occurrence and the stakes are high to be right. Unlike trash removal, judging whether an appropriate level of service has been delivered and effective is challenging because it will directly impact the client's life and well-being. When racism and cultural differences are present, this is even more challenging. Cultural differences may be also be attributed to skin color, and create racial tensions that reinforce negative racial stereotypes. In both examples, social hierarchy and belief systems still impact the delivery of services. However, in human services, there is a direct and profound human impact though very personal interactions between the service providers and the service recipients.

To illustrate how judgment and discretion influences public services, I will give you an example of how racism impacted me as an Asian American woman. Race become a factor used to deny me services, even though it was never positioned the way from the public employee who was serving me. I went camping at a Minnesota State park several years ago when my four children were all under the age of eight, where I was told by a White park ranger that I was "illegally showering." I was not supposed to be using the public showers because I had booked a group site with no electricity or water. He told me that my sisters and I would need to pay and

register for a regular site to access the public showers. The conflict on the surface was a sign that said "Registered Campers Only." However, I was a registered camper. Because each of us had children under the age of three, I had reserved the group site closest to the public restrooms and showers. I had confirmed when I had reserved that usage was allowed.

In reality, as Asian Americans, we stuck out like a sore thumb among White campers. This was in Southern Minnesota, at a park that people of color rarely visited. The park ranger was inconsistently reinforcing the "registered campers only" policy. If we had been White families, we would have showered undetected. However, because of our skin color, our behavior was unacceptable. The ranger thought that he was treating us exactly the same, but he was not. I confronted the ranger only to discover that the White camp host, posted near the public showers had complained. The ranger was responding to his complaint. His complaint was that a "large number of Asian folks" had showered two evenings in a row without proper authorization. To add insult to injury, the park ranger told me I could bathe my children in the river, or use the water pump located half a block away from our campsite.

Visibly upset, I told him he was being racist, but he refused to apologize. He was not racially conscious enough to understand that he was actually not treating us the same, he was actually treating us differently. He thought was just doing his job. It was impossible to argue with him. His skin color privilege was invisible to him. He just reinforced his own social norms that benefited White campers and created a disadvantage for us, Asian American campers. He was not a bad person, nor was he being mean. However, this lack of racial consciousness and inconsistent policy application created a benefit for White campers: the ability for Whites to shower free, and created a disadvantage for us, an added cost for us as Asian Americans to

shower. To get a free shower was based solely on skin color. He had created a racial disparity by responding to someone who saw us as a threat.

When the park ranger reinforced his White social norm that privileged Whites, it became institutional racism – race prejudice with the power of State was behind the enforcement. All public employees have the same authority to enforce and allocate resources. Setting limits and checking the power of the bureaucracy is central to many public administration theories, as well as trying to reconcile diverse interests and balancing the representation of different interest groups. The theory of representative bureaucracy reconciles the basic problem of administrative discretion and our democratic values through the idea that having public employees of diverse backgrounds is positive and enhances our democratic ideals through *passive representation* (Kingsley, 1944). Through diversifying the public workforce and reflecting the community it serves in the people it employs, the interests of the population would be served better.

Passive representation is the idea that public employees with shared social socialization experiences and origin represent the same interests without a need to be conscious and intentional. Recent versions of this theory link passive representation to active representation, or the intentional action from those of the same racial background to generate policy outcomes and programs that favor their own racial group (Krislov, 1974; Mosher, 1982; Selden, 1997). And further evidence with active representation suggests that a person does not need to be of the same racial background to represent racial minority interests. In contemporary active representation theory, the assertion is that it is possible that dominant and privileged groups can represent racial minority interests if they adopt and believe that it is their role to do so. However, previous studies of the theory of active representation are quantitative and studied marginalized or racial minority groups. In this study, I shift the focus of the research question to the dominant social

group, White public administrators and use a qualitative design to examine the factors that contribute to Whites who are actively representing racial minority interests in local county government.

1.2 **Purpose**

To represent the public good and "create public value" means that employees need to provide strategic management for the people they serve (Moore, 1995). The persistent nature of racial disparities suggests that racial minorities and their interests in public organizations are not being effectively managed. The continued lack of representation of people of color among the ranks of public administration means that the interests of racial minorities are not being adequately represented. We face a challenge in that citizens of color are not matched up with staff of color, but White staff. The ethic to serve the public suggests that White staff should and must actively represent the needs of racial minorities they serve in order to be responsive and relevant to achieve the public good. While not enough progress has been made to reduce racial disparities, there are gains that have been achieved even though racial minorities are strikingly absent in public administrative positions. This leads to the conclusion that some Whites may be actively representing the interests of racial minorities, and effectively doing so.

The purpose of this study was to learn from Whites who are being actively representative of racial minority interest to gain insight and knowledge about how to reduce racial disparities from this dominant culture perspective. In doing so, I studied the theory of active representation from the perspective of White public administrators using their own narratives about who they are, their racial identities, and what they have done to actively represent racial minority interests. I compared the findings to extant literature about being White and active representation. I interviewed 15 White public administrators in three local county human services organizations in

Minnesota and focused on exploring the personal and organizational factors that contribute to the active representation of racial minority interests from the dominant White culture. In doing so, this is study is unique from previous studies that focus on racial minority groups.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance in this study is to understand active representation of racial minority interests from the perspective of White public administrators, add to our knowledge of active representation, and learn from those who are already doing the work. Focusing on those who have the opportunity and positional power to act, to shift resources, and to speak up about the plight of racial minorities may increase our effectiveness in serving racial minorities and reducing racial disparities. Racial disparities also continue to be perpetuated, even as we try hard to create more equity in public administration. Figuring out what we are missing in terms of educating those from the dominant culture would also help provide us with new and practical solutions to be more effective.

Learning about the factors and personal qualities that White public administrators who are active in championing and advocating for racial minorities can give us clarity about how progress is being made to advance equitable service outcomes. Since public employees are the vehicle from which most human services is still being delivered and race is such a powerful socializing force, understanding what White employees believe of themselves and their roles to represent racial minorities will shed light about how we can support even more change. Tokenism of people of color creates a heavy burden. Having the expectation that employees of color will represent racial minority interests is inadequate to reduce racial disparities. Enlisting allies who are White to move toward actively representing the interests and needs of racial

minorities would be another strategy. We know very little about the White public employees who are already allies to racial minorities in local county government.

In related work about White allies, Thompson, Schaefer, and Boyd (2003) captured the life stories of White men challenging racism, and they showed how White men gained strength and acted to benefit people of color and dismantled racism. White male allies did so through learning, interacting, spending time with people of color, and having people of color validate when they were being helpful. Likewise, Goodman (2011) illustrated that promoting diversity and social justice from the perspective of privileged groups occurs through awareness raising, training, and the application of knowledge. But is this enough? Is education and training a factor in raising racial consciousness, and what other ways might exist?

Some organizations have taken a "managing diversity" approach and is focused on increasing cultural competency. As a skills-oriented approach, these efforts may downplay the importance of the power dynamics present in racism. Agencies also recruit broadly and implement strategies to retain staff of color, yet turnover continues when people of color are hired. Managing diversity frequently assumes that hiring minorities will increase cultural competency and reduce racial disparities. The expectations for the few people of color, at least in the mid-west, which tends to be very homogenous, and are unrealistic. Conversely, assuming that White employees are unable to represent racial minority interests also seems naïve. No silver bullet exists, but studying the experience of the dominant and privileged group that does have that authority to make changes can expand our base of knowledge.

Structural inequalities in the allocation of resources also exist because bureaucracies have legacies of policies, rules, and practices from previous administrations. Changing the power dynamics to address structural inequalities means that the White majority must work to change

unacceptable status quo conditions. Resources are defined as people, time, and money. If White people only support White interests, how do we change our decision-making to benefit those who are absent from the ranks of public administration? How do White people in public administration increase the number of people of color in public organizations? The interaction between the personal and professional is porous; what happens in one arena affects the other. The theory of active representation counts this interaction to be put to work in the organization. We also know that socialization experiences cross multiple social identities, and not just a racial identity (Holvino, 2012; Wijeyeshinghe and Jackson, 2012). People bring their entire selves to work, and the set of personal experiences, beliefs, and values may be not readily evident or easily judged just because of skin color. We assume that a White person does not share beliefs or attitudes that are similar to people of color, but this may be an untrue assumption. A White person may have pale skin color but is Native American, Latino, or is married to a person of color. Socialization outside of the workplace, personal background, and other characteristics may be contributing factors that change how these individuals view their work. The assumption that White people are not multi-cultural, and cannot understand the life experiences or conditions of racial minorities may be completely wrong.

If a White person grew up in poverty or has had significant relationships with people of color, this may have altered their views about race. They might have removed themselves from a White racial frame and gained cultural competency through these life experiences. Treating race as a discrete variable is problematic. For example, the racial category of "Asian" encompasses many ethnicities and cultures (Takaki, 1998). A third generation Chinese-American is not the same as a newly arrived Hmong refugee from Thailand. The experience of a Mexican-American who is in the United States is different from that of an immigrant from Columbia. And yet, these

individuals are both considered "Latino". Recent work on racial identity and development shows that "intersectionality" of multiple social identities exists for any individual (Wijeyeshinghe & Jackson, 2012). We bring these social identities with us, not just our "racial selves" to the workplace. The interplay of these dynamics can assist us in understanding how to draw on people's different social identities to improve understanding about how to serve those from a different racial background.

The elimination of prejudice is an indicator of social justice because in public systems, prejudice against racial minorities manifests into the systemic attribution of power to Whites (Krislov, 1974). We know that race is intertwined with bureaucratic interests for those in the White majority and solutions are less evident than first appears (Watkins-Hayes, 2011). Undoing the cumulative effects of past racism is impossible, but improving future decisions is possible. We need an ethic of race in public administration; one that governs not just the managerial but calls forth a different set of values from which to operate that is more pragmatic and threaded through public administration (Fredrickson, 2005; Alexander & Stivers, 2010). Focusing on managing diversity alone does not elevate our conceptual understanding of how racism works in the delivery of public services, the dynamics of the organization, or the choices that administrators make to distribute resources. Underlying values and belief systems guide our behavior every day, and also lead us to adopt new ways of working to improve our community impact.

Finally, the significance of this study would be to challenge stereotypes about White people as unable, unwilling, or incapable of understanding social justice and racial equity. Using academic rigor to study what contributes to the making of White allies in public administration and asking this research question allows us to question assumptions about race and research in

public administration. A new theoretical framework may unlock the potential we already have to do achieve better results. Farmbry (2009) urges researchers to be agents of social change and to confront racism in public administration by using rigor and asking new questions. Engaging in academic discourse and scholarship to discover the ways that public administration is incomplete or inadequate is needed. New theories in public administration also call public administrators to use their values, skills, and judgment to deliver public services (Moore, 1995; Dolan & Rosenbloom, 2003; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2007). The image of the public administrator as a competent and neutral contributor is long gone (Moore, 1995; Shafritz, Hyde, & Parkes, 2004). Perhaps this ideal type never existed.

1.4 Research Design

This research was designed to explore the experiences of White public administrators in three county-based human services agencies in Minnesota. The first step was to select the three counties for study and gain site access to the counties to identify potential subjects. Second, I administered a screening tool to ensure that subjects could adequately answer the research question. I also had to ensure a balance in the composition of the participant pool. I interviewed a total of 15 White subjects who were actively engaged in representing racial minority interests. I also collected relevant county-based data such current and historical information about diversity and inclusion efforts, organizational structure, and support structures to advance cultural competency in the organization. Using one hour long interviews, I asked participants the research question: What personal and organizational factors contribute to White public administrators actively representing the interests of racial minorities? Results were compared to current evidence that about the theory of active representation and literature about Whiteness and racial identity. I chose qualitative methods because they are the best suited to observe, examine,

and study the social reality and meaning of the relationships between the person and their organization and how these two categories of factors interact to create the active representation of racial minority interests (Newman, 2006).

1.5 Research Question

The majority of research on the theory of representative bureaucracy has focused on passive representation and counts of people of color as compared to White people in government. Studies confirm that if there are more racial minorities, this does increase active representation of racial minority interests. Shifting the focus to a dominant group and studying representation from a White perspective has never been done before. To build on the theoretical framework for active representation, my research question was: What personal and organizational factors contribute to White public administrators actively representing the interests of racial minorities in county-based human services?

Secondary questions for the research included whether White employees are conscious of the decisions they make, their level of acceptance of their roles in advocating for racial minority interests, and what personal background characteristics exist. Also, what the interaction of the personal and organizational factors look like with the unique characteristics of different subjects, and whether deeper interactions and socialization with people of color matters. And finally, how do Whites reconcile their racial self-interest and belief system in the workplace if there is a need to adopt a role to represent racial minorities? Quantitative methods treat these personal and organizational factors as discrete but the theory of representation depends on individual characteristics, social background, and belief systems to be brought into the workplace to ensure responsiveness of the bureaucracy to the citizens it serves. Because of all these reasons, it made sense to use qualitative methods to answer the research question.

1.5.1 **Reflexivity.**

Because I am a person of color, it is helpful to reflect on the perspectives, assumptions and sensitivities that I brought to this study. To interpret knowledge of one's self in the work as it relates to the research question can help account for the strengths and weaknesses in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Newman, 2006). I have also served in local county human services as a division director and observed how White public administrators in that public organization were actively representing racial minority interests. Furthermore, because I run a large non-profit organization, and I am working on our own diversity and inclusion efforts, I have hands on experience with engaging White employees to become more actively representative of racial minority interests.

I am a Hmong woman who was born in Laos, and resettled in the United States after considerable hardship, war, and loss living in a refugee camp. As a child growing up in low income neighborhoods, I observed poor Whites living among us in public housing and receiving the same welfare benefits as my family. Even though I knew I was different, I was not racially conscious of my Asian racial identity until I was twelve. The event was when I became a naturalized citizen, and the INS officer told me that I could not prove that I was my mother's daughter. Since my mother could not speak English very well, I had to serve as the interpreter. My mother was furious. In broken English, she told him that as she had given birth to me, so I *had* to be her daughter. But, he still looked at us as if we were lying. From this interaction, grew the seed of my Asian racial identity. Before this incident, I identified as Hmong but never as Asian. Afterwards, I realized I could not control how people saw me, and later noticed that my White friends and teachers in high school treated me differently.

Another defining moment for me was winning a full scholarship to study in West Berlin, Germany, at age 16. I had taken German for four years, and was able to speak it fluently as I lived there for a full year. Living overseas made me realize that not all White people are the same, and that racism, and White identity were more complicated than I had imagined. For the first time, I realized my nationality as a U.S. citizen made me American, but I still had to call myself Asian American. Some of the Germans could not understand how I could be an American and also be Asian. Some thought I was Native American because I was dark from playing tennis. However, I was confused that American-born Whites could not see their own race as White, nor did they understand their ethnic origins. I had made friends in the exchange program that year, and it was my first time getting to know White people intimately as friends. Germans saw themselves as German, but not White. Xenophobia was on the rise in Germany and was the predominant conflict during that time. Purity for the Germans in Berlin related to how far back you could trace your ancestors to Prussia. My host father was an American-born Jew who had moved to Berlin to teach German to the American troops, and he did not consider himself White. It was at this time that I realized that race was socially constructed, and that racism in America was a uniquely American phenomenon.

I am a well-educated person, having exceeded what my parents hoped for when they immigrated to the U.S. over 38 years ago. I have crossed socio-economic classes and earn a great living. At age 18, I won a full scholarship to an esteemed private university and was one of the few Hmong women of my generation to graduate from advanced graduate studies before getting married. My career has followed my educational path; I have been promoted every 3-5 years in my profession. In the course of my career, I have an equal amount of professional experience at senior levels in two sectors: the non-profit sector and the public sector. In one of those roles, I

managed the county-based human services for individuals 18 and over for a large urban county. I was the first person of color hired in a director level position there. My career has been a lot of "firsts" as a person of color. This includes the role that I have now in my current organization since I am in the top position.

However, despite these successes, and overcoming many obstacles, I continue to experience racism at work, home, and the community. At the county, if I missed a management meeting, it was immediately noticed; not just because of my authority level but because I am Asian. I have spent a huge amount of time avoiding being tokenized, but still ended up heading numerous diversity and inclusion efforts. It has not been possible to step away from personal and professional challenges as a person of color. I have decided it is a life long journey. As a person of color, I have been attributed with negative stereotypes because of the work of White people who have worked for me and previous leaders who came before me. In one of the worst meetings of my life, I walked out of a room full of White managers and directors at the county who could not see their privilege. They refused to move forward to adopt a self-assessment tool to increase accountability for anti-racism work that a group of staff had developed that they spent a year developing. It was after this meeting that I realized that if race was socializing me to be this angry, that it must be socializing White people to not see their own race. It was a turning point for me to do intensive self-reflection and learning. For over one year, I kept a journal about racism, privilege, and my reactions to White people to explore what I was seeing that White people were not seeing. I had to examine my feelings and relationships as a person of color and come to understand that White people are also victims of racism. We are all complicit in keeping the myths around racism alive.

I decided to take control of my own learning seven years ago, and increased my cultural competency and ability to see racial dynamics in any situation. So, I took the Intercultural Development Inventory, an assessment tool that measures intercultural competency (Intercultural Development Inventory, 2014). I used the results to improve my understanding of my own values and belief system, to see and accept differences, and to change my behavior. I wanted to become more culturally competent so that I could be less exhausted. Six years ago, I moved into a stage called "adaptation" which is the end stage in this cultural competency framework and have stayed there. I have increased my lexicon to talk about racism.

I have observed that I am more at peace with who I am, what I represent, what my values and belief system is and also where my personal and work boundaries begin and end. Although acts of racism bother me, I just take on the challenges that are closest to me. I realize that I do not have to believe the messages that others send me about my race, and I certainly do not have to internalize them. The difference now is that I work to understand what assumptions are behind people's actions and make them explicit. I accept that race is about how others see me, and not so much how I see myself. Though barriers exist, I am less angry and frustrated as I once was six years ago.

As I was interviewing White subjects, I was comfortable with myself. Because of social desirability, I may have solicited responses that introduced bias. For some, it might have been more comfortable to be interviewed by a White person. To minimize possible surprise about my racial identity, I shared over the phone that I am an Asian American woman during the screening process. I assured participants that their digital voice files would be de-identified. I acknowledged the organizational risk in discussing race openly with a person of color, and disclosing how they feel about racial minorities and being White. I assured them that there were

no wrong answers, and that their responses were confidential and would be handled with care and confidentiality. Also, that because of the way the study was designed, key contacts would not receive information about who I was interviewing. I also made sure to observe the participants and their level of comfort, as well as their reactions, verbal and non-verbal, to me as a person of color. Because I am comfortable with myself, my racial identity, and my own cultural competency, I was able to move through the interviews without disruption. However, it was hard to get through some of the interviews because of the negative attributions and stereotypes about people of color exhibited by some of the participants.

1.6 Assumptions and Limitations

For this study, I assumed that White racial identity exists and that was not going to be disputed. Because I was studying active representation, I also assumed that the subject had enough racial consciousness to not deny their White racial identity. I selected participants using selection criteria found in the Research Methods section of this paper that assured me that they identified as White. The primary focus of this study was active representation from the perspective of White people. Therefore, a psychological and sociological exploration of White identity was beyond the scope of this study. I used only enough literature about Whiteness and White identity related to the public sector to give me information about the social construction of White identity and what it means. White racial identity is the lens from which active representation is being reviewed to see how subjects accept a role to champion racial minority interests. This study was also limited because it was not a study of about attitude congruence, personal attitudes, or personalities. I limited the amount of data collected on counties because this was not a case study of counties alongside the experiences of White public administrators.

Finally, I assumed that socialization is a process from birth into adulthood that is an on-going a work, home, and in the community.

1.7 Definition of Terms

This section defines terms that are used throughout the paper.

Personal factors: Personal factors are considered to be attributes that relate to the subjects themselves. Examples of personal factors include their background, experiences growing up, significant relationships, their values and beliefs, and other things they reflect on as important or defining who they are in their lives.

Organizational factors: Organizational factors are those that exist outside of the subject, such as work conditions, rules, policies inside the organization, hierarchy, and bureaucracy.

Passive representation: Passive representation is shared racial identity and symbolic representation. In passive representation, it is assumed that the attitudes, beliefs, and values and represent by racial minorities, or minorities of any type occur without intention or consciousness (Kingsley, 1944; Krislov, 1974). Passive representation is not about behavior, just beliefs.

Active representation: Active representation is when White public administrators take action affect an outcome that benefits people of color and assumes acceptance of a minority representative role (Selden, 1997). People of color are those who are a darker skin color. They may be from an ethnic or cultural minority, a non-English speaker, immigrant, or native born.

Active representation is not about being successful, it is about adopting a role to advance or

champion the interests of a minority in society.

Minority role adoption: This is when a person from a socially dominant group understands and

adopts a minority interest or viewpoint and assumes a representative role with these interests

(Selden, 1997). For the purpose of this paper, minority role adoption refers to White public

administrators and White employees who are working to reduce racial disparities or serving

racial minorities.

Whiteness or being White: White is defined as a socially constructed racial category with light

skin color in which structural advantages, privilege, invisibility, and the "norm" of society is

expressed (Carter & Gooden, 1994; Eichstedt, 2001; Gushue & Carter, 2000; Scott & Robinson

2001; Chubbuck, 2004; Croll, 2007; Hays, Chang & Havice, 2008; Alimo, 2012).

Racial minorities or people of color: Racial minorities or people of color are those who are not a

part of the dominant White racial group and are disadvantaged because of their darker skin color.

Racial minorities and people of color are terms that are used interchangeably in this paper.

Administrative discretion: Administrative discretion refers to the hierarchy in government, the

span of control (hierarchy level and number of direct reports), authority to make decisions with

regard to the allocation of resources that include the use of time, personnel, or dollars to impact

decisions and outcomes (Meier & Bohte, 2001).

Racial minority interests: Racial minority interests are the wishes, desires, wants, and needs of people of color who are at a systemic disadvantage because of the assignment of social value to their darker skin color.

Public administrator: This term refers to White employees working in county human services and includes White people employed at all levels in the hierarchy. This includes directors, managers, supervisors, and front line staff.

Cultural Competence: This term refers to the skills required to serve people from a range of diverse backgrounds, to understand their needs, and to be able to achieve effective service in a cultural context that is understood from those being served. This definition is the general understanding of what cultural competency means from the growing field of work in cultural competency and public administration from Norman-Major and Gooden (2012).

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explains the theoretical orientation for the study and reviews evidence for the theory of representative bureaucracy, active representation, Whiteness and White identity. Key words used included passive representation, active representation, White identity and public administration, race and public administration, Whites and public representation, and Whites and

the public sector. Journals and databases were searched in business, political science, public

administration, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Books and studies anchored in the

theory of representative bureaucracy were also read, even if they were written long ago, to

understand the evolution of this theory over time. In studies about Whiteness and White identity,

only materials related to studies in public sector or had some public aspect such as the public

schools were included. Limited work in the field of public administration about White identity

and public administration exists, so information about being White and in the public sector was

drawn from other fields. Since this was not a study about race but rather about *active

representation*, there is theory that is examined about White identity that is tested or advanced as

a result of this review. I assume that being White is a legitimate social construct. The search for

meaning in the literature review was to ensure that the researcher understood how White people

see themselves and their own White racial identity and compare it to what the evidence suggests

for the social construction of Whiteness as it relates to adopting a minority representative role for

people of color.

2.1 **Theoretical Orientation for the Study**

The purpose of the literature review was to assess the theoretical framework of active

representation, its evidence and studies over time that support or reject its assumptions, and to

identify gaps or opportunities for theory-building. As such, I reviewed studies about passive and

active representation, and assessed the points of intersection and congruence, and where there

was variability or limitations. I also reviewed Whiteness and White identity and its constructs in

studies related to public administration. Identification as White was a condition for the

participation in the study, and the perspective from which the research question about active

representation was being asked, so it was important for the researcher to understand the social

construction of Whiteness and White identity, and how racial identity and the background of

White public employees matter when actively representing racial minority interests. Therefore,

the theoretical orientation of the literature review was to gain insight and synthesize the

information about what we know about social construction of White racial identity and the

personal and organizational factors that contribute to active representation.

2.2 **Theory of Representative Bureaucracy**

Donald Kingsley (1944) proposed the theory of representative bureaucracy to reconcile

our democratic values and guard against the limits of power in the bureaucracy through the

assertion that if individuals from diverse backgrounds served in government, our growing

bureaucracy would more accurately reflect the views of the populace. Public bureaucracies

would be enriched because views of the larger population would be represented in these

individuals. This is known as *passive representation*. Passive representation assumes that

individuals with the same racial identity share similar attitudes, beliefs, and values and represent

similar views in government because of shared socialization experiences without intention or

consciousness (Kingsley, 1944; Krislov, 1974). People of diverse backgrounds would enrich the

bureaucracy through no intentional action, e.g. Black public employees share and represent the

views of Black people in the population. Reflecting the racial demographics in the public sector

would reconcile the different viewpoints of the citizenry and be integrated into bureaucracies.

Later expansion of the theory of representative bureaucracy is attributed to Mosher

(1982) who distinguished between passive and *active representation*. Active representation

occurs when individuals use their discretion to impact policy or program outcomes to further the

interests of who share social origins. Active representation under this theoretical construction

could not occur without people of color in government, e.g. no Asian American employees

means no active representation of the interests of Asian Americans. Moreover, researchers

argued, that the *potential for active representation* through the shared socialization experiences

of individuals with congruent values and attitudes were required for policy and program

outcomes to occur (Thompson, 1976; Rosenbloom and Kinnard, 1977; Rosenbloom &

Featherstonhaugh, 1978). Under this framework, if no potential exists to active representation of

racial minority interests, then active representation is not possible.

There are five assumptions to the theory of representative bureaucracy. The first

assumption is that those of the same racial background share similar within group values,

attitudes, and beliefs. This means that *racial identity and socialization* is the primary anchor in

the theory of representative bureaucracy. The second assumption is that a link exists between

passive and active representation. This link is possible because of employing people of color in

the public sector, or electing public officials who are people of color. For example, Black public

employees represent Black interests. Third, there is the assumption that the *potential for active*

representation exists. Or, that something activates and increases the "potential" for active

representation. There are conditions under which the potential for active representation is

increased, e.g. a welcoming and inclusive environment. Fourth, that people act and decide in

favor their own racial group, or they are "actively representative." And finally, that active

representation is positive, since more equitable outcomes are achieved when employees act on

behalf of their own racial group, thereby reflecting the interests of the citizenry. The more

diverse of a workforce a public organization is, the better able it is to reconcile the diverse views

of the population as a whole.

