

WHITE RAINBOW WEAPONIZATION: WHITE GAY MALES UNDERSTANDING
AND USE OF RACIAL IDENTITY PRIVILEGE IN URBAN POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Education,
Indiana University

December 2024

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty of Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to the courageous participants who generously shared their stories and experiences. Your openness and honesty have provided invaluable insights into the complexities of identity and privilege. By engaging in these critical conversations, you have contributed significantly to a deeper understanding of the dynamics within our communities. Thank you for your willingness to reflect, challenge, and grow; your voices are essential in pursuing equity and inclusion.

I also dedicate this work to the relentless champions who continue to fight against systemic whiteness and advocate for social justice. Your unwavering commitment to dismantling oppressive structures inspires hope and action. You pave the way toward a more just and inclusive society through education, activism, and allyship. May this research serve as a tool to support your efforts and amplify the call for meaningful change.

Acknowledgment

I express my deepest gratitude to those who have supported and guided me throughout this academic journey. First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my current dissertation committee:

- Dr. Kathleen King Thorius, Co-Chair, for your unwavering support, insightful guidance, and steadfast belief in my work.
- Dr. James Scheurich, Co-Chair, thank you for your mentorship and critical feedback and for challenging me to reach new heights in my research.
- Dr. Cleveland Hayes II, for your thoughtful perspectives and invaluable contributions to this study.
- Dr. Lehn Benjamin, thank you for your willingness to step in and help me cross the finish line while contributing your insight and thoughtfulness to the process.

I also wish to acknowledge my former committee members:

- Dr. Robin Hughes, thank you for your early guidance and support in shaping the foundations of this research.
- Dr. Lori Patton Davis, thank you for your scholarly insights, which have inspired me to delve deeper into issues of equity and inclusion.
- Dr. Marlene Walk, thank you for your constructive feedback and assistance during this project's formative stages.
- Dr. Gina Gibau, thank you for broadening my understanding of cultural dynamics within education.

A special acknowledgment goes to my mother, Ellen Ursula McKay, who has been my best friend, rock, teacher, and