2.3 **Theory of Active Representation**

The purpose of the literature review was to review the concept of active representation. Passive representation is viewed as a pre-condition to achieve active representation. So, this information was also reviewed. Passive representation is also a valuable concept because it signals to the community that the agency is open to diversity through the hiring of minority groups, and legitimizes the progress in diversifying the workforce overall (Riccuci & Saidel, 1997). There is also evidence that people who share a similar racial, ethnic, or social backgrounds prefer to receive services from those who have similar socialization experiences (Thielman & Stewart, 1996; Watkins-Hayes, 2011). Scavo (1990) also established that there was attitude congruence with those who share a similar racial background and this does lead to similar perspectives on social issues.

The presence of racial minorities in politics may also increase the diversity of public administration. Meier and Smith (1994) studied the link between political and bureaucratic representation using a pooled time series study with 67 Florida school districts. They found that increases in elected black school board members resulted in more African American public administrators, which increased the number of African American teachers. Conversely, increases in African American teachers resulted in more African American administrators which also increased Black political representation on the school board. The presence of African American administrators increased the likelihood there will be Black politicians and vice versa. Diversity increased in both directions in politics and administration.

2.3.1 **Link between Passive and Active Representation.**

Links between the percentage of racial minorities and positive program outcomes for racial minorities is confirmed (Selden, 1997; Meier & Stewart, 1992; Hindera, 1993; Meier,

1993). There is also evidence that positive program outcomes for racial minority groups extend beyond those of same racial minority group to other racial minority groups. This contradicts the assumption that people have to be of the same racial background to represent those interests. Rocha and Hawes (2009) found that the presence of African American teachers lowers secondary discrimination not only among African American students but also among Latino students. The inter-race impact of African American teachers was significantly related to a reduction of suspension rates, placement into special education, and an increase in admission to gifted and talented programs for African American and Latino children. The reverse was also true. The presence of Latino teachers positively impacted African American children along these dimensions, even though the effects were weaker. This supports the idea that employing people of color benefits other racial minority groups.

A related study of the link between passive and active representation and racial and ethnic identity confirmed these directional effects and studied discipline policies. Roch, Pitts, and Navarro (2010) confirmed that the type of policy tool for discipline were more sanction-oriented instead of learning-oriented when there was racial or ethnic imbalance in Texas school districts among teachers and supervisors of color. In districts with more balanced racial and ethnic representation in proportion to teachers and supervisors, more learning oriented disciplinary tools were used for students. Discipline was more punitive for students of color in school districts with less racial and ethnic balance.

2.3.2 **Administrative Discretion.**

Setting limits and checking the power of the bureaucracy sits at the heart of the theory of representative bureaucracy. Bureaucratic discretion is required to achieve policy and program objectives, services effectiveness, and citizen satisfaction. Studies show that the more discretion

a public administrator has, the more salient the impact to minority group interests with active representation (Selden, 1997; Keiser, Wilkins, Meier, & Holland, 2002; Meier, 2003). Critics of bureaucratic representation argue that administrative discretion which promotes minority interests over the rights of the majority can threaten the democratic value of equal treatment (Thompson, 1976; Krislov & Rosenbloom, 1981; Mosher, 1982; Lim, 2006). The fear of too much discretionary power favoring racial minorities could lead to discrimination of other groups (Lim, 2006). Bailey (2004) suggests that acts of "employee empowerment may challenge the value of providing equitable services…" and may threaten democracy (p. 248). However, evidence suggests this may be an unwarranted fear. Distributional studies about whether the presence of racial minorities in government come at the direct cost of White interests shows that increased racial minority representation accrues benefits to all groups and promotes more proportional and equitable representation even when benefits are finite, not less (Meier, Wrinkle, & Polinard,1999; Nicholson-Crotty, Grissom, & Nicholson-Crotty, 2011).

2.3.3 **Minority Role Adoption and Active Representation.**

More recent studies support evidence that racial minority status is not a requirement to advocate or make a difference to benefit racial minorities (Selden, 1997; Selden, Brudney, & Kellough, 1998; Sowa & Selden, 2003; Wilkins & Keiser, 2004; Bradbury & Kellough, 2008; Smith & Fernandez, 2010; Bradbury & Kellough, 2011). The assumption that one must be of the same racial background or have similar socialization experiences to actively represent minority interests is starting to fall apart. Selden, Brudney, & Kellough (1998) argued that it is the adoption of a minority representative role that matters along with attitude congruence, not minority status that potentiates active representation of racial minority interests. Selden (1997) argued that when public administrators perceive or believe that they need to represent minority

interests, they become actively representative of minority interests. Also, that dominant culture groups could actively represent minority interests, and not just minorities. She calls this "assuming the minority representative role".

Selden, Brudney and Kellough (1998) studied attitude formation of racial minorities and Whites at the Federal Department of Agriculture. They looked at factors that led bureaucrats to represent racial minority interests using personal factors, organizational factors, and the perceived role expectations of the Department of Agriculture in the Farmers Home Administration area. Selden and colleagues (1998) found that it was the acceptance of the minority role representation that was the most significant factor in active representation, and not the race or ethnicity of the public administrator. Selden and colleagues (1998) conclude that establishing a work culture that expects employees to increase the access of services to racial minorities to promote equity could significantly reduce disparities in services.

Expanding on this former study, Sowa and Selden (2003) studied the impact of administrative discretion on active representation using data from the Rural Housing Loan Program of the Department of Agriculture's Farmer's Home Administration (FmHA). They considered several variables and their impact on policy outcomes favoring racial minorities. These variables included: administrative discretion, traditional role acceptance (neutral competency, economy and efficiency), minority role acceptance (acceptance of the expectation to increase minority access to programs and tenure of employment) and other control variables (minority status, gender). The researchers found that the more discretion administrators felt they had and the more they accepted a minority role, the more likely they were to influence outcomes that benefited racial minorities. Minority and White public administrators who perceived

themselves as having more discretion in relation to internal agency processes and over client

outcomes produced results that favored racial minority interests.

Bradbury and Kellough (2008) expanded the idea of the potential for active

representation though the adoption of a 'minority representative role' or the willingness of

bureaucrats to see themselves as advocates for, or representatives of minority interests. They

found more potential for minority role representation with racial minorities for racial minorities

than with Whites for racial minorities. Attitude congruence among African American public

administrators and African American citizens was more significant than White public

administrators and African American citizens. However, when they held attitude congruence

constant, the race of the public administrator did not matter. When White public administrators

believed that they should adopt a minority representative role, race did not matter. This supports

the idea that White public administrators could represent racial minority interests. However,

there was no explanation for what creates attitude congruence among White public

administrators.

Meier and Bohte (2001) varied administrative discretion and defined it as the levels of

reporting up the chain of command or span of control to see if it would make a difference to

advance racial minority interests. They used three organization structural levels (street level

teachers, front-line supervisors, and mid-level managers) in six hundred school districts to

measure its impact on policy outcomes. The policy outcome under study was the number of

minority students passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Standards (TASS) exam. They

found that an increased span of control strengthened the relationship between passive and active

representation. A broader span of control improved outcomes for racial minorities.

Finally, race and active representation is more salient than loose concepts of general "diversity" or demographic composition as a whole. Pitts (2007) studied agency performance using a diversity index that grouped race and ethnicity together along three key performance indicators: the pass rate of a comprehensive exam, SAT scores, and drop-out rates. Results were mixed for general diversity but race was found to predict student performance at the teacher level on three key dimensions. However, overall results were mixed, and the data did not support the idea that upper level administrators who have more discretion impact outcomes more than street level bureaucrats. Their conclusion was that demographic diversity is not the same as active representation. Having workforce diversity per se does not result in directly beneficial outcomes for racial minorities.

2.3.4 Limiting Factors in Active Representation.

There are also factors that limit active representation. There is evidence that agency socialization and the bureaucratic context limits racial minorities from becoming more actively representative (Selden, 1997; Scott, 1997). Wilkins and Williams (2008) studied racial profiling among Latino policeman and found that increasing numbers of Latino police officers actually increased the number of traffic stops of Latino drivers, which is counterintuitive. They conclude that when there are strong agency norms for racial minorities to behave in a certain way, the socialization of the agency limits administrative discretion. Racial minorities may feel a need to step up their efforts to overcompensate for possible sanctions related to their job duties, leading to further disparities in public service.

A qualitative study from Watkins-Hayes (2011) demonstrates the relationship with same-race clients and staff is more complex and dynamic than they initially conceived. In her study of human services agencies that administer welfare benefits, Black and Latina clients interviewed in

a racially diverse welfare office did not view same-race workers as particularly helpful in

creating advantages. Strong bureaucratic barriers restricted the ability of same-race front line

workers to engage meaningfully and assist clients even if they wanted help. Perceptions of

clients of color toward same-race workers were subject to different expectations and were not

helpful. In this study, agency socialization prohibited more meaningful work from staff of color

with clients of color. Even though social workers and those seeking assistance were the same

race, bureaucratic rules created barriers to being more culturally responsive. Also, staff and

clients had different perspectives about culturally responsive services. Clients also sometimes

had a negative perception of being served by a person of the same race.

2.3.5 Summary of Personal and Organizational Factors in Active Representation.

The theoretical framework for active representation has evolved to include those of

different racial backgrounds. As long as those individuals adopt a role to represent minority

interests, they can be actively representative. There is evidence that attitude congruence and the

expectations of the bureaucratic environment to represent minority interests are more important

than the race of the public administrator. However, with quantitative methods, it is impossible to

discern why some White people adopted a minority representative role while others have not.

Though we know that active representation occurs, as Selden, Brudney, and Kellough (2011)

state, "…studies relying on data aggregated to an organizational level, as is currently typical in

the public administration literature, cannot separate the effects of the behavior" of minorities

from dominant culture groups (p.163). Having administrative discretion appears to increase the

ability of employees to actively represent racial minority interests but when and how these

individuals decide to do so this is impossible to determine from previous studies. From this

literature review, the concept of "active representation" can be applied to White public

administrators and not just people of color. Looking at active representation from the lens of a dominant social group such as White people would add to the knowledge of what contributes to those in the dominant group adopting a role to represent racial minority interests.

2.4 **Whiteness and White Identity**

To understand what it means to be White, I reviewed research on Whiteness and White identity. Much of the research on White people has focused on three things. First, describing and defining what being White means in relation to historical, social, and economic power and what this means for the construction of White racial identity. Second, measurement of White racial identity development models with application to direct services, particularly in the fields of psychology and education. Third, documenting and learning about the characteristics of Whites who are openly supportive of anti-racism efforts. I will review the first theme in the literature about what being White means and then summarize findings from the other two areas.

2.5 **What is Being White?**

There is agreement among researchers that besides skin color and a few biological traits, race is socially constructed (Marshall, 2002; Chubbuck, 2004; Croll, 2007; Hays, Chang & Havice, 2008; Alimo, 2012). Race is a social identity, and as such it forms in relation to others and the environment; it is reinforced and collectively shared through in-group processes, uses boundary maintenance, identity delineation, and defining who is outside of the group (Eichstedt, 2001; Marshall, 2002; McDermott & Samson, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, Goer, & Embrick, 2006). For any individual, there can also be more than one significant social identity (Bonilla-Silva, Goer and Embrick, 2006; Carter, 1990). According to Leach, Behrens, LaFleur (2002), White identity combines socio-political and psychological features. White identity can be weak or strong, heterogeneous, and contain assumptions that define the social category in relation to other social

identities (Pope-Davis, Stone, & Vandiver, 1999; McDermott & Samson, 2005; Croll, 2007;

Goren & Plaut, 2011).

White identity consists of having social dynamics and structural advantages where the

allocation of resources benefits Whites as the "norm" without having to think about racial

identity in a concept called "White privilege" (Carter & Gooden, 1994; Eichstedt, 2001; Gushue

& Carter, 2000; Scott & Robinson 2001; Chubbuck, 2004; Croll, 2007; Hays, Chang & Havice,

2008; Alimo, 2012). Unlike people of color, White identity is unmarked and operates invisibly

(Eichstedt, 2001; Marshall, 2002). Therefore, White people are less likely to see their racial

identity at work and in their social interactions (Scott and Robinson, 2001; Bonilla-Silva, Goer,

and Embrick, 2006). Chubbuck (2004) calls this colorblind mentality "power-blind" as it masks

White privilege and denies the importance of race as compared to other racial minorities. The

socialization forces for White people prevents them from being able to see themselves as a racial

category, because they are in the dominant group. Without effort, they accrue benefits because of

their skin color.

Therefore, White identity becomes most salient when its dominance is challenged from

racial minorities (McDermott & Samson, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, Goer, & Embrick, 2006; Croll,

2007). When this happens, asserting color-blindness protects White privilege and becomes a

resistance strategy that preserves White identity and its place in society. For White people, the

failure to see the structural advantages of being Whites reinforces the belief that individual

achievement and meritocracy benefits everyone and that White people are superior to racial

minorities (Chubbuck, 2004; McDermott & Samson, 2005). This myth of meritocracy produces

disparate outcomes since societal norms favor White people and reinforces the belief that people

of color are inferior. An inability to see structural inequality is common. Whites are not required

to examine their own racial identity because they operate as "the norm", contrary to other racial groups (Carter, 1990; Marshall, 2002; Ottavi, Pope-Davis, & Dings, 2004; Croll, 2007). As evidence, the number of White people who claim that White racial identity is important is significantly smaller than people of color who think racial identity is important (Croll, 2007). White people are also more socially and spatially isolated than other racial groups; their limited exposure to different races further reinforces these individual and systemic characteristics of White racial identity (Bonilla-Silva, Goer & Embrick, 2006).

Current research about White racial identity is influenced by the research about White identity development in the field of psychology. In the field of public administration, a paradigm of using "cultural difference" as positive, protective, and valuable is gaining momentum in contrast to the paradigm of White superiority (Carter & Gooden, 1994). In reality, both paradigms operate in policies and practices, but the emphasis on cultural competence focuses on skill building, valuing different cultures, inclusion, and understanding how different culture belief systems may impact service delivery (Norman-Major & Gooden, 2012). Cultural studies paradigms do not address racism when White cultural norms dominate and become institutionalized in decision-making that creates structural bias and exclusion. Goodman (2011) argues that focusing on training and development activities with privileged groups to identify their privilege is the first step to becoming racially conscious so that the promotion of racial justice and equity can occur (Goodman, 2011). Racial justice requires institutional organizing and dismantling racism that goes beyond just "culture" because racism is a mutually reinforcing dynamic that socializes all of us.

Lynch (1992) has criticized race-targeted strategies such as affirmative action as a " leftist" movement in academia. White critics have shut down due to guilt and a fear of

retribution. He argues that a socially deterministic perspective of Whiteness assumes that motivation and talent are evenly distributed to all racial groups, which is not true. Hiring racial minorities without proper competency or qualifications harms public administration. Also, assuming that teaching White people about White racial identity, privilege, and dominance to achieve awareness about racial equity is overly optimistic (Chubbuck, 2004). White supremacist groups and anti-racist White allies share the similarity of having strong White identities. However, what these two White groups are trying to achieve is different (Croll, 2007). Federico and Sidanius (2002) used large scale survey research and posited that more sophisticated White people with certain political ideals would understand racism and be less racist. They found the opposite to be true. Whites with more sophisticated political ideals and an understanding of being White were more racist than low-income Whites and Whites with less sophisticated political knowledge. Federico and Sidanious (2002) also found that the belief in the superiority of Whites and the inferiority of people of color around affirmative action was more strongly associated with wealthier and more sophisticated Whites. Therefore, a strong White identity and the treatment of Whiteness as one continuous variable does not do justice to more complex associations and dynamics within White racial identity (McDermott & Samson, 2005).

2.5.1 **White Identity and Racial Consciousness.**

White racial identity development and White racial consciousness are related in the literature and scales have been developed for both. Similarities and differences exist with these scales. A discussion about the scales and how they are constructed is beyond the scope of this literature review. However, is worth noting that construct validity problems exist with both scales even while others are busily applying these scales to measure the progression of White identity development and racial consciousness (Choney & Rowe, 1994; Scott & Robinson, 2001;

Leach, Behrens, & LeFleuer, 2002; McDermott & Samson, 2005; Sang Min, Puig, Pasquarella-Daley, Denny, Rai, Dallape, & Max Parker, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, Goer, & Embick, 2006; Wijeysinghe & Jackson, 2012). Therefore, the results from studies that use these scales are subject to caution and alternative explanations proliferate in the literature. There is agreement that further research and theoretical refinement is required for both tools.

However, there is consensus that White identity models assume the end stage is an abandonment of entitlement for those who are White (Hays, Chang, & Havice, 2008). Common desire for change includes the adoption of attitudes, behaviors and emotions, acceptance and appreciation of diversity, and a personal responsibility for racism to be non-racist (Scott & Robinson, 2001). The most widely used scale is the White Racial Identity Development Scale created by Janet Helms in 1984. The initial scale was expanded and refined in 1990 and 1995 to reflect the progression of White identity moving from racist beliefs to non-racist beliefs as White people come into contact with African Americans through different statuses (McDermott & Samson, 2005). As White people progress, they move through different levels of racial consciousness, interacting with Blacks, and experiencing different levels of comfort or "statuses" (Claney & Parker, 1989). These five statuses are dynamic and move along a continuum: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independence, and Autonomy.

White people progress into a state of enlightenment, modifying their views about social justice and activism in these two measurement scales. The solution to achieving better representation and decreasing racial disparities from this perspective would be for White individuals to come into racial consciousness as a target for self-improvement. No remedy exists for structural inequality in these models as they are individually based. Hays, Chang, and Havice (2008) found that White racial identity development status did predict White privilege

awareness. However, socialization forces maintain the current belief system even in the face of concrete evidence that is counter to the reality of White people. Gushue and Carter (2000) showed that White racial identity attitudes are strongly influenced by racial stereotypes that affect memory recall and information processes. They conclude that just because White people are exposed to accurate information about race does not guarantee that accurate knowledge results.

Studies also show social desirability affects where Whites actual attitudes and behaviors they display are not always congruent with their own beliefs about how far along they were with racial consciousness (Tettegah, 1996; Alimo, 2012). Uhlmann and Nosek (2012) found that when White participants felt threatened, they made negative attributes to people of color instead of themselves. Whites desire to be more racially conscious and tend to report beliefs that are not congruent with their actual behavior. Tettegah (1996) found prospective teachers ratings to be inconsistent of themselves about their racial consciousness. She explained the findings in two ways. First, no single measure exists to assess racial attitudes or racial consciousness across and among racial groups. Second, social desirability effects impacted the results. This supports the assertion that Whites are unwilling to be honest about what they actually believe (Lynch, 1992).

2.5.3 Characteristics of Whites Who Support Anti-Racism Efforts.

One of the motivating factors for Whites who support anti-racism efforts is a vision of living in a nonracist world. The experience of Whites in other social identity categories whereby they are the marginalized group may predispose them to gain racial consciousness because of a lack of privilege with those social identities (Carter, 1990; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Eichstedt, 2001; Schniedewind, 2005; Croll, 2007). Having White people accept and understand that they have a race is the first step to raising racial consciousness so the journey can begin (Eichstedt,

2001). Research assumes that racist behaviors and attributes are learned and can be unlearned. In the book, *White Men Challenging Racism*, White anti-racist allies described their own learning journeys as difficult because of the strong socialization forces that make anti-racism work easier for them compared to people of color (Thompson, Schaefer, & Brod, 2003). Their vision of non-racist world included reclaiming their own humanity as White people.

White allies hold onto racism as their responsibility to dismantle and to deconstruct the system of meaning and power that gives them privilege and creates disadvantages for people of color (Eichstedt, 2001). Chubbuck (2004) proposes helping White people to self-identify and see themselves as a part of the solution, to increase community support and accountability to other White people so that they do not fall back onto social norms. Blitz & Kohl (2012) suggest that creating White racial affinity groups would assist White allies in doing anti-racism work. The function of White racial affinity groups would be the give support in the change process to raise White racial consciousness, build accountability, and validate that racism exists. Ways to intervene include having Whites identify and discuss their racial identity, creating a climate where talking about race and culture is normal, confronting institutional racism, and revising and reviewing practices and policies that lead to disparate outcomes (Schniedewind, 2006). In summary, what White activists share in common is that they are aware of their own racial identity and take action to acknowledge their power and privilege, holding themselves accountable to racial minorities without being asked (Alimo, 2012; Chubbuck, 2004).

As a means to achieve an inclusive climate, race-based training targets raising White racial consciousness through interactions with people of color to increase intercultural comfort over a long and consistent duration of time (Claney & Parker, 1989; Carter, 1990; Pope-Davis, Ottavi, & Dings, 1994; Parker, Moore & Greg, 1998; Schniedewind, 2006).   For example, inter-

group dialogues have been found to fuel White racial ally development (Alimo, 2012). Also, consistent with other studies, Middleton et. al. (2005) found that higher stages of racial identity development correlated with higher levels of perceived multi-cultural competency. However, it is impossible to tell whether training leads to internal change and commitment to align with the interest of racial minorities. There is no tool that measures the level of commitment to dismantling racism.

2.6 Summary of Whiteness

The literature review suggest that it is difficult to separate Whites' individual beliefs and actions from their roles inside institutions; these are mutually reinforcing dynamics. White identity is tied to a larger system of advantages, operates invisibly, and is the norm. By virtue of being White, White people have unearned privilege, whether they reject or accept it. It does not need to be understood to operate, it is just there. It is challenging for Whites who are socialized to function with an unmarked racial identity to actively represent and support the interests of racial minorities, or to be a part of anti-racism work. It is possible that through increased racial consciousness, Whites may become more actively engaged in representing and adopting a minority representative role that benefits people of color. But it is hard for White people to see and accept their own racial identity. The possibility of doing better resides in identifying and seeing the mutually reinforcing socialization processes the create advantages for Whites without their conscious as Whiteness is invisible, rooted in social and economic privilege, and is situational (Eichstedt, 2001; Marshall, 2002; Chubbuck, 2004; McDermott & Samson, 2005).

2.7 Working Assumptions

The research question is, "What personal and organizational factors contribute to White public administrators actively representing the interests of racial minorities?" Assumptions based

on the literature review is that White public administrators may be best able to be actively

representing racial minority interests if they have racial consciousness, understand and can

articulate their own values and belief system, and work in organizations that supports diversity

and inclusion. It is possible to observe active representation if White people accept a role to

represent the interests of racial minorities, and we can ask about their actions such as time spent,

activities, decisions, allocation of resources, and relationships with people of color. Also,

because administrative discretion matters, White public administrators with a larger span of

control and the ability to allocate resources would be better able to impact work outcomes.

Because it is impossible to extricate the personal and organizational factors that contribute to

active representation, I believe that significant relationships, whether inside or outside of an

organization contributes to the active representation of racial minority interests.

CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methods I used to answer the research question, "What personal and organizational factors contribute to White public administrators actively representing the interests of racial minorities in county human services?" I describe the research design along with the procedures, target population, sampling, data collection, instruments, and data analysis. I also discuss the limitations of the research design and explain how I improved the trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of the data throughout the research process. In particular, I reflect about possible researcher bias, the insight I gained about the research process, and note any problems with the rigor of the research.

3.1 Rationale for Qualitative Research Methods

Previous studies have used quantitative methods to measure the effect of the racial demographics, or personal characteristics of those present in the workforce from similar backgrounds. Qualitative methods allow for the exploration of the types of questions expressed above, as well as related sub-questions (Berg 2007; Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Quantitative studies are unable to explore the variation and/or mixed findings related to active representation to date, and no studies I read have used White public administrators as the primary group to be studied. The question to be researched is the following, "What personal and organizational factors contribute to White people actively representing the interests of racial minorities in county human services?" As expressed in Chapter 1, the primary purpose of the study is to confirm or explore whether the experiences of White public administrators are consistent with existing evidence from the theory of active representation. What does the interaction of personal

and organizational factors look like for White public administrators? Although Whites may represent their own racial interests, they might choose to make decisions different to benefit other racial groups and not their own if incentives exist for this type of behavior in the workplace.

Qualitative methods allow for the exploration of these types of questions (Berg 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). According to Berg (2007), qualitative research refers to" what, how, when, and where of a thing – its essence and ambience" (p. 3). The choice of this method fit the task at hand. As discussed in the literature review, robust quantitative studies have guided us with certain types of evidence but there is a gap in terms of understanding the nuances of the variability of research results over time and the lack of data around whether the actual experiences of public administrators is consistent with how researchers have set up quantitative research designs. Meaning making and relationships are difficult to capture using quantitative methods. The desire to explore and elaborate on the theory of active representative can be accomplished effectively using qualitative methods. I combine the findings from the literature review about being White and actively representative of racial minority interests using a qualitative design to enable participants to talk about themselves and their work as much as possible.

3.2 **Research Design**

In the State of Minnesota, counties administer the majority of human services, either directly or through contracted providers. Local county government must respond to its residents. As the racial demographics change, counties need to deliver mandated services such as child protection, cash assistance, and mental health. The structure of the State administered county-based human services delivery system in Minnesota sets up bureaucracy that restricts autonomy,

and yet local public employees must find a way to deliver these safety net services. Unlike roads

or bridges, the cultural expectations and service delivery mechanisms require understanding of

the population that resides there who are seeking and requesting essential services within the

boundaries of that county. The State has a similar set of expectations for the programs and

services in all 87 counties. Even though there is variation in the organizational structure, because

most human services are mandated, it is impossible for counties to not serve its residents without

being sanctioned if key objectives are not being met. Counties have broad responsibility within

its geographic boundaries to serve its residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or background.

I chose to narrow my focus to county based human services in Minnesota because of

these characteristics, and because it was a field in which I was familiar. Also, I still had key

contacts who could assist me to gain site access and permission to potential participants for the

study. The structure of Minnesota's human services delivery system also meant that I could also

interview participants from different counties at different stages of formation and

implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives to examine organizational factors and still

have consistency in terms of the types of positions across counties. To enable maximum access

and in-person contact, stayed within a distance where I could drive to the county and back within

a day without an overnight stay. Because of this, the first step in the design was to select and

gain permission from counties with different characteristics that had experienced significant

demographic changes in the last two decades.

I completed 15 interviews with White employees from three different counties that varied

in geography in Minnesota that had experienced an increase of at least a 10% change in

demographics from 2000-2010 in terms of increasing populations of color. I assumed that

significant change in demographics would require some level of active representation of racial

minority interests because of the need to serve and be responsive to residents of the county who were in need and qualified for public human services. The intent was to talk to participants from county human services at different levels of the administrative or organizational hierarchy, select three counties at various stages of adoption formal diversity and inclusion efforts and covering different geographical locations (urban, suburban, and rural). Also, the pool of participants would be balanced with gender, age, and length of service. Additional data gathering about the counties was pursued through conversations on the phone and in-person meetings, public documents, or documents that were willingly shared so that I could contextualize and interpret the interviews in a cogent manner and decrease threats to validity. Cross-checking with key county contacts was made to ensure that I understood how organizational efforts and the terminology that was being described in the interviews. Since this was not a study of the organizations, but rather, the experiences of White public administrators, when I felt that had a good enough understanding of how the counties were organized and its diversity efforts, I stopped gathering data.

3.3 **Target Population and Sample Selection**

The target population was White public administrators employed in local county-based human services in vastly different geographical areas who had some level of participation, interaction, and engagement with people of color. For my sample of White public administrators, from three counties, there were several criteria that I used to narrow my focus on which counties to approach for the study. First, I wanted counties that had experienced significant demographic change. Second, I wanted different geographical characteristics (urban, suburban, and rural). Third, I wanted counties at varying levels of institutional adoption of diversity and inclusiveness initiatives. Finally, because I knew that I wanted to optimize in-person contact with primary key

county contacts to explain my research and to remain highly accessible, a criteria of proximity and driving distance that would enable me to drive to the county and back within a day was used.

Initial selection of counties included a scan of all counties in Minnesota that have experienced an increase of more than a 10% change from 1990 to 2010 in residents of color as reported in the U.S. Census data and supplemented by the American Community Survey as curated by Minnesota Compass, a free website that shows social and population indicators by county (Minnesota Compass, 2014). From the set of likely counties that had experienced more than a 10% change in people of color with their demographics. Next, I narrowed these two six counties that met my organizational study criteria, and searched their websites for information about diversity, disparities, language lines, and other publicly available information. I also talked to key informants, including the professors on my dissertation committee, former co-workers, and one political official to gather intelligence about two things: whether the county had formal diversity efforts and whether there was a contact person I could to talk to about my research project that might help me gain permission into the county. Since I wanted one rural, one urban, and one suburban county, I choose one primary county to approach and then a back-up for each one in case the primary county I wanted denied me access. I also reshuffled the order of the six counties in terms of desirability once I had reviewed information about each of the counties and talked to key contacts who had knowledge about those counties.

3.3 Gaining Site Access

The next step was to gain permission from key contacts to get inside of the target counties that met the criteria who would help me to find subjects who might fit my inclusion criteria (this will be described later). Because each of the counties was slightly different, county contacts required a different level of support to gain access. A description of the study was sent

to each county contact, along with an offer of help to answer questions about who might be good candidates for the interviews. A description of the expectations for the role of key county contact was given that was a request for time to spend time with me to establish a relationship and gain site permission, assist with identifying potential subjects, ensure appropriate space for interviews, share key documents with me so that I could better understand the county, and serve as a resource for future follow up as needed. If the initial email or phone contact was positive, I went ahead and set up a time so that I could briefly explain the general purpose of the study, the research process, the consent process, and to explain their roles. The county contacts were given a description of the study that they could share with other key county leaders to gain support inside the organization.

I approached four counties total: one urban, one rural, and two suburban. The urban county as the easiest to access and the response was almost immediate enthusiasm for participation in the study. The first suburban county I approached was unable to participate even though it was my first choice. The reason cited for not participating was that it would take too much time with the federal health reform occurring in the same time period. However, the suburban county approached next was able to participate and met all study criteria. Finally, the rural county agreed to participate after many conversations and some modifications in terms of thinking through whether or not they had five staff who might qualify as participants in the study.

Once I gained site access and a relationship with a person who agreed to be the key county contact person, I followed up with a request for organizational documents about diversity, inclusion, or anti-racism efforts as well as organizational charts to better understand each of the counties, prior to the interview. All counties willingly provided information about how they were

organized structurally, but they were less willing to share any information about internal

diversity efforts. One county directed me to their website, another did not share materials after

four attempts and requests for information, and another basically said they had no relevant

materials. However, I did find additional information through public resources and those

interviewed that gave me enough information to understand the counties. Key contacts were also

able to help answer questions later about how their diversity and inclusion efforts were

organized, and the challenges that they were having with those efforts.

After the multiple attempts at requests for information from county contacts with limited

success, I decided that no other information would be forthcoming. County contacts were either

too busy, or did not wish to disclose more information about formal diversity efforts. Because

the primary purpose of the study was to review personal and organization factors that contribute

the White public administrators themselves, I felt that I had gained enough information about

efforts that were underway from conversations with the participants themselves, conversations

with key county contacts, and what was available on public websites.

3.4.1 Participant Selection and Recruitment.

The goal was to interview 15 White participants with five participants per county for one

hour about their experiences. Though this sample size seems small, it was of adequate size to

review and assess the phenomena of active representation. This method of using a sample in

which the researcher renders some judgment or applies screening is appropriate in qualitative

methods because it is more important to find subjects in which the phenomenon being studied

can actually be observed (Berg, 2007). To balance out participant characteristics and ensure

basic representativeness and diversity in the subject pool, I encouraged county contacts to

generate a list that would include people of varying ages, gender, length of service, and people who held different types of positions in the county (mental health, chemical dependency, financial assistance services, and administration). Each county contact was asked to generate the names, titles, and contact information for at least ten people who might fit the study description and criteria. This task posed no problem for the urban and suburban counties which were larger and more diverse. However, the rural county was unable to generate ten names because of its small size and relative homogeneity. However, five participants were eventually found that met the selection criteria.

3.4.2 **Recruitment.**

Once the list of names was given to me, I contacted potential participants directly to maintain some anonymity for those eventually chosen. I sent potential subjects an email with a short description of the study to see if the potential participant would be willing to be contacted for a brief phone call for me to explain the study, and to also screen them to see if they would qualify for in depth interview that would last for 1.5 hours. The actual interview itself would take only one hour, but I asked for a total of 1.5 hours to ensure that there could be rapport built, I could further explain the study and possible risks, obtain consent, and help answer questions. If a potential participant agreed to talk further, I administered a short questionnaire over the phone or through email to screen them.

The inclusion criteria included the following: potential participants had worked for the county more than two years, participant self-identified as White, whether their work brings them into at least weekly contact with racial minorities, and whether they engaged in efforts around reducing racial disparities, and whether they were actively at work on efforts and activities

around racial minorities. Participants had to meet all criteria to be invited to an interview that last about one hour. Initial selection of the potential subject from the county contact and passing the screening increased the likelihood that subjects could contribute to answering the research question and be truthful and authentic about their experiences. In qualitative research, this is an important aspect of pre-qualifying subjects to increase the likelihood that the constructs being studied are observable and can be articulated (Newman, 2006).

There were a total of 38 names generated from all counties. The first contact was usually an email that was tailored specifically for that county, describing the study, the name of the county contact who considered them to be an appropriate person for the study, and requested that they reply to the email or give me a call if they were interested. I also followed up with a phone call to their work phone number, with a brief but similar message and would wait a week before marking off that the person as not interested in the study. Initial contact was made in this way for batches of 5-7 possible participants over a month with follow up each time. If a person connected with me in that week and expressed interest but did not return future emails or phone calls, I would move onto the next person on the potential participant list.

Of the 38 names generated, I contacted 22 potential participants, and 18 agreed to an initial conversation. Four of the respondents did not follow up, even though they expressed interest and one of the respondents was excluded because he did not meet the inclusion criteria for length of employment at the county. The reasons for organizing the recruitment process to target a diverse pool was to ensure that White participants of different backgrounds were included. In the urban county, I requested additional names of possible participants because there were no male participants on the list, and in the suburban county, only those with supervisory authority were listed. In the rural county, there were a limited number of pool of potential

participants because of the size of the county. The gradual process of initial contact, screening, and follow-up with participants and key county contacts created a diverse pool of participants, representing many facets of local county human services and totaled the goal number of 15 White public administrators. By tapping into the knowledge of key county contacts, I used them to create a purposive, network sampling to recruit and then screen participants for the study.

In regards to the exclusion criteria, the screening criteria was set up to eliminate the possibility that participants would not be able to agree to, or talk about their own White identity, would not have enough role clarity or understand their own job responsibilities and the county in which they worked, or were not being actively representative of racial minority interests. It was a not a criteria to be conscious and/or effective at being actively representative. There were two additional criteria that excluded possible participants, from the very beginning. The first was that I excluded individuals who have a job role focused specifically on diversity initiatives or are in this support category. This excluded human resources professionals, diversity coordinators or managers, and those who had assigned duties for some aspect of supporting other staff people in government around diversity. The reason for the exclusion was because the research question was focused on Whites who are working in county human services and not those who are in support roles or managing diversity initiatives. Also, if I had a personal relationships with the person suggested, I disqualified them from participation to eliminate bias. Screening questions were asked over the phone using a questionnaire. If people were in positions in which phone conversations were less convenient or impossible, they were emailed the questions from the questionnaire which they answered and emailed back. Once potential participants were screened, I set up an interview within two weeks of contact. The week of interview, I sent out or called to remind the participant of the interview and to confirm the date, time, and place.

3.4.3 Description of the Study Sample.

A total of 15 participants were interviewed, 10 female and 5 male. Of the 15 participants 8 worked directly with clients or supported other staff with no direct reports, four participants were managers who had at least one layer of staff who reported to them, and one of the participants was in the top social services director position. Length of serviced ranged from 3-33 years, with the average length of service at 15 years. Long tenure was a reality for the majority of participants with 60% having worked in their county for over 10 years. The average age of participants was 53.8 years, with the youngest participant being age 42 and the oldest being age 64. Four participants were under the age of 50, seven between 41-60, and four over age 60. Most participants had held many different types of jobs within their specialty area, and those with the longest tenure had held multiple roles in their counties, or had been promoted several times. Different types of human service areas were also represented among the participants including child protection, mental health, chemical dependency, child welfare, foster care, financial assistance, workforce development, family stabilization services, and administration. There was one case in which the key county contact expressed an interest to be interviewed. Since he met all the screening criteria, he was included in the study sample. A description of sample is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of Sample

Service Area	Discretion/Authority	Gender	Length of Service (Years)	Age
Child Protection	Front line	Female	13	46
Child Protection	Manager	Female	16	49
Administration	Front line	Female	5	60

Mental Health	Manager	Female	3	50
Chemical Dependency	Front line	Male	33	58
Child Welfare	Director	Female	8	50
Workforce	Manager	Male	12	55
Child Protection	Front line	Male	9	42
Foster Care & Adoption	Supervisor	Female	12	55
Administration	Manager	Female	13	57
Mental Health	Front line	Female	16	44
Administration	Director	Male	20	57
Financial Assistance	Front Line	Male	10	61
Family Stabilization	Front Line	Female	29	60
Family Stabilization	Front Line	Female	10	64

In Table 2, the demographics of the sample is shown with percentages to better describe the

diversity of the sample.

Table 2. Demographic Data (N=15)

Gender	<u>n</u>	%
Female	10	66.7
Male	5	33.3

Discretion/Authority	<u>n</u>	%
Line Staff	8	53.3
Supervisor	1	6.7
Manager	4	26.7
Director	1	6.7

Length of Service (Years)	<u>n</u>	%
0 to 10	6	40
11 to 20	7	46.7

Over 21	2	13.3

Age	**n**	**%**
40-49	4	26.7
50-59	7	46.7
60-65	4	26.7

Categories of Service	**n**	**%**
Administration	3	20
Children and Families	7	46.7
Mental Health	2	13.3
Workforce Development	1	6.7
Financial Assistance	1	6.7
Chemical Dependency	1	6.7

3.3 Instruments

This section describes the data collection instruments. All instruments used are attached in the Appendices. Instruments used for this research included a screening with demographic questionnaire, a consent form, an interview protocol using semi-standard questions and prompts, and a self-reflection tool used for journaling for pre-interview, during the interview, and post-interview thoughts and feelings as a person of color. The Hamline Institutional Review Board granted permission to proceed before I moved forward to pilot these instruments. Approval was gained within the same day because this research was considered to be of minimal risk to participants. To increase the reliability of the survey instruments, my three member dissertation committee reviewed them with me and gave feedback. Also, I conduced two full pilot interviews with White public administrators using the screening and demographic questionnaire, the consent

form, the interview protocol, and prompt questions. Reflections about these were noted in the researcher's journal.

The pilot interviews resulted revisions of the interview protocol and the consent form to make them easier to use. Pilot interviews were not included in the data analysis. To ensure validity, reliability, and to decrease bias, a White researcher currently working in county government who has extensive experience with qualitative research design was solicited to give feedback about the design of the questions. Feedback from the three members of the dissertation committee were also incorporated to ensure that questions were appropriate and to eliminate researcher bias. Slight revisions were made to the consent form, the description of the research itself, and prompt questions in the interview protocol. These steps made the instruments clearer and more reliable to solicit responses to answer the research question.

3.4.4 **Screening Guide and Demographic Questionnaire.**

The screening guide and demographics questionnaire consisted of one page interview guide to prompt me to ask questions in the same way of each potential participant. The demographic data portion included essential data such as their county, their names, the date of initial contact, age, gender, number of years in their current role, and whether they supervise anyone. The screening questions included inclusion criteria about length of service, their job role, whether they identify as White, if their weekly work brought them into contact with people of color, and if they were actively engaged at work in efforts and activities about race. In the top right hand corner, and if the participant met the screening criteria, they were given a code to be the identifier for future work related to the participant.

3.4.5 **Consent Form.**

The consent for was developed that stated the purpose of the research, including an introductory paragraph about who the researcher was and what participation would mean. The consent form clearly identified that I was a student at Hamline University and ended with my contact information. On the consent form, the expectations for the duration of the subject's participation was laid out which included setting aside 1.5 hours total to review the project, gain consent, and conduct a personal interview. Participants were asked about whether they would agree to be taped during the interview, could assist later in clarifying ideas or thoughts during the transcription process, and not speaking to others about the research until I was finished interviewing all participants at the county. The consent form also assured participants of confidentiality, and that all tapes and records would de-identified and destroyed at the end of the research project. Furthermore, I described the risks and benefits to the participants. Because talking about race can sometimes be risky or uncomfortable, I emphasized that participation was voluntary and that the participant could stop the interview at any time. Finally, subjects were asked if they would like to receive a copy of the finished dissertation. Requests were noted with the intent to send them a copy later as requested. Permission was also be asked for future contact if anything required clarification and follow-up.

3.4.6 **Interview Protocol.**

Interviews used a semi-standardized interview protocol. The reason for this format was to be able to have some pre-determined topics with key questions beforehand but retain the flexibility to probe more deeply about the key research question (Berg, 2007). Prior to administering the interview, consent was gained, with two copies signed and filed away for

future reference. The instrument was developed with two phases in mind. The first phase of the

interview established rapport with the subject and moved onto a description of their work roles,

their racial identity, and their interactions with people of a different race. Topics in the interview

protocol were to describe their work, what being White means to them, and asking them to

describe their interactions with racial minorities at work, home, and in the community.

After this "get comfortable stage", I moved onto the next phase of the interview which

was more challenging. During the second phase, I asked them to describe work situations at the

county in which they took action to benefit racial minorities. A series of open ended questions

with prompts were used to have participants reflect and talk about work situations in which race

was a factor in making decisions to benefit racial minorities. The intent in asking about past

experiences was to allow for me to observe how people thought of themselves in their work to

benefit racial minorities. I generated other questions that guided deeper probing around the

research question which was "What personal and organizational factors contribute to White

public administrators in county-based human services actively representing the interests of racial

minorities? General questions included: the situation, their role, the barriers and challenges that

emerged, results, and a summary of which factors they thought contributed to their actions.

3.4.7 Research Journal.

As part of good process, and to examine my own thoughts, feelings, and observations of

the interviews, to document progress, and provide some reflection for before the interview,

during interview, and after the interview, I maintained a research journal. Appendix D, shows the

reflective questions I noted in the research journal. I noted non-verbal cues, emotional triggers,

and/or thoughts that struck me. Also, any conversations or insight that was notable along with

general impressions, and conversations with peers or colleagues about the research question. The

process of talking out loud to others about this study also helped me process what was going on

and assisted in coming up with the words to express what I meant by certain things. Writing

things down in the journal assisted with this reflective process, even in documenting how the

transcriptions were going overall.

3.5 Data Collection and Management

This section describes the procedures in data collection using the instruments described

above. After initial contact was made, the screening and demographics questionnaire was

administered. Each time the questionnaire was administered, a subject number would be

assigned, and placed in a specific county file. If a participant qualified and met the inclusion

criteria, a time was scheduled within two weeks to conduct the interview. I tried to schedule

interviews with participants from the same county for an entire half day or day so that I could

save on travel time. I spent the time in between interviews journaling, or listening to the

interviews.

The first half hour of every interview was dedicated to introducing the purpose of the

study, reviewing the consent form together, obtaining consent, and building a relationship with

the participant before the digital recorder was turned on. Two consent forms were signed. One

consent form was given to the participant and the other, I retained for my research files. Subjects

were asked if I could record their interviews. I always arrived early so that I could check the

batteries at least once before moving forward with the interviews, make sure chairs were

appropriately arranged, and loud noises in the room or outside the room would be minimized.

Out of 15 interviews conducted, only two participants preferred to come to my work office to

interview, stating that they would be more comfortable to be outside of their county offices.

All interviews were about one hour. There were disruptions that occurred during two of the interviews. One subject learned that his daughter had gotten into a car accident and had to take care of a phone call right way to make sure that she would be all right. He returned after a ten minute break and we continued the interview where we left off but the flow of the interview did not resume with natural rapport. I believe this was because his mind might have been elsewhere. His non-verbal cues suggested that he was distressed, and he seemed to be keeping close track of the time. The other disruption was simply a need to run to the restroom. However, with the digital recorder off, I learned that we shared a mutual friendship with a person she was discussing in her interview. Because of the inadvertent trust that was built on the bathroom break, she may have disclosed more than she normally would have to a stranger afterwards when we continued the interview.

Digital voice files were backed up on the computer, de-identified, and were protected with a password that locked the files on my home computer. Digital voice files were deleted once files were transcribed. I transcribed all the voice files myself in order to spend more time with the data and to think about the words, reactions, thoughts, and stories of the participants. Each digital voice file took approximately 6 hours to transcribe. I transcribed all interviews verbatim. Once transcripts were complete, they were printed out in hard copy, and a copy was stored in a locked file at my home office so I could read them over if needed. Consent forms that had names on them and the screening questionnaires with the subject assignment codes were kept in a separate locked location. All transcripts and digital voice files were de-identified and assigned the same number. Demographics information about each participant was put into an excel spreadsheet to capture essential information for later. Again, no names were kept on this file, and everything was password protected.

To protect the counties and those who participated, the counties are referred to in this paper as urban, rural, and suburban. Also, any distinguishing characteristics of the counties themselves that might make them readily identifiable are left of out in this paper as well as characteristics that might be able to be traced to a certain individual. As discussed earlier, even key county contacts, through the design of the research were not informed about who I interviewed. Unless the participants themselves disclosed their participation, participation information was kept confidential. County contacts, did, however, at times assist me with finding space for the interviews to take place, so it is possible that some of them may know who was interviewed. Key contacts at the counties are not named. Two counties turned over information about organizational structure, diversity efforts, and other historical information. However, after repeated attempts with one of the counties, I decided that they were either unwilling or unable to assist and stopped contact. However, all contacts were still available for cross checking my understanding of their organizations, and I felt that I was able to get enough information for data analysis. After all five participants were successfully interviewed in each of the counties, I informed the key county contacts that I was finished with their county.

Cooperation was excellent during the data collection phase. I found myself moving seamlessly from one interview to another. It was the transcribing process that was time intensive since I was doing this myself. Each transcript was between 20-43 pages, depending on how verbose the participants were in their descriptions of previous work situations. In total, 485 pages of raw data were transcribed in double spaced in 12 pitch point, Times New Roman font. In addition, materials from public websites, and other reading that was voluntarily turned over was also collected and notes were read for consideration and context. I jotted notes in a research journal with specific thoughts throughout the research process. Although I was not as diligent as

I thought I should be, I did find that the exercise of reflection before, during, and after the interviews was helpful in examining my own feelings and thoughts. Though tedious, transcribing was helpful because I had to listen the interviews repeatedly until all the words were typed up.

All data will be destroyed, including paper files, digital files of transcripts, and other materials once this research has concluded. Until then, all the data as described will be kept secure and confidential.

3.6 **Limitations of Research Design**

This section discusses the limitations in the research design, researcher bias, and other threats to rigor.

Qualitative methods were used in this study and therefore results cannot be generalized to the entire population of White public administrators. Findings and comparisons to current theory are intended to refine the theoretical framework about active representation. Another limitation is that this study had data from only 15 participants. The small sample size, though rich, is not a representative sample. Reaching saturation is the objective, in which there is just enough data to explain certain phenomena (Berg, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Newman, 2006). Another limitation was the inability to have prolonged engagement with study participants. I only spent 1.5 hours with them. In qualitative methods, prolonged engagement in which the researcher can observe and see actual behavior, would mitigate possible misunderstanding or false judgments that are rendered (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This was not possible due to the design of this study. To address this issue, I asked subjects about whether they understood my questions. Also, I paraphrased and used active listening to make sure I understood their perspective and experiences throughout the research process. Also, participants were encouraged to add anything that they thought would be relevant at the end of the interview. Two subjects took advantage of

this and described more fully who they were and gave other personal reflections. I followed up with one subject about comments he made that I did not understand during the transcription process.

3.6.1 **Researcher Bias and Participant Bias.**

Another possible limitation is researcher bias. Researcher bias may exist because of my own worldview and the way that I have been socialized as a person of color, or it could be present because of the social desirability effects of White people in relation to the researcher. Milner (2007) argues that while race and culture and the researcher's position as a participant in society always introduces bias in qualitative research, deliberate self-reflection and the anticipation of the dangers, seen, unseen, and unforeseen for researches of all races can increase and enhance the quality of the results. I identify with these different social identities: Asian, Hmong, female, Christian, able-bodied, and middle class. As an ethnic Hmong person who grew up speaking two languages fluently, and is Asian, my presence affected the interviews. To limit researcher bias, three things were done. First, I have reflected and discussed in this paper, the key times in my life when racial consciousness was raised, and what it means to be Asian American. Second, I disclosed to potential research subjects that I was Asian American during the screening process so they could be prepared for the interview. Finally, to limit researcher bias, I used the case-analytic process described by Krieger (1985) to increase the trustworthiness of the data by doing the following:

- Identifying and writing down my responses including thoughts and feelings pre-interview, during the interview, and after the interview;

- Conducting an assessment of my own thoughts and feelings of each phase to identify

  prejudices, and impressions of self on the interview process to arrive at any insights about

  my racial identity in relation to White participants;

- apply any learning and insight gained about myself with in the data analyses and the finding

There was also the potential for participant bias because subjects were White and also came with their own racial worldview and assumptions about Asian Americans and other people of color. To try to eliminate participant bias, I engaged in active listening and affirmed reported experiences, regardless of what was being said. I did more listening than talking during rapport building and distanced myself emotionally from the words that were being said in order to give participants maximum flexibility in explaining and describing their life experiences. Finally, if subjects sought to validate their work situation and perspective, even if I personally thought it was not right, I did not express disagreement. I asked participants to contact me later if they had further questions, needed to share more information, or had second thoughts about anything they said.

There were a few situations where I did have strong emotional reactions, and I had to control and distance myself from subjects because of the negative portrayal of the persons of color. For example, several participants attributed a lack of diversity in their workforce to public transportation barriers and a lack of qualifications among people of color. Though I know that both of these are barriers to access, the swift responses still assumed that people of color would not have cars to drive to those counties nor would they enter at higher ranks than at front line levels. Through the interviews, a feeling of trust and safety was built for certain participants. Afterwards, one of them offered to be friends. I had a negative reaction, not only because I was

trying to maintain a research relationship, but also because I did not want to fill the void in the subject's life that had been opened up during the interview about her lack of friendships with people of color. I noticed that White subjects were checking the social construction of their racial experiences with me, a person of color with whom they had formed trust, in order to validate that racism exists. In doing so, White subjects were trying to gauge my reaction to their words and seek approval from me about their growing racial consciousness. The subtlety of these nuances drove home the deep need for White people to have some gauge of reality outside of their intimate and mostly homogenous social circles about the experiences of people of color.

Finally, other potential bias was that I am a well-known figure in one of the counties because of my job and previous work experience in county government. My past role and my current role are highly visible public roles. To minimize this bias, I excluded potential participants which with whom I have had a direct relationship. Even though it had been over five years since I worked in county government, there were still five people on the initial list of possible subjects who were disqualified because of this requirement. It was possible for participants in the county in which I served that feelings (negative or positive) about my work in that county there were present during the interviews. However, only subjects with no previous direct working experience or social connections with me were selected to reduce the potential for researcher and participant bias.

3.6.2 **Rigor.**

Other threats using this method are trustworthiness and the credibility of the data. Because the researcher uses their understanding of the world as a tool to interpret the data, it is possible that poor judgment and poor categorization occur. To decrease these threats, certain

design elements could be placed to ensure rigor, primarily using triangulation with current

research and peer or member checking for rigor and credibility (Berg, 2007; Marshall &

Rossman, 2011). I used the research question and the literature as an initial coding framework. I

also sorted codes three times to ensure internal integrity and consistency against emergent

themes and relationships. I also used the full transcripts as an anchor and reference for the

interpretation of the data. Also, I checked my thinking with experienced qualitative researchers,

including colleagues and professors, to help me get organized, to review my explanatory schema,

and help offer alternative interpretations. This is described more fully in the data analysis

section.

CHAPTER 4

4. DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I describe how I analyzed the data using content analysis with the

theoretical framework of active representation to see what personal and organizational factors

would emerge from the data.

4.1 Analytic Induction

Content analysis is a systemic and careful way of inductive analysis that uses qualitative

data to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings (Berg, 2007). I used materials collected

from county contacts, readily available published documents, my own research journal, and the

transcriptions of the 15 interviews for content analysis. As suggested by Berg (2007), I used a

stage model of qualitative content analysis which included an identification of the research

question, determining the analytic categories, reading through and establishing grounded

categories, sorting through the grounded categories, establishing selection criteria for sorting data chunks, counting and reviewing all textual material materials, and identifying patterns for explanations to the research question.

After digital voice files were transcribed, I continued to familiarize myself with the interview recordings. I had to listen to the digital files multiple times in order to transcribe. This was an advantage later on in the open coding process because I was able to make meaning out of data chunks that might not have been possible without listening to the intonation and emphasis of how subjects responded to questions. I was astounded that I had a total of 485 pages of data. To start engaging in content analysis, I used my research question and the theoretical constructs as the initial analytic categories. In content analysis, the researcher takes written documents or transcriptions and uses objective analysis and criteria to start sorting the data (Berg, 2007). I used the following categories: active representation, personal factors, and organizational factors.

Anything that related to Whiteness, personal background, life events, significant persons, relations and social interactions outside of work, belief systems, and thoughts about people of color in relationship to the individual were coded as personal factors. Mentions about work climate, senior leaders, the law, policies, practices, and the bureaucracy were identified as organizational factors. Under the category of active representation, the codes include role adoption of minority interests, self-reports about actions taken, job duties, and examples of where the subject reported participation to educate, inform, allocate, represent and work on issues that could be interpreted as support and movement to create a positive benefit to racial minorities. If I thought that something was noteworthy but not a part of these other categories, I would make a note about the insight gained from the data and set it aside as part of a different type of construct that could not be located in the current research on active representation.

4.2 **Coding**

Using these theoretical constructs, I started coding the data. I learned how to program a short macro in Microsoft Word that could help me identify and then select the codes into a different Word document. What resulted was a serious of data chunks that were codes that I could label and note any thoughts or insight I had about it. Each code was identified by the subject number. Each transcript was coded with the research question with the initial categories: personal, organizational, and active representation. I classified, "White" as a sub-category under personal factors. Once I coded all 15 transcripts, I ran the macro and selected the codes with the data chunks into a separate document. Once I did that, I reviewed my codes again and compared them to their original transcript. I made more notations, and if anything seemed miscoded, I revised the code. During this process, I reviewed the codes as if I were seeing them for the first time without the benefit of the transcript. I wanted to see if the data chunks could stand on their own, and if not, whether I needed to jot down any additional notes about the data chunk. After I made these notes on the coded data, I increased the font size to be able to read and see them more easily. Then, I printed the codes onto 8 x 11.5 pages of paper, and I cut the codes apart to prepare them for sorting. This process was used for all 15 transcripts. Once each code was separate, I stacked them into one large pile. During this stage I documented any insights and or thoughts I had in my research journal or on post-it notes that were placed out in the open so I could think about them to interpret the data. I also read through the information gathered from county contacts and reviewed background materials for the counties, making notes for further interpretation.

I took several steps to increase the consistency and reliability of the coding process. I kept a hard copy of the transcripts nearby and checked my understanding of not just the words, phrases, or text, but the meaning underneath surface level words and phrases and the context in which the comment was being made. For example, I initially coded the following as "training": "…I can remember attending Bridges out of Poverty training. Yeah, it was at a middle school, and I bet there were probably three or four hundred people in attendance, and I had a good representation from social services but just you know, one of the things I thought of is you know, I sit at age 57 and I think about retirement, and I've got a lot of friends that are just in the private sector, unfortunately, starting to retire in their mid-50's. And one of the things that we thought of was not so much, if you are in poverty, maybe you're not thinking past what tonight looks like or tomorrow as opposed to ten years from now…" but I realized on the second review of this code that he was referring to his reflection of moving from a lower socioeconomic status to a higher one. So, I re-coded this under "intersectionality."

After cross-checking, I would periodically gain new insight and re-label the code. I also posted my research question so I could see it every time I looked up from coding, and every time I walked into my office. I would check the codes against the research question and its constructs which served as the initial coding framework. I also compared the codes against each other, sorting them into groups that were similar. If codes became very different from the others in that group, I would start a new group. Codes that did not conceptually belong anywhere, I neatly stacked away in a corner. I did not name any of the groups until all the codes were sorted into initial piles. The only thing I did was place a post-it note with one word near it so I could sort more easily. What emerged from this process were many different groups of codes with similar content. Piles that were very small were re-examined to see if they actually fit with a larger pile,

and piles that seemed stacked too high were re-examined to see if there was more than one

concept. If they was more than one concept, I split them up and put them near each other.

4.3 Axial Coding and Themes

Examining the many piles, my notes, and insights that I had gained from the process

along with my own observations, notes from my journal, and what I had learned from county

contacts and related documents is when I saw themes emerging. This process of learning,

reflection, listening, and reviewing took over six months. From listening and transcribing the

interviews, to conversations with peers, journaling, re-reading the summaries from the literature

review, to the stacks of piles of codes on my desk, I organized the categories into emergent

themes. I noticed that some of the themes appeared to show consistent patterns and that my

labels on some of the codes inside the categories were no longer as accurate as I thought. At this

point, I relabeled some of the codes. I also used large post-it notes to jot down thoughts about

linkages, and examined what the codes had in common if I noticed these patterns of themes

within the categories. Or, if codes seemed different conceptually, I moved them to a different

pile and labelled them something else.

In this next process, I conducted what is known as "axial coding," in which basic patterns

start to emerge from the data and new ways of thinking emerge (Berg, 2007; Marshall &

Rossman, 2011; Newman, 2006). Once themes emerged from my data that were consistent from

the previous process I wrote each theme down on post-it notes and told myself I did not have to

commit to these themes, but that I needed to use them to organize my thoughts about linkages

and relationships of these themes to each other. I also had a new category that I had noticed. So,

I used large flat surface of my desk to spatially organize these themes in relationships with each

other and also formed a new analytic category. I moved the themes together in new and different

ways so that I could think through the possible relationships.

Once I was satisfied with my ideas about these emerging themes and their relationships

with other themes and categories, I re-sorted every single piece of data and their codes one more

time. Though this was time consuming, I wanted to ensure that I was consistent with the pattern

of relationships and themes I was noticing with my second sort. I paid attention to not only the

words but their meanings underneath the words. I moved nearly a third of my codes, and I was

satisfied that there was more consistency than I thought with my first opening coding attempt.

The categories and themes seemed to be more consistent. One of the steps I also took during this

second sort was that I moved categories closer or farther apart spatially on my desk, depending

on the relationships, linkage, and themes that emerged. For example, a theme in the personal

factors category such as "personal experience in a marginalized social group" was placed in

closer in proximity to "conscious of White racial identity" rather than "inconsistent and poor

training" which was moved farther away. The reason I did this was because it appeared that one

theme inside of a category would interact with a different category. Also, that it did not seem

possible to extricate one theme form from another. Lastly, a third reading of every single code

within a theme or analytic category was cross-checked with other codes within the same category

and sub-category (selective coding) to make sure they represented the theme expressed.

4.4 Objectivity and Trustworthiness

To ensure objectivity and trustworthiness, I had one of my professors from my committee

who has conducted many qualitative studies come to my house to look at how I conducted my

data analysis. I asked her questions about my approach, and shared my thoughts with her about

the relationships and themes that had emerged. Peer checking is yet another way of making sure

that my thinking was sound and that the integrity of the research process was maintained (Berg, 2007). I also consulted with a retired professor who with whom I have a relationship through mutual board service about my research process, and talked to qualitative researchers at my workplace. I discussed themes I was finding to White public administrators and colleagues in the field also helped me check my ideas. Also, I used three separate textbooks on qualitative research and content analysis as a reference to make sure I was on track with my data analysis method (Berg, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Newman, 2006). And I also reviewed four examples of qualitative research that used content analysis. At the end of the process as in the beginning, I used the theory of active representation along with studies about Whiteness to triangulate and compare what I was discovering to confirm where the gaps are for future research. I tried to come up with alternative explanations for what I was finding.

In a final step, I looked for rigor, I tested my themes, patterns, and connections with the initial working hypothesis to search for negative cases so that gaps in the theoretical construction can be reformulated and alternative explanations offered. Using a negative case improves the rigor of emergent patterns and helps the researcher to examine relevance in the claims being made (Berg, 2007). In this study, there was one negative case. This case is explained in the results section of this paper.

I was satisfied to discover that because of the amount of data collected, saturation had occurred and key findings had emerged from the research.

CHAPTER 5

5. RESULTS

This chapter discusses the categories and themes that surfaced. Using categories and themes, I examined the personal and organizational factors that contribute to the active representation of racial minority interests from White public administrators working in county-based human services. The research question guided the category formation. Categories included personal factors, organizational factors, and active representation of racial minority interests. Personal factors are well established and have to do with the individual's background and socialization experiences. Also, because I was looking at the research question from the perspective of White public administrators and their adoption of a role to represent racial minorities, anything having to do with White identity was categorized under personal factors. Organizational factors included themes related to the work climate, workforce, bureaucracy, and management structure. Active representation included looking at reported work experiences reported and comparing them to personal and organizational factors. Results are reported in a way that protect the confidentiality of subjects and the counties that participated in the study.

5.1 **Category Formation**

From these three categories, themes and concepts emerged that I grouped in concordance with the theoretical framework of active representation. The categories and resulting themes provided insight about how White public employees think about themselves, their work, and active representation of racial minority interests. Themes are developed from the characteristics of the data. These characteristics are viewed through a theoretical framework where the data was analyzed and compared against already developed definitions, personal experience, theoretical

orientation, and academic constructs that pertain to the phenomena (Berg, 2007). The categories

mentioned above were compared against one another by applying my theoretical framework. I

consulted with other professionals about the categories. I practiced articulating my ideas and

developments to review their logic. I compared these findings to extant literature to identify any

gaps in the current theoretical framework of active representation.

Category formation was consistent with the theoretical framework of active

representation: personal factors, organizational factors, and active representation. I organized the

themes about Whiteness under the personal factors category because as data analysis continued,

there were codes that were did not fit under existing categories or seemed very different. In the

category of active representation, I included themes that emerged about experiences in serving

racial minorities, including comments about the adoption of a minority representative role.

Many of the participants did not distinguish race from ethnicity, income status, and culture, and

spoke about these interchangeably. I counted all of these as "active representation", even though

the narrative was not about race per se, examples were still about adopting a minority

representative role. Finally, the category that emerged that was not present in the current

theoretical framework about active representation is a category I named drivers" because the

themes emerged were about the interaction of community and external forces from outside the

organization that did not relate to personal or organizational factors.

5.2 **Personal Factors**

This category explored the personal factors in the subjects' backgrounds, socialization,

values and beliefs, and other significant characteristics. In the theory of active representation, the

assumption is that socialization creates similar values, belief systems, and attitudes that are

brought into the organization. Recent studies challenge the earlier assertion that a person must be

from the same racial background to actively represent racial minority interests and that is attitude

congruence and role acceptance matters (Bradbury & Kellough, 1998; Selden,1997; Sowa and

Selden, 2003;Bradbury & Kellough, 2008). This section describes the themes that emerged

around personal factors that contribute to and act as limiting factors to active representation.

Themes that emerged in the personal factors category included homogeneous childhood

experiences that reinforced White identity, influences later in adolescence or young adulthood

that raised their consciousness about being White, acceptance of White identity, personal

identification with a marginalized social group, and acceptance of a minority representation role.

Factors that limited active representation was a lack of racial consciousness, some guilt and

shame about being White, and the belief that White people are unfairly targeted by society for

past harm toward people of color.

5.2.1 **Background.**

Ten of the 15 White subjects grew up in White towns or neighborhoods and had no

exposure to people of color until adolescence. Their experiences with racial difference occurred

much later and some into young adulthood. All 15 subjects reported currently living in White

neighborhoods, even though they all said that they value diversity and enjoy interactions with

people from different backgrounds. The comments below reflect the common socialization of the

10 participants who grew up in all White towns or neighborhoods:

> "I guess I never put a date on it; just always been that I was White. Just going way back
>
> as a child, I understand yet I'm White. And where I grew up, everybody was White, very
>
> un-diverse population."

"I was born and raised in Southwestern Minnesota on the prairie where I did not see a

person of color in my recollection, or at least a Black person. Perhaps I saw some others,

but the first Black person I saw, I was 15 years old, so that tells you how sheltered we

were in that area."

"And so, to say when did I know I was White? Everybody was White. You almost need

to see diversity to say yeah, there is some difference here and how does that affect me?

Everybody I knew was White."

5.2.2 Parenting and Families.

Parenting practices enabled White subjects to accept racial and cultural differences later

on in life. For some, it was because of religious beliefs, and for others it was the parent's own

experiences with diversity and racial differences. Subjects reported that what parents and family

members said, how they acted, and who they welcomed in their homes were what mattered. One

subject remembers that even though the only diversity they had in rural Minnesota was the

differences between the Catholics and the Lutherans, her mother made it a point to buy her both

Black dolls and White dolls. A common thread was that subjects' parents emphasized that

everyone should be treated the same, and because this was so, participants reported that this gave

them a foundation from which to explore racial, cultural, and ethnic differences.

"It just wasn't acceptable to treat anyone different or who you were or what you looked like. You just didn't get to do that and that was very…that was taught to us at an early age."

"When we were little, my mother brought dolls in Black and White. And said there's no difference, so I believed her. There's no difference. I had dolls there, they were both Betsy-Wetsey and she said there was no difference but there was no test on it. There was no way to test that because there was no one in the community that I knew even if there was someone in the community."

Subjects said in hindsight that parents either protected them or exposed them to people in their families and in their communities who were different. Also, that parents shared memories of what they had done themselves contributed to raising participants' racial consciousness later on in life.

"I think my parents shielded me from a lot of racism. You know, an uncle was clearly racist, and they wouldn't let him talk the way he talk – negative, or derogatory names."

"My mother's best friend was a Black woman whom she had met through the League of Women Voters, and they were fighting for racial justice. And, in South Minneapolis at that time, Black people could not live south of…I want to say 46th Street, and they were fighting that."

"My mom was in the Peace Corp. She started a single mother's home in Tunesia, which was really big in the 60's. There was kind of the only one option in life and that was prostitution, and they were shunned. I think those things, I didn't know when I was really but had a big impact."

"One of things my father and mother did was made our home open to people who didn't have family here. So, people lived in our home and my parents had regular parties and family get-togethers, and there were always groups of foreign students. So to me, a party was something that all the adults sat around and talked about cross-cultural communication."

There were five subjects who had significant interactions with people of color before adulthood, and their socialization was different than the other ten subjects. A climate of openness and acceptance of difference was present in four of the five those families, and not the "treat everyone the same" message. One of the subjects started in an infant play group of with children of color who were adopted, and she remained friends with these individuals until college or until they moved away. Two subjects were exposed to people of color because of each of their fathers' were professors at a local university. One subject grew up in northern Minnesota among different Native American tribes and had a graduating class that was at least a third people of color. She said that she had some Native blood in her from her mother but identified as White. These individuals were less likely to stereotype people of color or other ethnic groups their interviews. They were matter of fact about racial differences, could talk about cultural differences, and could

identify their own inconsistencies in behavior from their belief system. They also had better

vocabulary to describe race, culture, and ethnicity.

> "Maybe my first taste of that was that march that we marched on with my dad and the
>
> minster in front of the parade you know. We tried to draw attention to racial
>
> discrimination. Even as a small child a) I saw a lot and b) I felt it was not right. So, that
>
> was probably my first taste of it in terms of acknowledgement of how the different skin
>
> color of skin could lead to prejudice and unfair practices."

The last of the five subjects attended an integrated high school with Black and White

students from different parts of town. She grew up with a father who she considers "very racist."

> "So, he was a golfer. He played golf all the time, we'd go out to dinner, we'd eat at the
>
> golf course, and everyone who worked there was Black and some of my friends worked
>
> there and they were servers, and he just would always make these awful comments
>
> about…after they would bring food and they would leave, and he would make terrible
>
> comments."

Because of this relationship with her father, even 50 years later, she was still grappling with how

her values differed so dramatically from his. She attributed overcoming this time period with the

belief that what she heard on Sundays at church was true – that people were equal in the eyes of

God. The friendship she held with the Black students at her school made her believe that it was

possible to have a more equitable world.

The early exposure and friendships in childhood with people of color did not always continue into adulthood. The woman whose father was a golfer and grew up attending an integrated high school continued to value diversity and work later with many Latino clients but currently had no friends of color. Only one of the five subjects continued to have significant friendships and to deliberately seek out relationships with people of color later on in life. That person continued to go up to Northern Minnesota, seek friendships with people of different races, and was active in representing racial minority interests at her county. Her belief system came out in how she lived her life at work and at home. The homogenous upbringing of most of the White participants, their decisions about where to live, and who they befriended confirmed the evidence that White people are more spatially and socially isolated than other racial minority groups (Bonilla-Silva, Goer & Embrick, 2006). Also, because of how most participants were raised, they seemed to have an openness to them that human beings ought to be treated equally.

5.2.3 Becoming Racially Conscious.

For participants, becoming racially conscious appeared to be influenced by having exposure outside where they grew up. These influences included travel, advanced studies in college or graduate school, volunteerism and military service, and previous work experiences in the non-profit sector. Twelve of the 15 subjects had significant and vivid memories of when they first realized they were White because of personal relationships that were disrupted, lost, and not supported by others. For one of the subjects, there was an incident in junior high where two Black girls beat her up because she was White, and a childhood friend who was also Black and lived in her neighborhood ended their friendship:

"I was in junior high and then when I got over to senior high, so it was probably a year later, he said, we can't be friends anymore. It had not occurred to me that I I it wasn't OK to have friends of another race."

For two of the participants, it was racism in their families that raised their awareness about what it means to be White:

"I decided to date an African American man and my mother said, why are you going to do that? You're not going to do that are you?! Well, I said you said there was no difference. I was rather stunned by her reaction. I was technically raised verbally that there was no difference."

Even though White subjects grew up in racially homogeneous backgrounds, what they thought of being White today was consistent with studies about the characteristics of White racial identity, including having privilege with its structural advantages, being the "norm," and being invisible (Carter and Gooden, 1994; Eichstedt, 2001; Gushue & Carter, 2000; Scott and Robinson, 2001; Chubbuck, 2004; Croll, 2007; Hays, Change and Havice; Alimo, 2010). Participants report that being White is about being invisible and having spoken and unspoken privilege:

"I don't have any struggles. I can go anywhere. I can do anything. I can walk down the street. People aren't fearful of me."

"I think it's because being part of the dominant group that we are just considered part of

the norm, and it's (being White) not necessarily talked about."

"Before, I wasn't paying attention to it. It wasn't that I didn't want to know that or that I

didn't care, but you just don't have to think about it when you're White because you

don't have to."

Participants noted that Whiteness takes less effort, and the fit is just better at work and

inside systems because it is the norm and it is comfortable. Another subject said that being White

was about not having to notice how others are automatically adapting to you. People of color are

doing the accommodating to their social norms.

"I have the luxury of being able to use a lot of cultural shorthand without trying to

explain so much why I believe what I believe because so many people have had the same

sorts of beliefs instilled in them that I don't have to explain myself so much."

This participant also identified being White as getting to be in the majority, and getting to

misbehave without personal consequences. Even if she did misbehave, negative characteristics

were not going to be attributed to the entire White race:

"I am super conscious of White privilege, and for all kinds of reasons. A lot of what it

means to be me is I just get to blend in. I don't get judged on a whole other level. I don't

have to…I have a tendency to be a bit oppositional. And I try to not let myself forget that

that's just something I'm really lucky to have an option for because I can be oppositional and people think it's my problem and that's as far as it goes. There is a whole lot about Whiteness that is about being an individual. Being individualized you know. It's rare in this particular culture for things that are common in the dominant culture to be ascribed to the group. You know what I mean. So that for me, I have the luxury of misbehaving. I have the luxury of being taken at face value."

Having racial consciousness was a factor in adopting a minority representative role among participants. However, being racially conscious was not a requirement of being actively representative of racial minority interests. Every participant expressed an acceptance of adopting a minority representative role, either because of who they were, what they believed, or what was required of them in their jobs. However, racial consciousness as a factor that impacted how they used their work roles to be actively representative of racial minority interests.

Participants had varying levels of understanding about their own White racial identity, and what they thought of themselves in relationship to racial minorities, even though this prevented active representation from occurring. Reasons why some participants were more racially conscious included identifying with another marginalized social group, bearing witness to the Civil Rights movement and experiencing racism themselves, and prolonged time spent with people of color. Participants who had these types of experiences had internalized beliefs about values driving them toward representing racial minority interests.

The level of racial consciousness was associated with the level of acceptance of a role to generate positive outcomes for people of color and the ability to be concrete about seeing potential solutions to problems involving people of color. An inability to be concrete and come

up with ideas was present for those who lacked racial consciousness. Two of the subjects

described an adoption of the minority representative role as just a part of work responsibilities. It

was unclear whether these participants would be actively representing racial minority interests if

duties in their respective work roles were not present. One of subjects served Somali clients

because he was assigned the part of the alphabet with names that started with "A" in the financial

assistance area. The other subject had adopted a racial representative role because he was

expected to work on racial disparities in the workforce development system.

Subjects who could also identify with a different marginalized social group drew on the

experience to become more racially conscious because it have them a way to express and talk

about a similar situation. This led to an internalization of a role to represent those interests. These

subjects believed that even though they could not see the racism that people of color were

experiencing all the time, they believed it was happening. This finding confirmed the

experiences of White people with a non-privileged group is a predisposition which increased

racial awareness (Carter, 1990; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Eichenstedt, 2001; Schniedewind,

2005; Croll, 2007). Furthermore, it helped them internalize and adopt a role to represent racial

minority interests.

> "I think what's helped me think about it, is that as a lesbian person, I think about it all
>
> the time. What does it mean to be lesbian in this world? So, it's not a big leap to then
>
> think about race."

"You know, it wasn't a race thing. It was a religion thing. Nothing to do with this. I remember when Kennedy was elected and it was like, you can't elect a Catholic! It's like the pope's going to take over the country. I remember that."

An example of someone who was deliberate about being a White ally observed similarities between being a female in a male dominated field and being a person of color in a White organization:

"Having been a woman in male dominated industries and being told I couldn't get promoted because I was a woman back before it was illegal to do that…to say that to people. I know what that institutional system can do to people. The women couldn't fight their own way out of that. It took men to help with that. To stop that. So, it's the same here with racism. You know, we White people have to step up and say we have a role in making it stop. Because we have the power, or the voice, or the ear of those in power. And we have to."

"I couldn't have all the toys I wanted, but that didn't…I didn't understand that that was because I was poor. My parents made mortgage, but I didn't know that. I didn't know that small city I grew up in was poor until I got into a sales job out of the army and you know they're like, don't go there, nobody's going to buy anything, they're poor. I was like, oh really?"

"If you are in poverty, maybe you are not thinking past what does tonight look like or tomorrow as opposed to let alone 10 years from now."

5.2.4 Civil Rights Movement and Direct Experience with Racism.

Seven out of 15 participants were in their late 50's or early 60's and said that living through the Civil Rights Movement raised their racial consciousness to work toward a more racially just society. One of the subjects reported that in her mid-western town, the Civil Rights movement was "…it was in your face all the time." She grew up on the White side of town. The Black side of town was the poor side of town. Even for participants who lived far away from the Civil Rights movement, watching it on T.V. raised their consciousness:

"I would say my first vivid memory is of desegregation efforts. And seeing the police standing outside a bus of African American children, getting off looking scared to death and this mob around them on both sides, for and against segregation. So, those are my earliest images."

"Civil Rights started when I was in high school. I was in such a sheltered environment, that I saw it on T.V. and went why would they do that? I didn't understand why intelligent people would be so discriminatory. My dad was in Florida and was working for a while and said, you aren't going to believe this but older Black gentlemen get off and walk in the street if I'm on the street."

"She would talk about the Civil Rights Movement. She had a lot of friends who were

people of color, and she would tell stories about some of the things that were going on in

Minneapolis, the metro, because that was far away, you know."

The experience of seeing more overt racism and how White privilege worked first hand

also increased racial consciousness and socialized them to see their White identity by giving

them a different and harsh perspective.

 "I also did some travelling between high school graduation, and then I went into the

military. I went into the South, into the deep South, and worked for a company where you

go into these towns and you take pictures of their kids at the Five and Dime, it was one of

those companies that travelled a lot. And, I saw the Southern prejudice for the first time, I

knew that that stuff happened, but this was in 1974 and there were still restaurants that

said members only and me being a dumb White kid from Minnesota, well, we can't go in

there, it's members only. Oh no, that's to keep the Colored's out. I saw Black people

being treated like the "N" word, being called that "N" word. It was such a reality check. I

mean, I cried so many times. It makes me teary just thinking about it. It was so sad (voice

breaks). I thought, nobody deserves this."

But it was not just acts of overt racism that led to enlightenment, it was also just co-

workers and interactions with people of color that helped them understand the advantages of

being White. For this participant, whose first job was working for a non-profit organization

serving runaway and homeless youth who were predominantly people of color, he experienced

what it was like to suddenly be surrounded by Black adolescents who could not count on "the

system" to support them in a distressed part of Minneapolis.

> "When I did street outreach, I worked in downtown Minneapolis outside Franklin
>
> Chicago area, North Side, and at that time, I had a pick-up, and the pick-up had a cracked
>
> windshield, and I never got pulled over. But I would hear from people (of color)…you
>
> don't get pulled over, they'd ask me. No, I don't get pulled over. Well, I would get pulled
>
> over, people would say."

It had never occurred to him that the act of driving while poor and Black would create problems

with the police. He realized that though he grew up in a very low income area, he never had to

worry about getting stopped by the police. And if he did, he assumed his explanation would be

adequate. His insight was that being a poor person of color was still worse than being a poor

White person.

Another salient factor in raising racial consciousness was prolonged and significant

interactions with people of color and key life events. This included service in the military,

volunteer experiences, friendships with people of color, student exchange programs, and living

in other parts of the United States. Nine of the 15 subjects' life events and experiences that

changed their worldview, their understanding of themselves, and exposed them to diversity that

was impossible to experience in their hometowns. Two of the participants joined the military.

Both grew up low income. The need to rely on people of color and the recognition that there

were other White people with vastly different backgrounds and beliefs also opened their eyes to

racial and cultural differences.

"There were African American guys that I served with that I didn't like. It wasn't because they were Black. It was because they were jerks. Same with White guys. So, I felt like it was nice going in without any preconceived notions of what a Black man is like and you know…you're doing that 'cause you're Black."

"It so opens your eyes to that we are all different, you know, no matter what color we are, or even if we are the same color, our backgrounds are so diverse, you know. You know you take a White person from Minnesota, and you take a White person from Texas, there's a total difference."

One of the subjects participated in a college exchange program when she was a junior to a racially diverse college in California. Most of her hall mates were people of color. Her boyfriend was Italian. Her roommate was from Mexico. And she had people who were African American from Los Angeles on the same floor. It was an experience she said she would never forget. She thought that it was a good experience to have "everyone staring at you because of your skin color."

"It opened up my eyes to racial tensions and stereotypes and discrimination because I didn't feel like I was sort of like, oh we're all the same. But I realized, no. People dislike me because of my skin color."

"It was a pivotal point in realizing that you know my personal experience had nothing to do with how I was perceived by other people."

5.2.5 Significant Relationships with People of Color.

Participants who were racially conscious about their White identities were also proactive in seeking out and maintaining relationships with people of color, not just letting things happen to them. Not only did they perceive this as fun, they felt their lives were enriched because of these diverse relationships. One woman volunteered regularly with an English language learner group, and because of these connections, she sometimes became friends with the participants which enriched her understanding of others from different backgrounds:

"Oh, yeah, much more that than…these people who are really just very cool, very embedded in the City. They're here to stay and fun and interesting people. I don't know what it is. A lot of the people are Latino. Columbian and Mexican mostly in the group. And as a group, it was just some sort of weird first batch of people that kind of were in that first wave in my conversation circle ended up becoming its own social circle outside of our group and so that was kind of an interesting and unexpected thing. People really gelled together in a really nice way. Yeah, it's like the coolest thing ever to have a gig like that."

Through the experiences of their friends, subjects were able to learn about how racism impacted the people they cared about. One subject was friends with a Pakistani woman. After the attack on September 11th, her friend and small son had things thrown at them at an international

airport. It was unimaginable to her that White people would treat others that way, just because of their skin color and religion. She also told a story about how this Pakistani woman's son was bullied at school because he did not eat pork:

> "And then her little son at school, some kids would touch a hot dog or pork and they're Muslim, and run after and try to touch him. It's horrible. We never have to deal with that. I never have to deal with that. You know what I mean? So, that was shocking to me. And you hear about things, but if you were friends with someone and you see the pain, it's different."

A woman who held a deep friendship with her former boss, who was an African American man, said that she admired the courage of people of color, and felt that her existence was easy compared to theirs.

> "And just sitting there in the group home and developing relationships, people like my friend who had this whole life prior to coming here and hearing his experiences and working with this man named John who had worked in prison in Louisiana as an African American man in his 60's but now really experienced first-hand stuff in the South and hearing those stories. I just remember thinking, oh my God, my life experiences don't even come close to what other people's has and still don't."

These were individuals who nurtured relationships with many types of people inside and outside of work. White subjects used friends of color as a safe place to talk about race, to compare socialization experiences, and validate approaches to interacting with people of color.

"You know, I'm this White guy, he's an African American man, but we have very similar beliefs about what we should be doing in our jobs, knowing how to diffuse hostile situations. I feel like we are both really good, really skilled, and so I think the rest of the team do turn to the two of us to talk about those kinds of things (involving racial minorities). So, he's very vocal on our team and very useful. "

"I think was an integral part of me being able to have safe conversations and I remember one conversation in particular, having biracial nieces and nephews. I remember going to him and saying I have to be able to help raise these kids. And, make sure that they are embraced fully in my family but also to help them know they're African American kids because their dad is gone. And I remember him looking at me and saying, "Why do you have to do that?" And I am thinking, what the hell do you mean, of course I have to do that. He's like, you just need to love them and they are going to be fine, and you're going to accept them for who they are and they are going to figure the other stuff out. Well, Jesus. That was pretty easy. It took me years to figure out what he was talking about but get rid of the love sees no color bullshit and help steer them by modelling who you are. They are who they are and let them figure out how they are going to fit."

This theme of White people who acknowledged their power and privilege and then held themselves accountable to people of color in order to validate that they were on the right path is consistent with the White ally literature (Alimo, 2012; Chubbuck, 2004).

5.2.5 Lack of Racial Consciousness.

The data also showed that even though White subjects could identify the constructs of White racial identity, they were not racially conscious during the interview and made comments that were negative and stereotyped people of color. The ability to identify the constructs of White racial identity at the beginning of the interview, did not mean that narratives or examples of active representation were congruent with their self-reported racial consciousness. One of the subjects who was working on reducing employment disparities, identified that he had no prior public sector work experience. He was recruited to his current director level position by a friend inside of the county. He was unable to relate his earlier comments about White privilege to his employment status at the county although he had benefitted from a White social network; a network that is unavailable to potential candidates of color. When I asked him about the lack of workforce diversity inside of his county, he noted a lack of public transportation and meeting minimum requirements as barriers for employment among racial minorities. His response assumed that racial minorities did not own cars or have the qualifications to enter public administration ranks at upper ranks. This lack of consciousness was not unique among the White subjects.

"They (African Americans) want to better themselves, but they're not willing to put work in to it."

 "We can't socially stray from our own value system whether we are White or African American, or you know what I mean."

"The human race is pretty much the same from all over."

Another subject believed a manager of color to be incompetent, so she would just, "pay lip service to whatever she says" and then "put myself on the same level as her". Taken at face value, these words could be seen as disrespectful regardless of racial background. However, I was asking her specifically to think about examples in which she was actively working to benefit racial minorities. She gave a negative example instead of a positive one. She believed that if she brought herself to "their level" she was benefitting them; she was unaware that her statement revealed that having to function at the level of someone "incompetent" could be perceived as consistent with the privileged White racial frame. Subjects would also switch positions or commentary in the middle of examples from being racially aware and then completely not racially unaware. The subject in this example accepted that White people had a responsibility to be a part of the solution. Also, as a female management analyst, she understood how difficult racism must be for people of color. She believed that racism did happen. However, at a later point in the interview, she stated, "I have never felt personally, I have never identified myself as being a race." This moving in and out of racial consciousness was common among White participants.

Believing that racial minorities are inferior to White people reinforces the myth of meritocracy. As stated in the literature review, this myth socializes White people to be unable to

see the structural advantages of Whites, reinforcing White superiority to racial minorities

(Chubback, 2004; MerDermott & Samson, 2005). This data also supports results in the previous

literature that Whites want to believe they are more racially conscious than behaviors, words, and

actions demonstrate (Tettegah, 1996; Alimo, 2012). In this case, even within their own self-

reports, discrepancies existed between what they believed, and the examples they gave. A lack of

racial consciousness couple with the positive intent to improve outcomes for racial minorities

surfaced in examples of active representation that with indecision, frustration, and conflict

among participants. I will discuss this later in the section on active representation.

In summary, personal factors that contributed to active representation racial minority

interests included exposure to racism and people of color, acceptance of a White racial identity,

prolonged and significant relationships with people of color, the ability to identify with a

marginalized group, and adoption of a role to represent racial minority interests. The level of

racial consciousness of the White subject affected their ability to see the structural advantages of

being White. Self-reports of White racial identity and their related beliefs often lacked

congruence with active representation examples that were discussed. However, in general,

subjects who were more racially conscious tended to have internalized acceptance of a role to

advocate for racial minorities. Acceptance of this role was driven mostly from personal

socialization experiences. I also found that acceptance of a role to represent racial minority

interest did not require racial consciousness. Subjects were still actively representing racial

minority interests and thought they were more racially conscious than their behavior and

examples during the interview indicated. On one hand, participants could identify the constructs

of White identity and norms that benefitted them, understanding that these were things that

required change from them. On the other hand, their self-reports demonstrated that they lacked

the awareness that they were still using racial stereotypes to construct interventions through a White racial identity lens that attributed stereotypes to people of color that placed themselves in a superior role.

5.3 **Organizational Factors**

As defined in the literature, organizational factors included the agency socialization and the bureaucratic context (Selden, 1997; Scott, 1997). Results showed that subjects within counties shared a similar vocabulary for discussing their respective diversity efforts. There was also overall consistency in their narratives about major events, initiatives, and efforts over time in the counties. Because of the length of time most subjects had spent in their respective counties, there was a good understanding of organization and its structure. Subjects were open about what they saw that could be improved about the bureaucracy and their roles in it.

The three counties had experienced significant growth in the population of color from 10% from 1990 to 2010, a span of two decades. The demographics of the three counties are reported in Table 3. The urban county experienced the most significant demographic change of the percentage of people of color over this twenty year period, at 19.7%. The suburban county had experienced a 12.9% change, and the rural county, an 11.9% change in people of color.

Table 3. Changes in County Demographics

County	Current Population	% of Color in 2012	% of Color in 1990	% of Color in 2010	% Change 1990 -2010
Urban	520,000	34.2%	13.3 %	33%	19.7%
Suburban	405,088	18.5%	4.7%	17.6%	12.9%
Rural	64,854	15.2%	2.9%	14.8%	11.9%

Source: Minnesota Compass, 2014

Each of the counties had efforts underway to address workforce diversity and service disparities. The urban county was focused on the elimination of racism. The suburban county

was working to reinvigorate its diversity efforts and thinking of next steps, and the rural county

was organized around meeting needs and serving the new immigrants and refugees. Diversity

efforts had achieved different levels of penetration into the organization's work culture and

efforts were called different names in each county. However, every county contact person and

the subjects reported that changing demographics of the county was a driver of their work to

actively represent racial minority interests. As expected, changes in the growth of people of color

in the counties that required human services had created a need for change.

The urban county was organized, strategic, and the farthest among the three counties with

a unified vision, strategic plan, goals, and measures. The urban county's human services division

had started an anti-racism initiative to reduce service disparities, increase the hiring and

promotion of staff of color, and instituted changes to policies, procedures, and practices. The

work in the human services area had also started to spread county-wide to other county

departments. There were roles assigned for key leaders and staff with support from human

services to move to being an anti-racist multi-cultural organization: management goals, service

goals, and workplace diversity goals. Managers and directors had clear expectations in the anti-

racism initiative structure, and were expected to examine their own racial lens in decision

making. There was a plan that communicated these goals and a vision for 2030, a dashboard, a

history of anti-racism efforts and lessons learned, and the anti-racism initiatives engagement

structure to enlist more staff support.

The county's anti-racism initiative was led by a team of line staff and management and

used as an institutional organizing mechanism to dismantle racism. The department had also

adopted a goal to change polices, practices, and the influence of White norms on current

organizational norms. They had advocacy goals for enlisting the support of county

commissioners, the county manager, and other public policy leaders at the State to create and

revise polices, practices, and the procedures that were creating systemic racial disparities. The

anti-racism initiative had been in existence for 11 years in its current form but its evolution had

taken longer than 11 years. Institutional practices with supporting tools to assess the values and

beliefs of teams and their decision-making process to reduce racial bias were in place. For

example, service development teams had an assessment matrix that was used for contracting with

non-profit providers to check for racial bias. Between 2002 and 2010, the urban county had

increased the percentage of staff of color and supervisors of color by 10% in both categories.

The suburban county was also explicit its support of diversity and inclusion. Diversity

and inclusion work had been delivered through the employee relations area since 2000, but in

2009, the downturn in recession and layoffs resulted in diminished efforts when the key position

that was coordinating efforts was laid off. A cross-department group planned efforts together and

had training, job fairs, and other activities. Learning and sharing was done on a regular basis for

those who attended. However, attendance started to wane and a lack of centralized resources had

departments trying to fuel efforts on their own without a pool of shared resources. By the time

the layoffs occurred, efforts had already started to fizzle away. The focus was more on training

and development of current staff and increasing workplace diversity to reflect the growing

number of people of color that the county was starting to serve. More recently, this county had

committed new resources to rejuvenate county-wide efforts with a focus on diversity not as

problem to be solved, but as something to be leveraged to increase cultural competency and to be

able to serve growing numbers of people of color in the county.

In the rural county, there were two diversity efforts were underway to serve immigrants

who were Somali or Latino, mostly from Mexico. The first diversity effort was a community

connections committee that was initially set up as a diversity committee to decrease tensions

inside the county among staff who were frustrated with serving the rapidly growing number of

Somali residents. Racial tensions had increased due to a steady stream and influx of Somali and

Latino families residing in the county, made worse by linguistic and cultural differences. The

outreach committee's purpose was to connect with different cultural communities and increase

community connectedness for marginalized or disadvantaged families being underserved. A

secondary purpose was to educate county employees and immigrants about county based human

services.

The county had also joined a second community effort to increase health and well-being

with arose out of a private grant to address the needs of the growing Somali and Latino

communities. The purpose of the Community Health and Well-being Initiative was to address the

social determinants of health to improve the conditions that were creating disparate outcomes for

disadvantaged and marginalized communities, mostly immigrant families under the age of five.

Efforts included helping immigrant families build social bonds within their cultural communities

such as at a mobile home park, to connecting them to key services, and removing barriers to

access. For example, because the I94 card that immigrants received upon arrival to the U.S. did

not count as a primary form of ID with the State of Minnesota, a driver's license was

unattainable for Somali immigrants. Waiting for an official green card took up to several years.

Leaders with this Community Health and Well-being Initiative effort identified a variance form

that immigrants could use to petition the State to accept existing documents. This led to an

increase of Somali immigrants successfully acquiring a driver's license thus eliminating a

transportation barrier. The director of public health and the director of social services were

engaged in monthly meetings with the community health and well-being effort to problem solve about these issues.

5.3.1 **Administrative Discretion.**

Staff used administrative discretion to benefit racial minorities regardless of the level of position they held in the organization. Administrative discretion for this study was defined as span of control, authority level and the person's judgment to make decisions about the use of time, resources, and services to benefit racial minorities. There were 8 participants who were line staff, 6 who were at a manager level, and one director. Participants in all types and levels of positions were able to affect systems change. The lack of span of control did not prohibit productive work to benefit racial minorities even for front line social workers. Depending on responsibilities, personal influence, and leadership capabilities, subjects used their knowledge to influence way more people than just those they were directly serving and had responsibility to serve in the county. Subjects risked reputational and relationship capital to actively represent racial minority interests. Another finding was that subjects who were actively representative did not let organizational barriers stop them from pursuing what they thought was needed. A social worker in the rural county helped a Somali woman who was a single mother with three children and was pregnant. The Somali woman was HIV positive and needed to attain her citizenship for health care. The social worker drove the Somali woman to a city 40 minutes away several times and helped organize her citizenship materials. Following through on this process took over a year and the social worker noted with satisfaction that citizenship was granted. When I asked why she went to such lengths, she said, "I don't think it's in my job description. She needed it." In another situation with a different social worker, she helped undocumented women get visas so that they could stay in the country, filed orders for protection for victims of domestic abuse, and

ensured that basic needs were met when she did home visits. These were not a part of her regular

duties. Subjects often kept their work activities to themselves, so as not to disrupt the

bureaucracy or raise questions. They continued because they believed it was the right thing to do,

and they were meeting their other work goals.

Subjects who accepted a role to represent racial minority interests did it because they saw

it as part of their daily work. They also interpreted their work duties broadly and used their

authority, influence, and time much beyond their normal job boundaries. Bradbury and Kellough

(1998) argued that adoption of a minority representative role is what matters along with attitude

congruence, and not whether the person was of the same racial minority status. This seemed to

be true with the subjects interviewed, and was confirmed through the comments that subjects

made. Even though not all participants were racially conscious, they believed that what they

were working on was just the right thing to do and had an ethic of public service that guided

them above and beyond their personal belief system. There was an acceptance of minority

representation and role adoption for all subjects. Selden (1997) also argued that as long as public

administrators perceived and believed that they should represent racial minority interests, it

would make a positive difference with outcomes.

No subjects reported that accepting a racially representative role was additional work,

even though time was sometimes limited because of heavy workloads. Participants justified their

actions to be consistent with their own beliefs. They justified their actions away from agency

socialization if they perceived upper management and the agencies goals as different from theirs.

For example one of the subjects was a mental health therapist who served many Latino clients.

She did much more than was required, including helping to file orders for protection, helping

people fill out applications for financial assistance, and assisting with visa applications. She

reported that most of her clients only spoke Spanish. She justified her work by explaining that

finding someone else who could understand the form and assist clients with the work would be

very challenging. As long as she was there, it made sense to finish up. During the interview, she

justified her actions constantly while assuring me that she tried to adhere as much as possible to

bureaucratic standards. Her rationale was that it was impossible to serve clients and address

mental health issues without first addressing basic needs. However, she knew that she was

crossing a boundary. Her belief was that meeting basic needs was a pre-condition for delivering

mental health services so she incorporated this as part of regular duties, and hoped she would not

get into trouble.

"Are we enabling them by making things too easy for them? And I'm like, it's mental

health services. You know, come on. But he hasn't come out and said that. I think it's

just…gas has gone up and I'm driving all over the county. So, that's more what I mean

that's – if we can have them in, then they come in. But I find going to people's homes, I

think they are more comfortable. So, there's a lot of debate in our county about do

boundaries get too loose going into people's homes versus are you really doing clinical

work? And you know some of these situations, I'm doing social work not clinical work.

But it's hierarchy of needs. I mean, if she doesn't have food, and can't get medical

attention, if she doesn't feel safe, how is she going to address her depression? So, that's

sort of how I justify it."

Subjects used their authority to benefit racial minorities, and challenged or stepped into

conflict as necessary to advance racial and cultural understanding at a risk to themselves.

Sometimes, this would cross boundaries into areas that not assigned to them. Even if it got them in trouble, they continued to press forward because of their beliefs. A participant who worked in foster care placed a child in a same sex White and Asian household, and a different supervisor went behind her back to place the child back with a relative. Though the subject was not able to get the child back into the right placement, she confronted him and got herself into trouble later with her own supervisor.

> "Now it makes sense, but his thing was, and he was quoted saying, "Do you realize how screwed up that baby would be raised by two women? (Ha ha). Yeah. That's the one I got into trouble with because I did the hand on the hip, shake the finger, oh yeah.""

Another subject who was a social worker called herself an advocate and used her knowledge of the county to speak at clubs and build relationships with a local university. She convinced her supervisor to give her a lower caseload so that she could form the diversity committee at her county to address racial and cultural tensions due to a lack of understanding about the Somali culture and stressed out county workers. When I asked why she started the diversity committee, her response was:

> "Well, as everybody was walking around here going send them back, send them back, send them back. I couldn't stand hearing that. That's inappropriate. I'm sorry. That's totally inappropriate. It's not politically correct, it's not everything. I said, come on, let's all get together and start talking. Tell me what's happening. What are they doing that's driving you crazy?"

She organized staff and learned about who to connect with in the community to decrease

tensions, attended training to learn more about Somali culture and went to community meetings

in her off hours to try to figure out what was going on there. She gave advice to staff, Somali

residents, and figured out how to serve Somali residents better on her own by not being afraid to

ask questions. However, she never went up the chain of command. The one time she did was to

ask for permission to carry out these internal and community activities to improve relationships

and services with diverse communities.

"No, I push the community. I do not dare push inside. Like I spoke recently at the Rotary

Club and talked to them. I go to a networking group up at the college. X is the head of the

Social Work Department. She kind of has a social work networking group and we talk up

there. Just basically talking to people as I go out and about. I have these two committees,

the community connections, and the teen pregnancy one and I don't know just talking to

people."

Subjects knew that certain activities were outside the scope of their jobs, but felt that they

had an obligation either to their profession or to the public work to benefit racial minorities. For

this participant who was at a manager in child welfare, she was trying to get buy-in from staff to

acknowledge that their child welfare services could be more culturally appropriate and that

internal diversity efforts needed to be rejuvenated, especially for African American children. In

her suburban county, there was a lack of mentoring for families going through the child welfare

system. A dearth of resources existed for White mothers with African American children and this

was led to special challenges. So, she took the opportunity after President Obama's speech about

Trayvon Martin to gather staff from her floor together to listen to the speech on-line and use it as

an educational opportunity to discuss the implications for serving African American boys in their

county (Washington Post, 2013).

"See, that's the covert part about OK, let's listen to what Obama says and he says some

good things about lifting up African American men. Hey look, we have a group of people

who have now signed on the big sheet of paper on the wall that they are willing to be

involved in talking about service needs. Do you know what I mean? So, it is trying to

bring people along that way toward just saying OK, how do you provide those informal

supports because we're not in people's lives forever, hopefully, um you know the idea of

child protection work is we are in and out but there's something that sustains them when

you know the whole point of family group decision making, relative search and all those

kinds of other initiatives is really to bring people to their own informal supports that will

help sustain them when we are no longer there."

One of her direct reports who was also a participant in the study described the event as

inspirational and covert.

"Really to my boss's credit, I don't know if you heard and I don't know if she even told

you but she fired up the Obama response over a lunch hour, in terms of his personal

response to Trayvon Martin, and opened it up to the floor, come bring your lunch, let's

watch it together and let's talk about. And, I couldn't go, but several of my staff went and

they said it was just so powerful. I mean the fact that she's willing to have the

conversation, it's huge. And she didn't ask for permission, but our Director was there

which was so clearly he was on board. My boss does that dance of don't pull in that

central administration unless you absolutely have to, and don't ask for permission. It's

better to seek forgiveness than ask permission. She does this dance with them, you

know."

Because the subject was a manager of children and family services, she created a climate

among her near one hundred mostly White staff to adopt a role to represent racial minority

interests. She saw no reason to enlist those above her administration rank to support her work

because she thought they lacked racial consciousness and would not be helpful. Evidence from

the other four participants within the county verified the lack of senior engagement. This

subject's experience supports the assertion that the more administrative discretion, span of

control, and management authority a public administrator has, the more salient the impact to

minority groups (Selden, 1997; Keiser, Wilkins, Meier, & Holland, 2002; Meier, 2003).

However, it was also true that front line social workers influenced and changed practices way

beyond scope of their jobs. For example, just a couple of line staff in the rural county created the

diversity committee there, which decreased racial tensions around Somali refugees, dampened

the overt racism, and increased understanding between Somali elders and county staff in a social

services department. That department was also about 100 employees.

There are no studies about administrative discretion and leadership qualities in active

representation. But Sowa and Selden (2003) studied the span of control and the acceptance of a

minority representative role for public administrators and found that public administrators who

perceived themselves as having more discretion over internal agency processes and over client

outcomes produced more results that favored minority interests. Control over internal agency

processes was more likely to come from supervisor and manager positions. But, I also found that

subjects on the front line who had a clear sense of purpose and strong acceptance to advance

racial minority interests also made a considerable impact. These individuals did not control

agency processes, but because of their subject matter expertise and knowledge, they were able to

move the organization's work culture to improve conditions and respond to people of color.

5.3.2 Supervisor Support.

A pattern of consistent and strong supervisor support was present. This has not been

highlighted in past studies of active representation. No subjects could have advanced work to

benefit racial minorities without a supportive supervisor. Most subjects used the flexibility given

to them by their supervisors to educate others, participate in formal diversity efforts, revise

practices, and enlist the support of other White people to reduce racial disparities. The set of

work conditions varied under each supervisor because of the differing levels of authority, but

supervisors allowed subjects to be move outside the scope of their responsibilities in order to

improve service outcomes for racial minorities. Supportive supervision was a factor that

increased the potential for active representation among subjects. Subjects claimed the power to

make decisions without asking for permission in any of the counties. However, in the suburban

and rural counties, subjects lacked confidence that the county administrations would support

their efforts and activities. In the urban county which had clear organizational expectations about

expected behaviors to improve services to racial minorities, no subjects lacked confidence in

administration. What they did have was high expectations and worries about whether they could achieve them.

There was no literature that I could find about the role of supervision and administrative discretion. The diversity work was organic in the suburban and rural counties, and unified and strategic in the urban county. However, progress was made in all three counties to actively represent racial minority interests with regard to workplace diversity and service outcomes. The results add to the evidence that racial minority status of the public administrator is not required to advocate for, or make a difference to benefit racial minorities (Selden, 1997; Selden, Brudney, & Kellough, 1998; Sowa & Selden, 2003; Wilkins & Keiser, 2004; Bradbury & Kellough, 2008; Smith & Fernandez, 2010; Bradbury and Kellough, 2011).

5.3.3 Diverse and Inclusive Work Environment.

Urban County

A clear statement about diversity, resources being allocated to those efforts, and the reinforcement of behaviors were all important for White subjects to feel that they should be actively representing racial minority interests. In the urban county, action teams and workgroups were used as an institutional organizing model to dismantle racism and create an anti-racist multicultural organization. Subjects reported that human resources was active and work unit leaders were expected to provide regular training and support. If subjects were supervisors, they had the same vocabulary to talk about White privilege, racism, and cultural norms. Racism was talked about openly, and a common vision, strategic plan, and metrics were available.

"I think it's become part of the culture. And I think partly it's because of the feedback

from outside the county, and I've heard this from different sources. I came here to apply

for a job because I wanted to be part of a county that is committed to this."

"I think having such a clear commitment by the department that this is such an important

focus and an important thing we talk about and having the advantage…I guess the

advantage of having so much focus on training that is something people do talk about."

White subjects in the urban county felt they could talk openly about racism, and admitted

they were on a journey to become more racial consciousness. However, four of the five subjects

in the urban county thought that the county culture was forced and that White people felt

marginalized. Participants believed that too many things were expressed as being about race

when they were not about race. Whites felt dismissed and felt that White employees could not

talk authentically about their struggles as White people trying work on being anti-racist. In

studies about White identity, White identity became salient when its dominance was challenged

by people of color (McDermott & Samson, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, Goer, & Embrick, 2006; Croll,

2007). There was a lack of acceptance among White subjects in the urban county that White

racial identity was a socialization process impacts how others treat you and not how you want to

be treated. Colorblindness and invisibility about White privilege has been noted as a resistance

strategy to protect the place of White people in society (Eichstedt, 2001; Marshall, 2000). It was

a challenge for White participants to believe that racism is always present.

"What I see happening in anti-racism team is if a White person says something, that's

probably my White privilege showing. It's kind of like they don't feel like it's OK

anymore to assert themselves with somehow backpedaling and acknowledging that it's

probably because they are White that they are doing that."

"But I also think there is a lot of frustration with White workers around here right now.

And, and we can sort of talk, but not really."

One of the subjects reported that White people were second guessed and that it was not safe for

White people to talk about race without getting in trouble:

"That's how these things are, they are volatile. They are so emotional, but yeah, that was

one time when I'm telling you here that was talked about and we aren't safe to talk.

Really, we would want to but it doesn't come out very genuine and I don't know what it

is. We're just you know, I don't know why. We feel we are being second guessed."

And this subject talked about how training was rolled forth and the reaction from White staff was

that they quit attending.

"Because it (training) was forced. It was almost like we were told that we were bad, and

that we need to understand what other people are going through. White people are bad,

and that we set the bar. I don't know. That's what it felt like."

Of the five participants in the urban county that I interviewed, there was only one person

who was racially conscious and motivated to eliminate racism. She was able to express her value

system and beliefs and worked hard and constantly to see her Whiteness. She used her friends who were people of color to check her own decisions and behavior. She could identify and see the resistance from other White employees and their race privilege. She described White employees there as being committed but with an attitude that racism was episodic events. She believed that dismantling racism is a process that is never done because of the mutually reinforcing social dynamics that continues to socialize White people to not see racism.

> "I think people think, oh we're too busy for that. And unfortunately, it's primarily White staff that say that. They think that you can't possibly do the work and be racist. And, I think that's just the opposite. Or, that you. Or, I think people think their done with the process. And I don't know that the process is ever done."

White subjects interviewed saw limited value in how the anti-racism efforts were pushed forward inside the county even though they acknowledged an organized effort was needed. They were not satisfied with their own progress, nor that of the overall organization. As a group it appeared that they wanted to be a part of the solution but also seemed to resist change. As White allies, they did not appear to have a safe space in which to explore their own feelings about racism from a dominant group perspective. Goodman (2011) suggests that forming affinity groups or resource networks in which Whites can explore their own cultural norms would benefit the county. But urban subjects also expressed that they felt supported to take time and learn about racism. When difficulties arose about race, they appreciated the formal supports that were in place in human resources to overcome these challenges.

Suburban County

In the suburban county, diversity efforts were organized though the employee relations area and focused on training about hiring practices and creating a diverse and inclusive work climate for all employees. Also, for nearly ten years, the diversity efforts were focused on interventions to problem solve around issues of diversity. Unlike the urban county, the initiative spanned many departments. When the recession hit in 2009, the employment relations position that coordinated county-wide efforts was cut and formal support for diversity efforts ended. Though diversity and inclusion was supported, the perception among subjects interviewed was that while there was good work occurring, lack of overall coordination and inconsistent support left the county with a claim to caring about racial minorities and diversity but no enduring and consistent institutional progress.

"Part of it is during the recession, hiring really slowed down everywhere. Slowed down in county governments and so much of the diversity efforts was around outreach to the communities through the newspapers or who knows, the personal, back to the personal relationships when the hiring really came to a screeching halt. I think that may have contributed to it. But you can talk to ER (employee relations) or somebody for a better answer."

"And, it doesn't feel like we're making any strides."

"We had all kinds of work done on it and long story short in the last round of layoffs, whatever when the budget crunch hit a couple of years ago, those positions went away from the county. And so that was the end of any leadership internally about it and I think

that the department groups just floundered once leadership component went way and they just found something to do with their time instead."

As result of a climate of perceived inconsistent support for diversity, subjects who were highly active in representing minority interests did so under the radar and in their own way; focusing on diversity within their work units and instituting their own training and development approaches. The lack of consistent leadership engagement at top administrator levels and the layers of bureaucracy were cited as contributing to a work climate that was not committed to diversity and inclusion. In other words, the lack of results and visible engagement was a disappointment and sent a message the diversity was not a priority.

Rural County

In the rural county, the actions of management spoke loudly with no formal statements about diversity, inclusion, or service disparities. The social services director who was also a subject believed the county should be able to serve and reflect its residents. His ethic of public service and making sure he understood what was happening in the county in order deliver on their mission drove his actions. He had to play a role to check the data and often dispelled rumors in the community about populations of color moving into the county. He worked directly with the Board of Commissioners and other community people who did not like the newest residents into the county. At times, the response from the community about the changing racial demographics has been in his words, "ugly." Evidence and data informed him, however, that these new immigrant groups were hardworking and outperforming White people in the same financial situation.

"I view our immigrants as hard workers when they can get past that barrier of finding a job because of language and in face one of the things I keep track of because we have to for to assure that there are no gaps in performance and the funny thing of it is in X County that the Somali and Hispanic populations outperform the Caucasian's in terms of work participation rate, and three years self-sufficiency index.

So, you know as we're looked to if that population is 5% or less from their performance from the Caucasian population, then we need to create a performance improvement plan, I've never had to create one because their performance has always outpaced that of the Caucasian population."

His visibility and participation along with the public health director in a Community Health and Well-being Initiative funded by a private grant sent the message to his staff and the community that he cared about people of color and new residents who were in their community. One of his visible contributions was testifying to city council members to preserve dollars for the growing Somali and Latino communities.

"One of cities had had dollars set aside their budget to pay for someone who was fluent in Spanish and serve as kind of a liaison with the community and they were cutting that position for budget purposes. And, the Community Health and Well-being Initiative was pretty established by then and I know, a number of us went and spoke at the City Council

meeting to say you know this is going to create a problem in terms of access for services

for these families."

His actions brought visibility to the problems that existed for Latino residents and the private

grant dollars were re-directed to the community center to keep it going as a service center and

link for immigrants.

In contrast to urban and suburban counties, the creation of a diverse and inclusive work

environment was through his actions and not words. In response to whether the county had a

diversity statement one of the subjects who worked for him said:

"I'm sure we do, I'm sure we do. Yeah, they go through just as far as equal rights, equal

access. We have a language line. "

Another subject said that if there were a county-wide diversity statement, it would have helped

her. She had guidance from her supervisor, and permission from the director of social services

which was what she needed to get services to be more responsive and relevant. In this county,

because the need was so great, not having formal diversity efforts was not a barrier at the social

services department level. Staff saw needs and delivered on their jobs. One participant stated that

she was actively representative of racial minority interests because she had high standards and it

was an ethic in her social work profession to serve others:

"I have really high standards for myself as a social worker and I don't want to do it

wrong. And I don't care who you are. I don't want to do it wrong. So, if I'm working

with a different population, I need to understand it and I need to…not that they are all..like you say it are homogeneous, that about their culture. It's always been like that with me. I want to do it right."

Evidence suggested that because the rural county had a hierarchical work culture, advice and consultation was neither forthcoming nor welcomed. Mounting pressure to decrease racial tensions, relieve overwhelmed workers, and serve people non-English populations were drivers in making changes to their small county which had a limited administrative infrastructure. Here is an example of what she was dealing with. A Somali woman with a sick child was upsetting everyone in the lobby area and she was asked to go help. She then had to find someone who speak Somali to interpret for her and once she did, she found out that the family had lived for decades in refugee camp without medical help and did not know how to access a doctor.

"Another family came in and they really hadn't been in the country very long and they had a child with them that was throwing up, vomiting everywhere. Well, they'd only been in the county a couple days. I'm sure she ate something that didn't agree with her but what was bothering the staff was that the family made no attempt to deal with her and get her to the doctor and get her out. And they didn't understand. And it took us a while to understand as we called and got a nurse and she said you've got to take this kid to the doctor. They weren't used to having a doctor. So, we thought, get the kid to the doctor and they're like, doctor? There's a doctor?"

The waiting area for services became overcrowded, and the changes in processing had clients waiting in the lobby for long durations and it was at this point that racial tensions would rise.

"I have a family I have been working with on-going and always there are financial issues with that family. They are borderline intellectual functioning so they struggle. And, socio-economically, they are down there so they are accusing using racist comments. You know, there was a Hispanic girl and she'll say, "where are your sheets" to her friends and walking past Somali women and the one family would talk about these Somali girls have taken over the bathroom. They are washing their feet there that is really disgusting. Why should they get their own bathroom. Why do they get to leave? All those sort of, they can do these things that my kids can't do. They get all these services. So, that's what I hear. They get help. How come all these people get help and I get turned down. Why am I being denied this and I know they have this and the other. It's all comparing and it's financial. Almost always."

5.3.3.1 *Workforce Diversity.*

Another organizational factor that emerged was that subjects believed that if the workforce was racially diverse, it would reduce disparities and increase cultural competence. There is some evidence that a more racially diverse workforce does increase outcomes with discipline policies in public schools (Navarro, 2010). Subjects said their counties were too White in the suburban and rural counties. They wanted a racially diverse workplace and reported being homogenous as a barrier to effectively serving people of color.

"We often hire who we are. So, I take responsibility for that. I look at our core

management group, we are all White. I look at the division management group, we are all

White. I look at senior management team, and it's mostly White males…when they hire a

White male, it's kind of like, really, can't we do better than that? Not that that White

male isn't qualified, but let's try to bring some new blood in and try to bring new ideas

and backgrounds in."

"I've been with the county 30 years and it's grown over the years, but now it's 90 people,

and we've only had one Black person that entire time, and she was fired. She

wasn't…she was, I watched carefully and I would have objected if she wasn't doing a

good job. She wasn't. She wasn't professional. But I was kind of "whoa!"

Other reasons given for lack of diversity in the workplace included the rigid merit

system, a lack of public transportation, and limited relationships with racial minority

communities. Subjects who were supervisors also talked about an inability to attract talented

people of color with the right credentials to work in available positions. Here is a comment from

a subject who successfully worked to create flexibility in the merit system by adjusting it so that

being bilingual became a requirement so that he could hire bilingual speakers for the front

reception desk.

"That's a problem because I think if you are a non-English speaker, and English is your

second language and if some of these tests are heavy in English grammar, and I've not

taken those tests but I…you know, I took a social worker test a years ago, and I want to

increase the diversity of my employees, so that as best represents the community that we

serve, it they're not funneling and passing the merit test, that makes it a challenge."

Another subject attributed the lack of workplace diversity as a lack of relationships. He was

unable to see the structural and systems barriers for people of color. Access to jobs was having

and using relationships to gain employment at the county.

"You can set up however many systems you want, but it's relationship based. That's what

we've found. There aren't communities of color that you can tack into a leadership group,

or person and say how can we work together to improve things. That's significantly

lacking."

When a workplace did have people of color, it created new dynamics and worries for the

subjects' who were supervisors about how White employees were treating employees of color.

Also, whether employees of color had enough support to do their jobs because of the additional

scrutiny that would ensue.

"I am really worried because there is this part about especially for whatever reason, it

seems especially for my African American staff, for some of the African American

women I have on staff, the feeling that they are representing even here at work, that they

are first seen as Black women as opposed to being seen as an individual person. That

makes me really cognizant how we as a group need that other piece that my folks

themselves were talking about dialogue, a place for awareness – cultural brokering, just a

place for some support because I wouldn't want to spend my whole day thinking people

I'm thinking I'm representing my whole group."

Or, this supervisor who had to step in and tell other staff on the floor to give this employee who

was East Indian a chance to do her job, regardless of her heavy accent:

> "…a year ago, we hired a woman who is East Indian and has a very strong accent and we
>
> hired her into a role that she was doing scanning into the Electronic Document System
>
> (ENEA) and we brought her up here to do something of the same but that position also
>
> covers our front desk. And because they page for people, and because she has strong
>
> accent, it's actually quite humorous the way she pronounces some of the names, we kind
>
> of get a kick out of it. But, she's very professional and she does a nice job and so there
>
> was some rumblings because she was spending time at the front desk and doing a lot of
>
> this paging, and was probably harder to understand then because we weren't used to her
>
> accent. I had some people who complained about it, saying that's not a role for her. She
>
> shouldn't be at the front desk, and I said you know she's fully capable of doing that job
>
> and you will get used to her accent. Give her some time, be a good listener when she
>
> pages. I have no trouble understanding her."

Increased interactions and supervision of people of color also challenged subjects'

perceptions of themselves as White people, and their place at the county. One of the subjects

who was a manager in the child protection area explained how a review of outcomes data with

different types of case management became about race, even though she was focused on

outcomes, not race:

> "Yeah. And so then it comes up that they want some of the traditional workers so that's
>
> when I came up with some of my right data. And then, they are people of color and then
>
> I'm like, wait a minute, let's talk about data. Do you know what I mean? I just want to
>
> talk about data, not that they're people of color. It's good that they're people of color, and
>
> they wanted those jobs and you know what I mean. It gets all mixed in and then I feel like
>
> I can't say anything. Which is probably not true, but when I say something, it comes out
>
> racy."

Or, this White subject who works in the chemical dependency area who believes that White

males are now in the minority because of increased diversity at the urban county.

> "Things have changed a lot. And the ethnic groups. You get on the elevators and
>
> everybody's speaking different languages. There are so many different languages spoken
>
> in the county now, and the workers, too, which is nice because there's a lot of X here. It's
>
> changed from being almost all White almost to being almost me being a minority in the
>
> county."

5.3.3.2 Leadership Engagement.

Another theme that emerged was that the engagement of top leaders in human services in

diversity and anti-racism efforts promoted active representation of racial minority interests

among White staff. There was consistent leadership engagement in the urban county with clear

expectations for management. Staff up and down the chain of command were invited to join

efforts. The department director had created an environment where leaders in the county were

expected to work to reduce service disparities and to take personal responsibility for learning. In

addition, the department director had visited and made it a priority to educate and connect with

the county manager, other the top positions in the county, and the Board of Commissioners.

> "He got the County Manager interested in what we were doing and expanded it
>
> throughout the county. That would never have happened without X. Nor would all the
>
> managers, directors, supervisors, and everybody underneath him have taken seriously the
>
> fact that your staff needs to spend time on this. This is not just something we pay lip
>
> service to. This takes work and it takes time. People have to be trained. You have to hold
>
> training events to work on anti-racism training in your units –that comes from him. If he
>
> leaves and nobody is enforcing that – I've seen people come on line and he says this has
>
> to happen."

In the suburban county, formal diversity efforts were in reset mode. Subjects cited poor

attendance, a lack of resource-sharing between departments, and inconsistent or ambiguous

messages and no engagement from top management about diversity and reducing racial

disparities. One subject summed it up by saying, "Supportive in concept. Proactive not so much.

Not necessarily engaged. It's more like, you GO!" Subjects reported no previous senior

management representation in previous county-wide efforts. Instead, the diversity coordinator

reported to senior management and conveyed messages. No official board support was

mentioned. Subjects reported a lack of coordinated action, commitment, and shared purpose. For example, there were centralized dollars for training and development and staff received little acknowledgement for their work. When the diversity position was cut from the human resources budget, subjects noted that there was no effort from top leaders to retain it.

"Maybe we were just tired of fighting. Well, the other thing was always my philosophy when I was involved. The county as an employer put money in an account towards recognition, so we have a certain amount of money that we can spend to recognize staff. I always said, when you put money behind something as an employer, it means something. People respect that, they go, this is important. The county's willing to spend money toward this. They would never do that for any of the diversity inclusivity movements that we tried."

"Well, our job as a cultural diversity task force was to review our cultural pluralism plan but then we tried to increase cultural awareness so we all were going to host different events and host different representatives from different departments so for example, public health is down there, corrections is down there, libraries is down there, so if we choose to host something that raises awareness you know about culture, we were going to invite other departments. And then, it was a money thing. So, if I'm going to invite other corrections because I have a really good speaker, but he's really high bucks. Just you know, I'm not going to spend my wad and offer it to everybody. Oh yeah, it's so silly. Government. Government."

In the rural county, the person in social services was actively engaged in diversity and inclusion efforts at the department and in the community. However, subjects reported that higher up, the expectations were ambiguous and leadership engagement there did not exist. Because of the activism of the social services director on multiple fronts, several committees including the community connections committee (formerly the diversity committee) and Community Health and Well-being Initiative existed. He had also created flexibility in the merit system to increase bilingual staff. Because of his leadership engagement and active representation of racial minority interests, subjects reported that though they sometimes disagreed with his decisions at times, he had put them on a positive path to be responsive and culturally relevant. Subjects were grateful for his intervention which were starting to show positive results.

Leadership engagement for subjects sent strong positive or negative messages about whether active representation was expected and important. In the urban county, there was consistent role modelling and engagement. Further, leadership engagement was deep and had been institutionalized so that anti-racism work was not just one person's responsibility, but everyone's responsibility. In the suburban county, there was inconsistent role modelling and engagement. Pockets of progress existed but due to a lack of engagement by top leadership, subjects wondered whether there was a real commitment to diversity. In the rural county, there was role modelling without the messaging. However, the behavior of its top leader sent a strong signal to staff about expectations, and this seemed enough along with the progress that was being made to feel that they were being culturally responsive.

5.3.4 **Bureaucracy.**

Bureaucracy was described as unnecessary process, too many people being involved to make one decision, a lack of empowerment of staff, and an overall belief that work could be simpler. Subjects described a lack of communication as a problem and not knowing who was making decisions about what issue. Also, if subjects did know who was making the decisions, they disagreed with how the decisions were getting made. For example, the decision to change the income maintenance area to have functional expertise versus having each income maintenance worker assigned to a caseload backed up financial assistance cases and led to many clients who needed mental health services losing their health insurance coverage.

Road blocks included a lack of consultation from front line workers. For example, the interpreting contract was cut, a language line was started, and caused problems with home visits in the mental health area.

> "There are just things like policy and simple road blocks like I wanted a Somali interpreter and ours, the financial ones were scheduled and so trying to find one and then to get one that's on our contract. I had to call the Director of Public Health Nursing to see if IU could borrow theirs and then call our Director to see if he would be willing to allow her to work for me and then what would all that entail and what paperwork needs to be done and completed blah blah blah and just…same thing with they dropped contracts on all our Spanish speaking interpreters."

> "So, it just seems like for our county, it's like pulling teeth. And it's like, couldn't there be an easier way to do that? Um and it doesn't feel like the wheels are greased to make it easier."

Another issue related to bureaucracy was the needing to go through many people to make management decisions. In once such situation, a child protection manager enlisted the support of the interim division director who stepped in to help her communicate about a work unit restructure. Their approach backfired, and it took months for the challenges and allegations of racism to die down and for staff to accept the changes. In hindsight, the subject said she would have approached the situation differently. However, because she felt it best to involve her interim supervisor, it created unanticipated dynamics that were hard to manage. More process and conversation was needed to settle down. In this situation, administrative discretion from the subject had a negative result, and led to a paradoxical effect in which she was working to reduce racial disparities for children of color in the child protections system. While she asserted her authority to do so, it led workers of color to not trust her because she is White. Another subject who was a child protection worker reported that management did not trust staff to make good decisions, even with seasoned and highly competent staff.

"It's the bureaucracy. Here's the thing I don't like about the county. You never get the answer at the level you want it. It's always got to go to somebody else, to somebody else, to somebody else."

Fear of getting in trouble with the union also came up as a barrier. If personnel changes needed to occur, human resources and union representatives got involved, sometimes leading to a long drawn out process. If a staff person filed a complaint, an investigation occurred and the situation would last for months. One of the subjects interviewed was a manager of mental health

services in a county clinic. She got caught between sorting out style differences between two African American employees. Because human resources conducted an investigation, it took months to finalize a coaching plan, extending the negative impact to the work climate.

"It wasn't all my sort of timing, we sort of somehow, HR had to come in and do an investigation and it took like two months. It was just an extraordinary long time, and then in the meantime the conflict was continuing and escalating. I wish I would have just said no, I do think we need to be doing something while we're investigating and we put it on hold. And then, in the end, the investigation was kind of yeah there's problems on all sides of it. There was nothing…nothing really came out of the investigation that there was no findings. No one was disciplined. Kind of the result was, we need more coaching and training."

Another example of the bureaucracy preventing active representation was an opportunity to develop mental health services for the growing Somali community. Because of the bureaucracy related to services development, the contracting process, ensuring equity, and going up the chain of command, the opportunity was lost. The need to vet the decision through a long process stopped the partnership from occurring.

"There was a Somali organization, a relatively new organization in St. Paul, I can't remember the exact name of it approached me a couple of others to get a contract with us to provide case management services potentially for Somali clients and were quite articulate about what they felt was the community need and there was clear need for case

management. So, what they wanted was to get a new contract for case management services. And came here and met a couple times, and they certainly seemed to be competent, you know, that it made sense with their business plan and all of that. So, we talked to the other Manager, and our contract person, and our planner and the Services Team that would be managing this organization or managing the case management services, or what we wanted to do. Do we want to consider doing that? And what we decided was that we thought that this was probably right, although we didn't, hadn't done a process to have data or investigate and that was probably true to our experience. You know, we have case management contracts that go for 4-5 years and this was the middle of cycle, and so did we want to or was it fair or make sense to sort of initiate a contract with one organization in a middle of cycle and can we do that without extending the opportunity to other organizations or communities or pick one minority community over others. So, what we ended up deciding was that we didn't really have the time to figure….what we decided was to say no to the organization now and then hope that this was maybe a year or a year and a half ago…that we would try to do at some point, do a pilot exploration of holding some focus groups, or doing some sort of exploration of is that a community need, is the best way to satisfy that community need to contract with a specific community organization and does that make sense or not to which then of course we had to communicate back."

However, near the same time in the county when the Karen community requested assistance for mental health services though a different mental health manager, a part-time position was authorized. It was positioned as a pilot and valued at $200,000 per year. The

confusion from this participant was about the bureaucracy. In one situation, a contract was possible and in another, it was not. As newer county employee, it did not make sense to her. And even though it did not make sense to her, she did not challenge the decision.

5.3.5 Legal and Compliance Issues.

Legal and compliance issues were cited as a barrier to active representation because of value-laden judgments. In the child protection area which is highly regulated, compliance with the law did not mean an equal number of maltreatment reports because of the uneven treatment application of reporting, the intake process, placement process, and even exit process due to race and poverty together. For example, one subject described the intake process as sorting out through values:

> "I'd like to report this mom she is living in a two bedroom, she has 7 children. They don't have any beds. She's sleeping all the time. I would assume that she's using drugs. And getting that clarity out of and this is what we spend a lot of time doing. Is it rising to the level of neglect or abuse or is the reporter making the report because it isn't hitting their value of parenting."

> "We spend a lot of our time and talking about statute and separating out their values and I think people's values are connected to being racist. Ah, and separating that out about how you may raise your children may be totally different than how I raise my children. But the fact that a family may be struggling and may be living under the poverty line does not mean that they are being neglectful or abusive to their children. I think a lot of the reports

that come in are based on that. And so often, many of our reporters are people in the White community."

"And that's what I…culture does not play a role in the State law. In the State law, your kid is 10, he has to be in school. And so, that's what I'm enforcing. I'm not enforcing culture. I'm not enforcing anything about your experience. It's State law and I'm enforcing State law."

Because being a person of color and being poor often came together in reports, it was impossible for subjects to not feel that the way the system was working continued to foster racial disparities. It was a challenge to communicate to clients of color that they were not being targeted, because it often felt that way, and at times it was true.

 "You know, I still see those same schools making more reports where a person of color, or someone who's poor get more reports. I had a principal in a meeting say to me, "I didn't report this family because he's a hygienist, he's a doctor, and I'm not going to report him because he's staying in the community." It was for educational neglect, when I was there for another family for educational neglect."

"I would…it's definitely more the poor families are getting reported. And, they have harder decisions to make. If I have a 7 year old, that 7 year old has been raised to be more independent than a 16 year old in another family might. And our rule in X County is that you have to be 8 to be able to be alone for 2 hours. Well, that single mom can't afford

day care, she's going to let that kid be home for 2 hours before she gets home from work.

I understand that. It makes sense. That kid can tell me everything about fire safety, they

have a back-up plan, they know the neighbor, they have a phone number list, the mom

doesn't want to do it, but she has no other choice, there's nobody else to help her. Where

the other family, in the million dollar home, they just spend money on day care and it's

not an issue."

In other services areas such as mental health, compliance and regulatory requirements

around billing and getting credentialed was a barrier increase clinicians of color and to deliver

services to be more responsive and relevant to what people need. A mental health manager in

this work unit said that having a set appointment time at a designed clinic for mental health

services was a White western model of delivery that did not serve the populations they were

trying to reach, and that regulatory barriers were creating challenges to service.

"…as we have to hire people who are licensed with two years to be able to credential and

then bill and all sorts of systems issues around that staff…I think there are so many things

that we think, well, we can't do that because of DHS regulations, or we can't do this

because of this regulation or that regulation. I think we've come to say, well, then we

need to be challenging those whatever those regulations are that are a barrier and we

should be challenging those."

However, sometimes regulatory requirements were also helpful. One of the subjects who

was a supervisor in foster care licensing and placement, said that she used the Multiethnic

Placement Act to make changes so staff would be culturally competent. The Multiethnic

Placement Act says that you cannot place children in foster homes solely based on race

(Multiethnic Placement Act, 2014). She had released two of her staff to become trainers so that

the county could have in-house expertise. She made it possible for them to have flexible time and

saw training as professional development for staff.

> "Two of my staff are MN Child Welfare Trainers. So, I've got experts within my unit,
>
> and they train everything from the definition of culture to how to work with adolescents.
>
> Both of them actually do foster adoption kinship training. They actually go and train on
>
> their own time and train other counties. I'm really lucky to have internal experts. Not
>
> only good trainers but have that "get it" factor, too….I have benefitted by them being
>
> trainers and the info meetings and things like that."

In the rural county, the threat of State sanction for delays and a lack of service to its

residents prompted administrative changes to respond to the increasing diversity of the county.

As reported by this participant, the county board refused to serve more people and went to court

twice, losing each time.

> "The State was on our tail because we couldn't get stuff done in a timely manner. We
>
> were looking at State sanction. And then they fought it. Even so, the county board fought
>
> it and said, you can't do that. They're going to make us serve all these people, and
>
> they've done it twice now taken it to court, and they've lost both times."

There was also public pressure that changed the minds of county board to comply with the State. Picketers showed up for days in front of the main county building, and brought visibility to the issue, helping to force the county to serve its newest residents.

"Nope. Not a dark skin in the bunch. They came and said, you have to stop doing this. Nobody can get any services. They are waiting. They don't get their meds you know. They don't get their food. They don't get anything in a timely manner. So, while they were fighting the State, these people were saying enough. This is our county, too, you need to hire some staff and at that point, they hired. The Board looking at the signs outside decided four new financial staff might help which still did not bring up to a quarter of the other counties. See how fried the workers are? They were fried."

Organizational factors that contributed to active representation included direct supervisors who allowed public employees to have broad discretion in carrying out their work duties to actively represent racial minority interests, a racially diverse workforce, clear expectations about diversity and inclusion, leadership engagement and action, and a common vision for how the county should be operating. Limiting factors in active representation included bureaucracy, laws, and compliance activities that were typically based on dominant cultural norms. Because the differing values of those who may have created laws, they would create a situation that was challenging for White public administrators to reduce service disparities. Even if they could see what was causing the racial disparities, the larger policy or regulatory barriers were outside of the organizations in which they worked.

5.4 Interaction of Factors and Active Representation

In the previous two categories, I reviewed personal and organizational factors. In this section, I will discuss the themes or patterns that I noted in terms of the interactions of these factors together. Each participant shared two to three examples of active representation. The results showed that both personal and organizational factors are important for active representation and cannot be extricated from each other. Even though reporting of the results occurred in those two categories, they interacted in ways that were linked yet hard to capture. Depending on the participant's unique background and socialization experiences and the set of conditions in the organization and external environment, factors interacted to produce the examples of active representation that participant's talked about. What subjects did depended on how they interpreted as possible to make with their span of control, regular job roles, and adoption of a minority representation role. Figure 1 shows the overlapping personal and organizational factors that played out for active representation to occur.

Also, there were factors that promoted active representation from outside of the organization from the narratives. These I called "external factors" and include: public policy, demographics, and needs. These external factors created situations inside the counties that required a response, and were uncontrollable to the organization. For example, federal policy declared Somali's as refugees, generating an influx of refugees resettling in the county. Refugees had more complex health needs and had experienced more trauma than those who came before. Changing demographics was also a factor, supporting my rationale for choosing these three counties. The third external factor that mattered was "need". Need described the people who lived in those counties needing to access county services. In short, external factors behooved the county performing its safety net functions to adequately serve the residents.

Figure 1. Summary of Active Representation

External Environment

Public policy
Demographics
Need for Services

Organizational Factors

Diverse & Inclusive Work
Environment
- Leadership engagement
- Workforce diversity

Bureaucracy

Supervisor Support

Legal/Compliance

Administrative Discretion

Span of control

Minority Role adoption

Authority

Personal Factors

White racial consciousness
- Id with other social marginalized groups
- Civil Rights & direct experience with racism
- Relationships w/people of color

Background
- Parents and families
- Life events

Active Representation

Deliberate
Partial
Conformist

Role acceptance was stronger when subjects were racially conscious and the organization also was supportive of diversity, especially for front line workers. Participants who accepted and understood their White identity and clear belief systems had strong role acceptance to be actively representative.

"Race is our issue. I mean, I'm in child welfare, we are all about…that's that thing I say to my staff too, we are all about disproportionate impact."

"But as a White person, I have a personal responsibility for being a part of the solution. And if I'm not part of the solution, then I am part of the problem"

"Being in mostly White environments, but I was still always very…well maybe not active is the right word, but devoted to the idea that everybody is equal."

Selden (2007) was the first to assert that assuming a role to represent racial minority interests along with attitude congruence was more important than the race of the person. And Rocha and Hawes (2009) found that the presence of African American teachers lowers secondary discrimination of African American students and Latino students. The findings of this study support previous studies such as these and suggest that subjects from a dominant social group, Whites can positively affect positive outcomes to benefit racial minorities. Participants had to agree that they were White and be actively representing racial minority interests even minimally before interviews were set up. So, all 15 subjects had adopted a minority representative role to a certain extent. The adoption of the minority representative role varied across all 15 subjects depending on racial consciousness, organizational factors, and upbringing as mentioned earlier. The strength of role adoption to represent the interests of racial minorities depended on the level of racial consciousness of the subject, their own expectations, and the expectations of the organization. Three patterns emerged during in this study, which I grouped into three types of active representation: deliberate, partial, and conformist.

5.4.1 **Deliberate Active Representation.**

Deliberate active representation was observed among subjects who understood their White racial identity. These individuals had adopted a strong minority representative role, could identify how race and culture were a factor at work and in service delivery, and were able to proactively allocate time and resources to solve work and problems. These were subjects who understood the benefit of being a part of the dominant White race, accepted their racial identity, and were effective allies to people of color and those of a different culture background. They were deliberate about their actions, often very strategic, and had identified solutions for how to make things better. They expressed confidence about their actions and the connection to their belief system. They were also able to connect their personal leadership and action to structural and systems improvements to benefit people of color. In the interviews, these subjects had no excuses or justifications for how things happened and why they happened a certain way. They just knew action had to happen and they were deliberate in creating the action. These individuals could articulate who they were as White people, what they believed, why they believed it, and what they were doing about it. There were no inconsistencies with what they believed about their White racial identity and the examples that they gave about past behavior to represent racial minority interests. The dyad shows this consistent pattern of the self-identification of racial and cultural norms of what being White means, and the ability to talk openly about solutions and activities that the White mothers in her county needed. This subject was in the middle of a resource allocation and development process to benefit Black children being raised by White mothers in her suburban county.

Meaning of Whiteness and cultural norm:

 "And so for the shot of time that I lived there was essentially from 12 to maybe 18 and left the day after graduation and didn't go back there ever since. I think I made the comment to you that I'm so White that I glow in the dark some days. I go up North and I screw up every single time. I am just so culturally different than the…from that place that I just…it's like for me what it feels like is I'm not just White, I'm WHITE! (Laugh) Somebody says, "Hey, I haven't seen you in while, whatcha been up to?" And I start talking about my job. No one. No one, no one ever answers that question with like, let me tell you about my work. You know, where here I think it's just so much people identify so much around their job, and our jobs are so much a part of our (White) identity that when you go to a party and when somebody says what do you do. The only thing that you ever think that means is what do you do for a living."

Report of active representation:

"We need kids that can be seen for who they are and assisted for what they need and you know, I live in X, and we have community organizations that say now we're going to do driving while Black and so you know there's a way you know the old Hiawatha Y used to do, OK now all the White moms come, we're going to do classes on how to do African American hair. The community in the city is much better about just sort of establishing what families need, let's figure out how to do that.

How do you get people to always realize that for them what is what they do every single day at work is writ large in a family's life? You know, and that the connotations that get

write large, get different, depending on race, depending on culture, depending on multi-

generational experiences. And so, it is so trying to raise awareness, and all those other

kinds of things but it's also that wait wait wait, tune in here. Tune in here every day."

Six of the participants that I interviewed showed deliberate active representation about

race, poverty, and culture. Of these, two were male and four were female. Racial and cultural

dynamics were inextricably linked for these individuals, and they did not believe that social

identities could be separated from each other because of the reinforcing nature of socialization

processes. A lack of organizational factors that did not facilitate active representation, such as

top leadership in the county being absent from their work, did not stop them from doing what

they needed to do. All of these individuals had interactions with people of color in their work or

home lives where they cared about people of color and had trusting relationships. If they did not

currently have significant relationships, their backgrounds were such that they had immersed

themselves in volunteerism, community work, and in client work that motivated them to act on a

daily basis. Most had have it a point to apply training they had received and to also deliver

training in some way to others who were less afar along in being racially conscious.

Because they had a deeper understanding of themselves as human beings and what had

shaped them socially, they were more at peace with what they wanted and where they wanted to

head organizationally. These subjects gave personal examples of discussing values and beliefs,

and challenging the assumptions of others.

"In the screening room, there are three of us who are White and one is African American.

And we've even had the conversations about just our own biases within our own culture.

And I'm trying to think there was an example one day and it raised me up off of my chair because one of the screeners said...and I don't even think this was a report. It was a blurb on the internet that they were reading, something on the news and something happened anyway where a dad ended up shooting one of his kids. They were…he was cleaning the gun or something. Anyway, my coworker said and this was in a different State. And my co-worker said, "Oh look, there's a picture of the house. Of course they live in a trailer. Oh, I spun in my chair. You can't just assume. I said that could have happened in Eagan in a cul-de-sac in Eagan. There are families in Eagan who are White families that own guns and dad could have been cleaning and shot his kid."

Or, this subject who challenged leaders in the Somali community and also challenged her colleagues at the county to understand and resolve cultural misunderstanding. The issue was that Somali clients were loud, and it was scaring the front line county workers.

"Mostly I started with, "Let me explain…" And so, as I explained to them that this was part of their culture and they weren't yelling and it was perfectly…I told a worker the other day I said you know you can tell them that they don't need to yell. They know that they are doing it. They know that they are doing it? Yes, they know that they're doing that, and I said if you need them to talk quieter, please tell them. I will. They just were being…we had so many come in so fast. We had thousands of them."

5.4.2 **Partial Active Representation.**

Subjects who exhibited partial active representation if they could identify the constructs of White racial identity and took action to benefit racial minorities but lacked confidence and expressed inconsistency in their beliefs with the examples of active representation that they gave about themselves. I categorized six out of the 15 participants as partially active in representing racial minority interests. These individuals accepted a representative role, but were unable to identify concrete next steps for doing so or were conflicted about the actions that they chose. They had trouble describing what they wanted or believed about themselves. These individuals floated in and out of racial consciousness during the interview process. They justified their actions constantly, sought validation from me about their views, and were often conflicted about the outcomes of their actions. In particular, they were skeptical about whether White racial identity and socialization experiences that they had were real. They had a hard time connecting their personal actions to organizational outcomes and would sometimes be frustrated with themselves and the organization. This confirmed previous studies that White people are less likely to see racial identity at work or in their social interactions and that they tend to think of racism as being individualized (Scott and Robinson, 2001; Bonilla-Silva, Goer, and Embrick, 2006). Here are two dyad quotes that demonstrate this pattern.

Subject #1 Example:

> "I think it's the actual knowledge of where I am. You know, for people who know nothing and haven't even heard of the concept of White privilege, you can start that work but then I don't know where to go from there."

In explaining a unit restructuring that was about work outcomes where racial dynamics became problematic because the child protection supervisor she was moving as Black, the supervisor she was bringing in was a White man, she was White, and her interim supervisor was White:

> "Everything looks different from her perspective than it should have looked because it looks like it was a disciplinary issue and I told her over and if it was a disciplinary issue, I would have disciplined you. I said, it's a dynamic I need to change."

Subject # 2 Example:

> "It's very conflicting for me. Because I feel like I'm getting a lot of pressure through our anti-racism work here to identify as White. But to me, that's something that I never felt a need to do. And I still…while I understand the notion of White privilege and all of that…I get that. And yet, it's a concept that I never identified with before. I never thought of myself as, "Oh, you're a White person.""

Here is an example of the same subject talking about her work with diversity efforts.

> "The people of color have to learn to be more assertive. The people who have power, some of them are people of color, but they have to particularly…if you are White you have to be sensitive to the fact that people of color may not feel as confident in challenging you because of that (your White race). And so, I think you (White people)

have to be aware of it so that in any given situation, you can make sure you are not using a position of power over them."

She starts out saying that people of color need to be assertive and ends with White people not using their superior positional power in order to not make people of color feel bad. She was giving advice that assumes people of color are subordinate, have less authority, and are less willing to speak up, and that White people are superior because they have more power. However, at the beginning of this quote, she acknowledges that people of color do have power.

Another way in which partial active representation was demonstrated was though guilt and shame that was expressed about being White and feeling that nothing that could be done, or that they needed to take care of people of color. This is a subject who helped lead a diversity committee. The diversity committee had accomplished a huge amount of work, but she did not connect her contributions to increased access that was gained for Somali clients to her behavior. Instead, even while she was actively representing racial minority interests, she felt shame and guilt about being White.

 "Well, it (being White) certainly means privilege. A lot of privileges. I sometimes feel bad about that, bad about just being White because it feels, I don't know, fairness is real big in my mind and heart. Here I go again. But, it just doesn't seem fair that because of the color of your skin, you get treated a certain way or not, and I get… I am very lucky to be in this country and be who I am, I do, but it certainly does not make it…it's just not fair for other people, there's that disparity, that huge disparity, and it just bothers me on few different levels, but there's nothing I can really do about it."

Those in partial active representation were taking actions but were not deliberate in their actions and they were not always being strategic. However, they did see their roles as making things better for people of color. They had internalized of value of helping to increase and improve outcomes through formally established efforts at an institutional level and through their own services delivery. At times, they expressed just needing to be actively representative because there were organizational expectations for them to perform these duties. These were individuals were more likely to stay inside of their job boundaries. If asked, they would actively assist and volunteer to take projects on to help the racial minorities. Common factors for those in partial active representation were strong beliefs about racism being a problem and their own need to dismantle it, strong support of an organizational culture that values diversity, and a tendency to be worried about following rules and justifying their actions to support racial minorities as a part of their jobs while fearing they would get in trouble.

5.4.3 Conformist Active Representation.

Conformist active representation was observed among subjects who identified as White but expressed little self-awareness or racial consciousness. The organizational expectations and pressure from outside the organization was what moved these subjects to be actively representative. These individuals had internalized the value of diversity and had an ethic of public service. They enjoyed getting to know different types of people, but were not actively engaged directly with people of color at work nor did they make time to socialize with them. The reason why they had adopted a role to represent racial minorities was because it was a primary expectation of their work duties. Their narratives included stereotypes and generalizations about

people of color. Unlike the partially active subjects, these subjects conformed in their job

expectations. They did not give active representation examples where they were intrinsically

motivated to represent racial minority interests. There were two participants who fit as

conformist. Both of these subjects were White males.

When I asked one of the subjects who was working on reducing employment disparities,

about why he was doing so, he reported that there was a multi-county effort underway and it had

been started by a different county. The racial disparities data was also showing that this was a

problem and that he felt it was his job to address it in his current role.

> "So, professionally, it's something we're working on. We're talking about X county, and
>
> the workforce disparities project that they are working on is a big deal, it's really
>
> important. We've worked on disparities in the low income program with funding from
>
> DHS, it's probably about five years ago, and it's pretty dang complicated to move the
>
> needle."

He also noted that there was reputational risk for the county as it might be seen as not

welcoming for people of color. Unlike White public administrators who could articulate

structural problems and identify specific solutions targeted toward people of color, he was unable

to do so. He lacked the lexicon to fully express beliefs about White racial identity and people of

color. When I asked his efforts to diversify his own workforce since he oversees a large division,

he said, "We must have (diversified) because we didn't really have a choice." His solutions went

back to generating awareness of job opportunities and building relationships. Both of these

strategies are individualized and do not target policies or systems barriers that people of color may experience.

"So, kids of color, they saw some people of color at a private health insurance company, working in whatever department. And the kids like were, I didn't know that people like us could work here. Well, that's a big deal. It's just career awareness."

His approach to reduce disparities was to work on career awareness.

"So, our staff, on the career awareness piece, staff have, and it's really broad based. It's not targeted to any group. It's targeted by age and we're looking at that young adult, young folks we're connecting via the schools, we're working on a…I should say it's the K-12 schools, we have a plan in development as far as how we do a broader outreach with maybe Facebook or social media, maybe some traditional media in partnership with the two year schools in our area."

His solution was that awareness of career opportunities would motivate Black children to build relationships, "…we've got systems in place but so much of it is relationship based. That's my belief. You pick up the phone and say, what can we do?"

The other White subject in this category was a financial assistance worker and said he was actively representative because he was curious about people of different backgrounds, and that his caseload had the part of the alphabet that had a lot of Somali names.

"Well, I think when we originally, financial workers had their own caseloads, you had

your own clients that you saw on a regular basis, um, my part of the alphabet was A

through B something there so there were a lot of Ali's and Ahmed's so I think I might

have had a disproportionate amount of Somalians."

This subject was not racially conscious and demonstrated in his responses that his racial identity

was invisible. He also felt that racism was a thing of the past.

"Sometimes, I feel like…in honestly, sometimes I feel like the White race may being still

being blamed for sins of the past. Like maybe what our nation did to the American

Indians, you know at the beginning of our nation, and maybe there's still some blame

attached to the racial injustice of the Black Americans since you know around slavery

days, and I can understand people's feelings towards that, but I guess I really don't think

a lot about being White because I'm interested in…I love diversity and I want people to

share in all the benefits that I enjoy as an American citizen, too."

Because his caseload and work had changed as a result of restructuring, he was no longer

working primarily with Somali clients. When I asked him about how he thought being White

mattered at work, he did not understand the question. After I clarified, he said:

"Well, I would say that if anybody says they don't have any bias about certain races, they

probably wouldn't be totally honest because I think we are all people that based on what

we see in media and other sources, but I really try to incorporate my Christian beliefs and

again based on the bible, I try to treat all races and all ethnic groups the same and um I

hope I'm doing a good job of that."

This subject conformed to what was being asked of him from the organization and could not see

his own dominant cultural norms. He was motivated by his faith in God, and had adopted an

active role because it was his job. He also did not see racism as current, but as a thing of the past.

The subjects in this category were still able to articulate White identity constructs, believe

in achieving a racially equitable world, and wanted to do the right thing to move in that direction.

However, they lacked enough racial consciousness during interviews to stay away from

expressing stereotypes and generalizations. However, they were not as personally conflicted like

the individuals who were in partial active representation. They did not necessarily feel shame or

guilt. They did not deny that inequality existed, but had simpler explanations for what they

needed to do to get things done. These individuals felt they needed to do their jobs and what their

organizations expected of them with regard to diversity and inclusion. They had a willingness to

work and expressed concern and care about reducing disparities even while possibly perpetuating

disparities through their actions.

5.5 Negative Case.

In qualitative research, is helpful to find alternative explanations cases that do not adhere

to the researcher's explanations (Berg, 2007). A negative case helps compare the patterns that

emerged to test the reasoning behind the explanatory scheme and to review any moderating

influences that might cause a case to look different. I found one negative case. The negative case

was a White subject who worked in the chemical dependency and mental health case

management area at the urban county. As a part of his duties, he worked with drug addicts and alcoholics who cycled repeatedly into detoxification services. He had the longest tenure of all subjects interviewed, 33 years at the urban county.

The subject was able to identify misaligned management decisions with intended service goals to reduce racial disparities. He talked about how the county strove to be culturally responsive and had contracted with a non-profit Native American organization. The Native American organization sent a White person to work in the detoxification center. Management had assumed that if the contract was with a Native American organization, a Native American counselor would be sent, but this turned out to not be true. In his view, this went against everything the county was trying to achieve. In his experience, matching racial and ethnic background to the client was successful only if the client requested the match. However, county management was assigning every Native American person to the contracted service provider. In his view, clients who had an addiction required a sense of control over their lives and the ability to develop trust over a long period of time. Since the county was assigning Native American cases to a White person, I asked if he would help mentor and if he had asked management to change this practice. He said that it was not his job to do so.

He was able to identify his own values and the benefits of being White. He talked about relationships with people of color, the internalized oppression of his co-workers of color, and the need to work with White people and people of color to see where they could reconcile their racial realities. He could articulate and express the cultural values and social dynamics of various ethnic and racial groups.

"It's hard not to separate the groups, and part of how they integrate into America. I see African Americans, they've been here the longest and they have the hardest struggle. The Hispanics seem to work more, but something about the African Americans, they haven't figured out a way to integrate as much as say the Southeast Asian or the Somali's, Muslims. I don't know the names of the groups and they seem to integrate a lot easier than the African American. And I also see the African American's having more a chip on their shoulder than the other races do."

He could describe the cultural characteristics that either facilitated or hindered certain racial or ethnic groups from seeking services:

"There's three Hmong that work here. Two are nurses, and there was a guy here that was married to a Hmong lady, so I learned a lot about the Hmong and how the…that ethnic group. You don't see a lot of Hmongs coming into Detox. If they have a problem, the whole clan will get together and takes care of them. In other…I don't know about the Somali, they're pretty quiet, I don't see a lot of Somali's or Muslims in Detox either who are hidden. Very seldom will we get those in here. So, their culture might be different. I did some training but not a whole lot.

They take care of their own groups. African Americans, it's like they get problems, they get out so they are on the street a lot more. And Whites are the same way, too. If they…they try to help, but if it doesn't work, they just throw them out. The Hmongs and

Somali's, they take care of each other, but they just seem to integrate better. That's

probably because of the family network or how their system works."

I found the factual manner in which he reported out racial and cultural values and

attributes to be accurate. I wondered if he had shared his wisdom from working in chemical

dependency for over 30 years with other, but he said did not share it with others. There was a

lack of receptivity to his ideas from management and he had his hands full. He said he shut the

door sometimes because he did not want to be bothered. He limited his participation in diversity

training and related activities. His philosophy as a chemical dependency counselor was centered

on his own life experience as an alcoholic and drug addict.

"I'm an alcoholic and drug addict, too, and I remember the suffering and suicide, and

crimes committed and other things; it's a miserable place to be. You know, I even have

post-traumatic stress and that was back in the 70's so I still feel for people in that

position because it's not the place to be. And, I feel bad for people who are in that

position. And, I want to try to get them out of that if I can."

"But I don't see anything different. I've had Blacks, I've had Native Americans, I've got

real close to a lot these people, you know. A lot of them have passed on over the years

and stuff but I don't…I work with them, I don't see no difference. If they meet me for a

few times, you know I'm not an aggressive person, I'm not pushy. I just offer people

options and I say, if you want to drink, it's really your choice. You might die being

sober, too. So, you have a better chance to live longer if you don't drink. You know, cut

down. Do something."

During his interview, he expressed that he was tired of educating other Whites. The

subject said the swing in work culture had gone too far, making White people feel targeted and

fearful. He did not feel that White employees could discuss race openly. He believed that there

needed to be balance so it was not such a "Whites bad" and "people of color" good mentality. In

White identity racial development theory, this subject might be seen as sliding back into a former

stage of White identity development. As described by Helms (1990), this subject expresses and is

conscious of White racial identity, accepts it and knows what to do, but has distanced himself

from other Whites. This fits a stage called Pseudo-Independence in the White Racial Identity

Development Model. It is possible that if his social identity centers more so on being a

recovering addict and not around race. He believed that if a client died with a meal in his belly

and a roof over his head he died, then he had done his job well.

It appeared that the emotional energy of developing relationships with so many

vulnerable adults of the years who had died was all he could choose to focus on. And even

though he might have been able to do more, he chose not to. In doing so, he asserted race

privilege. Unlike other subjects, this individual was not withdrawing from actively representing

racial minority interests because he was not racially conscious. He was doing so because he was

deliberately not doing anything and asserting his race privilege to consciously protect himself

emotionally. In this way, he was asserting race privilege to protect himself from other Whites.

This case demonstrates that White people need support to continue to be allies to people

of color. The learning from this case is that White people who are racially conscious but receive

little or no support might mean exhaustion and a rejection of role adoption to represent racial

minority interests. For public employees who are in stressful emotional roles, the space needs to

be created whereby rest can occur and time made available to support them. For example, the

client caseload that he managed would regularly have one or two people die per month. He also

did not receive support from his primary supervisor or others to stay actively representative. It is

also possible to Whites to slip back into an earlier stage of White racial identity development and

who can always choose to not be allies if they are tired of the anti-racism work. The presumed

end state of White racial identity development as an abandonment of racist behavior may be

optimistic; just because a White person is racially conscious does not mean they want to risk

anything to get personally involved. There is still the assertion of race privilege in the end to

protect oneself, just like this particular subject.

CHAPTER 6

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results from the data suggest a more complex picture of active representation

previously described. This might be because this study method allowed the opportunity to study

the nuances of different sets of relationships. The level of interaction among personal and

organizational socialization factors combined in unexpected ways, and new insight was gained

leading to future areas for study. The convergence of these personal and organizational factors

either strengthened or weakened role adoption for White public administrators to represent racial

minority interests. The combination of these factors for each subject was unique, but patterns

were also fairly consistent along with the themes that surfaced. Also, a few factors emerged that

were new and unanticipated. This chapter discusses the results, implications, and limitations of the research.

6.1 **Active Representation May Be More Effective if Whites are Racially Conscious**

White subjects who had higher levels of racial conscious were more deliberate in accepting a role to represent racial minority interests and be advocates for changes that could improve outcomes for people of color. In the two counties with formal diversity efforts and goals, White subjects knew they could adopt a role to represent racial minority interests but they felt less confident and secure about their ability to do so. This was especially evident in the urban county where White subjects felt threatened and insecure about their own White racial identities, given the expectations from top leadership in the organization. Whites did not feel like they had support to explore their own White racial identity, nor could they see how anti-racism efforts were concrete. But they did feel that because of the support for anti-racism work that they could work through challenges if they wanted to. Whites in other counties also felt unsure but because expectations were lower from the organization, there was less personal tension present for White subjects who were interviewed. On one hand, the public administration literature assumes that public organizations which embrace diversity and inclusion would facilitate active representation. On the other hand, the White identity literatures states that when White dominance is challenged, White identity becomes most salient and resistance arises to maintain the status quo. The findings of this study is more consistent with the literature on White identity than with the literature on active representation (McDermott & Samson, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, Goer, & Embrick, 2006; Croll, 2007). Whites who were in deliberate and partial active

representation in the urban county could identify the resistance, but overall subjects did not know what to do about it to move the work culture forward.

As efforts move forward to reduce racial disparities, it might behoove us as public administrators to think about how to help White public administrators who are struggling with seeing racism to understand how organizational dynamics could be channeled more positively toward productive and useful change. Blitz and Kohl (2012) suggest that developing White anti-racist affinity groups would help White people to process and validate the existence of racism and to build accountability. The building of White allies into affinity groups is also supports by Goodman (2011). In particular, this could help subjects in the partial active representation group. In the negative case, that subject had stopped educating other Whites. In the suburban and rural counties, White allies had gone underground into covert operations. Subjects in partial active representation could see their Whiteness when conflict arose, but had trouble accepting that racism is a social dynamic that assigns privilege without their consent. Assigning White public administrators who have little racial consciousness to reduce racial disparities might just reinforce current disparities and create cultural conflict that is not useful.

The evidence from this study also supported the assertion from Hays, Change, and Havice (2008) that racial consciousness can be gained if White people receive exposure and prolonged social interaction with people of color. An acceptance of White racial identity seemed to require an acceptance of this identity and a choice to abandon White privilege and work on racial justice. Prolonged social and voluntary engagement with people of color made a difference for many of the White subjects in deliberate active representation. People of color validated that their racial reality was not the same as the reality of White people. White subjects experienced with friends of color could live vicariously and peek into a different social reality from their

own. This then assisted them to staying racially conscious. These individuals were less likely to generalize and stereotype people of color in their narratives and demonstrated more consistency between what they expressed was their values and how they reported their active representation. However, the insight from the negative case was that racial consciousness did not equal being an ally to people of color and that Whites could also slip back into a state of privilege if they wanted to. The choice to not be actively representative of racial minorities was about asserting White privilege.

Racial and cultural conflict played a role in fostering active representation. Part of gaining consciousness and being actively representative was accepting the role and using the authority to challenge, support, and advocate for change against the status quo which meant risk taking and stepping into conflict to problem solve. For those who were partially active, experiencing failure and making mistakes prepared them for more active representation and increased their racial consciousness. This means that focusing attention when Whites experience failure and using these as learning opportunities could help cultural competency and skill development to increase racial consciousness and improve active representation among Whites to represent racial minority interests.

Experiences in the personal sphere permeated into job roles inside the organization and vice versa. Interactions outside of workplace with people of color increased racial consciousness for Whites to be more effective at work. At times, Whites trying to educate other Whites also led to increased racial consciousness because it gave subjects an opportunity to test their skills. For example, one of the subjects talked about teaching her children to be racially conscious, and raising the racial consciousness of her White friends.

"She just got really mad and I did not know the next step to go. I could only go so far and

it was really interesting though because I realized I shouldn't…but it was a good learning

experience for everybody but she was not able to…it's so common for us to talk about it

here, you bring it up and you wouldn't get mad. You'd just say, I don't agree with that

but you wouldn't get mad like she got, "Why does everyone say that!" Really mad."

This experience taught that subject that she was farther along in understanding her White

racial identity than she though. She had an appreciation for what her staff of color had to go

through each time other Whites did not validate what she was seeing with racial dynamics

outside of her workplace. During the interview process, this subject sought on-going assurance

that her comments were racially appropriate. She cross-checked many comments with me to

validate her reality and to validate comments that staff of color had made to her about what they

observed and thought of her behavior as their supervisor.

Results also indicated that a lack racial consciousness did not mean that White people

would stop adopting a role to be actively representative of racial minority interests. Conformist

actively representative subjects expressed more confidence than was warranted that they were on

the right track with reducing racial disparities, understanding their Whiteness, and finding

solutions. Two subjects adopted a representative racial minority role because of their assigned

duties and not voluntary adoption.

Engagement in assigned work duties could increase racial consciousness, especially if

there is an ethic of public service the required service delivery to all of its citizens. For a number

of the participants in partial active representation, the need to serve the public prompted

engagement and their level of racial consciousness was raised as a result of this. In turn, this

changed how they accepted and then adopted a role to represent racial minority interests. Those

who were more racially conscious had a greater willingness to take risks and use their authority

to carry out duties to advocate for racial minorities. If participants had a deep understanding of

another marginalized social identity, they seemed to also gain racial consciousness more quickly

though trial an error. Conversations with these participants about racial identity often led to

examples of poverty and race, or poverty and gender, confirming intersectionality theories

(Wijeyshinghe & Jackson, 2012).

6.2 Duality of Factors in Active Representation

Personal and organizational factors for White public administrators could facilitate or

detract White subjects from actively representing racial minority interests, depending how they

perceived their administrative discretion: span of control, strength of role adoption, and

willingness to use authority to improve outcomes for racial minorities. These characteristics

confirmed findings from Sowa and Selden (2003) that showed that minority and White public

administrators who perceived themselves as having more discretion over internal agency

processes and client outcomes produced results that favored racial minorities. Also, previous

results show that the potential for minority role adoption included a willingness for bureaucrats

to see themselves as advocates for minority interests (Bradbury & Kellough, 2008). And finally,

administrative discretion is greater with a larger span of control (Meier & Bohte, 2001).

There was also a duality to the organizational factors that surfaced. In the literature, a

diverse and inclusive workplace along with a work culture that supports diversity is construed as

a facilitative factor. However, in strategic efforts to create a diverse and inclusive workplace and

to reduce racial disparities at the urban county, four out of the five White subjects felt

unsupported. They felt unsafe disclosing information about how they felt and even discussing

what they perceived as their reality of being White people. Likewise, bureaucracy, legal and

compliance factors are described in previous studies as barriers to active representation.

However, I found that these factors could also contribute to active representation. For example,

the Multiethnic Placement Act facilitated cultural competency training for the suburban county

and its employees in foster care. The supervisor whom I interviewed sent staff to be State-wide

trainers which in turn built credibility for the county. She had also successfully advocated for a

new position to assist in a team-focused review of placements to reduce racial and cultural bias

of children in the placement process. Likewise, the threat of sanction from the State catalyzed

changes for culturally responsive services in the rural county. Previous studies categorize these

factors as limiting and not facilitative. The duality of factors is an area for future research that

should be explored so that we can learn more about how use these organizational factors to

change organizations to improve outcomes for people of color.

6.3 New Factors to Consider

There were three factors that emerged where there is no previous research in the theory of

active representation which included the roles of top public administrators, direct supervisors,

and external factors. There are no past studies about leadership engagement of the top public

administrators and their role in creating a diverse and inclusive work environment that would

increase active representation. An unexpected finding was that because the top social services

director in the rural county was highly involved in diversity efforts, formal diversity declarations

were not needed for active representation. Through being a role model and adopting an action

oriented approach, a climate was created that improved access and service to the Somali and Latino communities.

Likewise, the role of direct supervisors also surfaced as an organizational factor that enabled White subjects to use their authority to actively represent racial minority interests. Their support enabled an expansion of job duties, working across units and silos, and directed resources to benefit racial minorities. In this study, direct supervisors enabled White subjects to take on tough challenges and advocate for changes to benefit racial minorities. Line staff who were empowered by their supervisors used their subject matter expertise and personal influence to achieve results that accrued to clients, the organization, and community. Also, results showed that external factors such as changes in public policy, demographics, and meeting service needs prompted changes inside organizations to become actively representative to support racial minority interests. In such cases, White subjects used these external forces to shape and change their counties to be more responsive to diverse residents. In studies of active representation, there has been little review of external factors and how an ethic of public service can be used to drive change to reduce racial disparities.

6.4 Implications for Public Administration

This study contributes to the field and is unique in that it is the first study to view from the dominant racial lens of White public administrators with the theory of active representation. There was new insight gained that challenged assumptions in previous representative bureaucracy literature and Whiteness studies. There was more complexity surfaced about the duality of organizational factors such as legal and compliance issues, an environment that supports racial diversity, and that role adoption to represent racial minority interests means

improved outcomes. The assumption that White people will abandon privilege if they are racially conscious was found to not be true. White people who were racially conscious not abandon their privilege to advocate for racial minorities, especially if they needed to take personal and professional risks and had no support in the workplace from other White allies. Also, while the matching up workers and clients of the same race for is ideal, it seems possible if we can raise the racial consciousness of White employees, this would help tremendously.

Continuing to focus on attracting, recruiting, and retaining a racially diverse work force needs to continue to be a priority in public organizations. One of the implications of this study is that it is harder for White public administrators to represent racial minority interests even if they are well intended because of the socialization process and belief systems continuously reinforce White social and cultural norms. A lack of self-awareness of one's belief system is a barrier to becoming more culturally competent. And even if one is aware, it is entirely another thing to be capable of seeing when racial stereotypes and generalizations are in play and affecting decisions and the delivery of results.

The acceptance of a role to represent racial minority interests did not mean that active representation was happening in ways that were not racially biased because of a lack of racial consciousness among White participants. An implication of this research is that White subjects had to work very hard to identify appropriate solutions that would benefit people of color and then to articulate them in ways that were acceptable to other White people. With so little interaction with people of color for White people in the workplace, at home, and in their communities, it was impossible for them to gain a different perspective. And it was interesting that they were also inconsistent with their own beliefs as demonstrated through self-reports. For White participants, the major challenge was seeing that racism exists. With little social validation

from White friends, family members, or those in a more intimate circle, this was challenging for

most of them.

The White participants who had the most racial consciousness in local county

government were those who brought it from their life experiences and events outside of the

workplace. Organization factors helped and hindered them from actively representing racial

minority interests. Those subjects who were deliberate in active representation were voluntarily

engaged with people of color and valued people of other races, socializing regularly with them.

They were people who had a predisposition to diversity because they belonged to some other

marginalized social group. They were clear about their values and behaved consistently when

they took action to benefit racial minorities. While training opportunities at work enhanced

beliefs around racial equity, the ability to talk to and confirm that racism was real with the

experiences of people of color in their lives anchored them in a different social reality. Counties

could consider selection criteria for new hires and promotions for people who are predisposed to

representing racial minority interests and have greater racial consciousness. Skills can be

developed, but the voluntary desire and affinity for diversity is required in order to keep growing

professionally.

It is also possible that if organizations knew which White employees were racially

conscious, these employees could be enlisted to assist other White employees to become more

racially conscious. This would increase the possibility of seeing where racial bias exists so that

solutions can be identified. This study demonstrated that engagement and action are powerful

tools and not just training for awareness building. Allowing for expanded job roles for

employees to decrease racial disparities was a powerful way for direct supervisors to make

progress with addressing service needs. Forcing program design changes and creating a space for

genuine socialization with people of color in the community with an assignment would be one way to go about it.

Whites who lacked racial consciousness and accepted a role to represent racial minorities were less able to identify relevant solutions and frustrated with their results. And if they were actively representative, they would give up more easily when failure was experienced. They would also attribute those negative experiences to the people of color. They were less confident about their judgment about racism. In the urban county, there was need to create a climate of support for White subjects who were allies but were struggling to articulate and sort out their feelings. By partnering them with White public administrators who are more racially conscious, they could have a safe environment to ask questions if mistakes are made and to gain insight about future work. Also, ensuring that there is support from top leaders that as the community becomes more diverse to communicate that failures will be a part of the learning process to improve services.

Finally, identifying policies, procedures, and practices that are creating structural inequality and sharing examples of successes of where service disparities were reduced might help. The perception of diversity and anti-racism work as inconsistent and lacking leadership support was problematic. Even in examples where there was concrete progress with merit system changes, contracting changes, procedural changes and a reallocation of resources to reduce racial bias, communication of such progress was not shared broadly. Creating regular and transparent reports and dashboards showing key indicators and the results of efforts would help motivate people to think beyond just who they are and to what is needed in the actual work they were doing. A characteristic of Whiteness is attributing racism to individuals and an inability to see themselves as actors in the creation of systems that create disadvantages for people of color

(Hardiman & Keehn, 2012). The urban county had done this and it was leading to a transformation of human services. Others ideas would be for counties to set aside centralized resources, make sure top leaders are engaged, and share progress.

6.4 Limitations

This study relied on self-reports from White participants who first shared their history and background, what being White meant to them, and then reported examples of active representation from work experiences. The limitation of this approach was that there was no way to spend much longer time periods with subjects to observe their actual behaviors. Rapport building occurred for thirty minutes. This was not enough time for relationship building. And, because I am a person of color, as noted at the beginning of this study, researcher bias may have been present.

I did not use a tool to measure the level of racial consciousness of the participants. The level of racial consciousness of the White participants mattered significantly during the data analysis stage, especially for role adoption. Because of this, I had to read interviews over repeatedly to look for patterns within subject narratives and across other narratives. I had to use my judgment based on their narratives about how racially conscious they were, which meant that the quality of these results are based on my own racial consciousness. Though adequate for this study because it was exploratory, future researchers might want to administer a tool to assess the subjects' racial consciousness to increase the validity of their findings if they want to replicate this study.

There were three other limitations. The term "White public administrator" which is common in public administration proved to be problematic out in the real world. Using "White

public employees" would have facilitated potential subject recruitment. Two of the county

contacts were confused with my request and it took a couple of conversations to get this

straightened out. As a qualitative study with 15 participants, no results can be generalized. No

causation can be attributed to any of the personal and organizational factors to achieve active

representation. There were also fewer male subjects than female subjects due the pool of

potential subjects that were forwarded to me from county contacts. Results might look different

if more White males had been interviewed. And finally, I did not anticipate the emotional toll

this study would take on me as a person of color listening to stereotypes and comments about

people of color. I tried not to personalize any comments while re-directing subjects to talk about

examples of active representation instead of sharing what they thought of people of people of

color. I anticipated that stereotypes would emerge, but they were still hard to listen and absorb.

The way I handled this was that I would always affirm what they were saying, and journal about

the experience later.

6.6 **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the answer to the question of what personal and organizational

factors contribute to White public administrators actively representing the interests of racial

minorities. In the beginning, my assumption was that White public administrators who were

racially conscious would be best able to represent racial minority interests. I was curious about

their backgrounds and socialization processes growing up as well as the county environments in

which they worked. I thought that those who effectively adopted an interest in representing racial

minorities would be clear about their values and belief systems and work in organizations that

supported diversity and inclusion. Also, because it is impossible to extricate the personal and

organizational factors that contribute to active representation, I believed that if White people had

significant relationships with people of color, whether inside or outside of the organization, this would help contribute to role adoption because of their socialization experiences.

Results showed that White public administrators could actively adopt a role without being racially conscious because of organizational expectations. I called this type of active representation "conformist active representation." These individuals did believe they were taking the right steps to address racial disparities, but they projected their dominant culture views and norms with the examples they gave and the decisions they made. The other surprise was that White public administrators who were racially conscious could also choose to not adopt a role to represent racial minority interests because they did not want to. This showed that acceptance of the role to actively represent racial minority interests was not necessarily a reflection of the belief system of the White person. In the negative case, this represented either sliding back into a less racially conscious state or the assertion of White privilege. It was confirmed that those with significant social relationships with people of color were more racially conscious. This was the result of their personal backgrounds and what their organizations expected of them. At times, it was what the external environment demanded. Finally, even though Whites were working hard to see racism, they could not see how they were perpetrating stereotypes, even during the interview process. Generalizations about people of color emerged in the narratives demonstrated consistency with the literature about White racial identity including White privilege, White superiority, and the myth of meritocracy which maintains status quo norms.

6.6 Recommendations

Recommendations for future research:

I have four suggestions for future research. The first is that we need to learn more about the duality of organizational factors that showed up as both limiting and facilitative of active representation. For example, what other progress has been made because of regulatory requirements that have instigated culture change? In the example of the Multiethnic Placement Act, the White subject was able to gain substantial traction in foster care. Are there other public policies that can be used to leverage change and how broadly have these already impacted different local government entities? Previous studies express and categorize these organizational factors as limiting, but more research is required to explore when these factors are facilitative. Moving the needle on systems change to reduce disparities may be accelerated with such knowledge.

My second suggestion is that future research focus on the three factors described above that emerged which have not been previously studied: the role of direct supervisors, leadership engagement and the role of key external factors to be a catalyst for change. It was interesting that the six subjects who were in deliberate active representation appeared be to boundary crossers and silo busters. They could be because they had their supervisors' support. There were also interactions among these three factors that were left unexplored in this study. For example, a number of subjects were top leaders in their own areas and used the community to leverage change inside their organizations. They were unapologetic about it, and continued along their own paths and risked reputational capital to do what they felt as a strong ethic of public service for all county residents. Embedded in this future-oriented focus should also be a consideration of how deeply the belief or value of an ethic for public service and mission orientation affects active representation.

Third, if this study were to be replicated, I would suggest that researchers use a tool to measure the level of racial consciousness or that the cultural competency of the subjects to provide further clarity about whether the themes and patterns still hold true to the findings of this study. Doing so would improve and refine potential findings. There is no universally accepted tool for measuring racial consciousness. However, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is an intercultural competency assessment that has been used consistently for more than a decade and has demonstrated high reliability and validity across many different social groups and cultures (Intercultural Development Inventory, 2014). The IDI stage of minimization in which individuals see and emphasizes similarities versus differences seems to mirror most of the characteristics of Helm's (1990) stage called disintegration, in which there is cognitive dissonance from Whites who withdraw back into their racial norms and blame or avoid of people of color for their own plight. Although not a perfect mapping, it could help us learn about skill level and the effectiveness of White public administrators.

Finally, because this study focused only on Whites and not on people of color, I would suggest that researchers in the future replicate this study and interview public administrators of color. Doing so would assist in understanding the dynamics of factors that might contribute to public administrators of color actively representing their own racial communities or other racial minorities. Also, it would assist us to gain insight about how people of color navigate working with White public administrators who are trying to actively represent racial minority interests. The findings of this research calls into question the ability of White people to be effective if there is a lack of racial consciousness in their active representation. This may also be true for people of color who have a different social construction of race, and one in which internalized

oppression may be at play along with trying to navigate a White racial frame that operates invisibly in the workplace.

Recommendations for public organizations:

My first recommendation is that concrete projects need to be delineated and offered to White public administrators to engage in experiences in which they are the racial minority. Support and tools for hands-on learning needs to be on-going and supported through centralized funding that demonstrates the seriousness of the effort to reduce racial disparities. Clearly, it is hard for White people to see racism, especially because they stay socially isolated in their social circles. Even for subjects who were the most racially conscious, homogenous home and neighborhood environments tended to reinforce a White social reality. Their version of reality was not disrupted. But personal socialization and relationships with people of color were transformative for White subjects. These relationships sometimes occurred at work, but mostly were done in personal social circles. If counties are serious about reducing racial disparities, those leading these efforts need to get out of their comfort zone and be put to work to build significant and meaningful relationships with people of color. If these relationships do not exist inside the county, dedicating White public administrators to work with culturally specific organizations in the community would be another way to achieve this goal. Because role modeling of top leadership was important, I recommend starting this with the top administrators in the organization.

Secondly, I would recommend that skills-based cultural competency training along with raising personal racial consciousness for Whites be instituted. These efforts need to be combined with clear organizational outcomes that can be benchmarked annually for public administration

leaders in performance evaluations and agency work plans. The evidence from this study

suggests that flexibility from direct supervisors along with clear expectations enables more active

representation of racial minority interests to occur. Public administrators at the executive levels

could articulate a vision that shows an end goal with strategies that include raising racial

consciousness and outcomes. I would suggest that a schema for organizing change include the

following elements: leadership and staff engagement in training and development activities,

community engagement efforts, services provision, policies and procedures, and workplace

diversity (recruitment, retention, promotion). Simple action steps could include metrics such as

20% of supervisors at a manager level or above being engaged in training activities or that a

certain number of barriers to service for people of color be eliminated. As a related suggestion, I

believe that White co-trainers would help to set the ground work and show that working to end

racism is everyone's responsibility, not just the responsibility of people of color.

Finally, White subjects desperately needed social support from other White allies to keep

doing their work to actively represent the interests of racial minorities. Obstacles from other

Whites proved to be very challenging because it was unexpected. Because of the guilt and shame

that White subjects showed about their inability to make progress along with self-doubt, conflict,

and pushing the boundaries of what was possible in order benefit racial minorities, I recommend

that White affinity groups be developed and that White allies who are more racially conscious

assist those who are not as far along in their anti-racism journey. People of color can serve as a

sounding board, but overall, what White subjects in this study needed was time to explore their

White racial identities without judgment, shame, or fear with other like-minded White people. It

seemed especially hard for those who had supervisory authority because they were expected to

know what to do, but they did not know how to move forward and spent a lot of time worrying

about how they were coming across, and if they were making a difference for people of color. At times, their ideas would backfire and resistance would arise from Whites and people of color alike. The ability to connect with other White allies would help these individuals to keep actively representing racial minority interests and to not give up hope.

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APPENDIX A: Screening Guide and Demographic Questions

County: Date:

Name: Email address:

Phone Number:

Work Address:

<u>Screening Questions</u>

1. Have worked for county human services longer than two years?   Yes   No

2. What is your role?

3. Do you identity as White?

4. Does your work bring you into weekly contact with racial minorities, or people of color?

5. Are you actively engaged at work in efforts and activities about race?

<u>Demographics</u>

Age		
Years in Role		
Gender	M	F
Supervisor	Yes	No

APPENDIX B: Consent Form

Background

My name is MayKao Y. Hang, and I am a graduate student in the Doctorate in Public

Administration Program at Hamline University. This research project is being conducted to

fulfill the dissertation requirements at Hamline University to graduate. Once finished, the

research project will be printed and stored at Hamline University because it is considered public

scholarship. Anyone who wishes to access the dissertation can do so. The purpose of this

research project is to study the representation of different racial interests in local county

government in human services and related people-oriented services. It is to gain insight about the

experiences of White public administrators and reducing racial disparities because our

demographics in Minnesota are changing rapidly. The significance of this study is in its

contribution to understanding how we might reduce racial disparities in local government.

Participation

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing to be interviewed about your personal and

professional experiences. In particular, you are agreeing to:

- Set aside a total of 1.5 hours of time to review the research project, gain consent, and conduct a personal interview.
- Be taped during the interview.
- Assist the researcher later in the research process to help clarify ideas or items that may be unclear during the transcription process.
- Not speak to others in the county about your interview experience until the all subjects have been interviewed.

All interviews are confidential, and anonymity will be maintained. Interviews will be taped, and

then transcribed. All tapes and transcriptions will be de-identified and destroyed at the end of the

study. All materials will be stored at the researcher's office and items will be locked. Even the

county in which you work will not be identified.

Potential Risks and Benefits

Because talking about race can sometimes be uncomfortable and/or risky. I assure you

that your participation is voluntary and that the interview can be stopped at any time. There is no

direct benefit to you, monetary or otherwise. Hamline University and the county in which you

work have already agreed this is study is appropriate and are supportive.

If you have any questions, you can contact me at MayKao Y. Hang,

maykao.hang@wilder.org, or (651) 334-5662.

I have read the consent form and agree to participate in this study about active representation in

local county government.

Participant

Signature_____Date_____

Researcher Signature_____Date_____

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol

Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to study the representation of different racial interests in local county human services. In particular, it is to gain insight about the experiences of White public administrators. Our demographics in Minnesota are changing rapidly and the significance of the study is in its contribution to understanding how we might reduce racial disparities in human services delivery in local government.

Give subject the consent form. Let's look at the consent form together. I will give you a few minutes to read it over before I review it with you.

Do you have any questions about the study itself?

Let's review confidentiality statement on the consent form (*review this with subject*).

I want to assure you that your experience in public service will be protected. Because I am studying the practical and lived experiences of public administrators, whatever you report will be anonymous and confidential. None of the information you disclose today will be attributed to you, and even the counties will only be identified with a general description.

Do you have any additional questions about the study or the consent form?

Collect the signed consent form and also sign the subjects consent form for the record.

Thank you for agreeing to this study. Remember that you can stop me at any time if you need a break, or feel uncomfortable.

Interview

Before we turn on the tape recorder, I'd like to tell you that this will feel more like a conversation. Periodically, I may just ask you questions or probe to redirect you toward a particular topic. Feel free to ask me to repeat the question if you do not understand what I am asking.

I am going to turn on the tape recorder. Are you ready?

Today is _____.
And I am interviewing subject #_____ and the interview is taking place at _____.

Background questions
- Can you tell me about your role here at X county and describe what you do?

- o Do you work directly with clients?
- o How many direct reports do you have? Are there other levels of staff?

- You identified as "White" which is why we set up this interview.
  - o When did you first realize that you were White? And what does being White mean to you?
  - o What do you think shaped your understanding of your race?
  - o How do you think being White matters at work?

- Describe your interactions with those of a different race.
  - o What work do you do with those of a different race?
  - o Can you describe what these relationships and interactions are like?
  - o Do you have personal interactions outside of work with those of a different race? If so, can you please tell me about them?

Work Situations

You talked about your racial identity, background, and relationships with people of color. Now, I would like to ask you about work situations in which you believe you were acting in the best interest of racial minorities.

I will let you think for a few minutes. Please try to remember and then reflect about a past or current work situation that involved race that required you to act in your capacity as a public servant.
- What was the situation? Can you describe if for me?
  - o Who was involved and how were they involved?
  - o What do you think this was really about?
  - o Who were the impacted parties that would have benefitted?

- What did you do, and how did you do it?
  - o What decisions and/or actions were taken?
  - o Were there things that helped the situation and made it better?
  - o What considerations did you have to make?
  - o What impacted your participation? Why did you continue to move forward with the work?

- Were there barriers or obstacles emerged?
  - o If so, how were these resolved?
  - o If they weren't resolved, how did you work on handling them?
  - o Why do you think these exist?

- What were some of the results of this situation?
  - o Is there anything that you still think about in relation to this situation?
  - o What were you thinking when this was happening to you?

- Can you summarize what personal and organizational factors you think contributed to your actions in this particular situation to benefit racial minorities?

Now that you've described this situation, I'd like to talk about another one. I'll let you think for a couple of minutes so that you can think about it. *Repeat series of questions/probes in this section of the interview.*

Turn off Recorder.

Thank you so much for taking time to share your thoughts and insights.

APPENDIX D: Self-Reflection Questions

<u>Pre-Interview</u>

Is there any noted rapport that has built up prior to the interview?

Are there any feelings I have about this subject?

Did the pre-screening conversation go as expected for me?

<u>Interview</u>

How did the relationship build in the interview?

Am I noticing anything different about my own reactions to the subject and interview content? If so, what was it?

Are there any non-verbal cues that strike me during the interview?

<u>Post-Interview</u>

How did I think the interview actually went for me?

How do I think it went for the subject?

Were there feelings in the room that I didn't notice while I was in the interview itself?

Is there anything else notable about my reaction to the subject and the interview that I should pay attention to?

APPENDIX E: Email to Potential Subjects

My name is MayKao Hang, and I am a graduate student in the Doctorate in Public Administration program at Hamline University. X County has agreed to help me with my research by allowing me to contact you and agreeing for you use work time for an interview with me, should you agree to participate. My research seeks to gain insight into the experiences of White people in local county services. The significance of the study is in its contribution to how we can further reduce racial disparities in local county government.

In consultation with X and those who are involved in efforts around racial disparities and our changing demographics, your name was given to me as someone who might fit my study criteria and also be willing to be interviewed about your experiences at X County. Because we would like you to feel comfortable that your choice to participate will remain confidential, X County is supporting this effort by identifying an initial set of potential people and extending an invitation to participate in the research effort. To assure confidentiality, your participation or non-participation will remain confidential to X County and be known only to me as the researcher. It is also important for you to know that X County will not be identified by name.

I will call or connect with you in the next few days to see whether you might be interested in helping me, and also ask you a few questions, including who else might a good person to interview. However, if you know that you are already interested in participating, please contact me directly at (651) 280-2122 or maykao.hang@wilder.org.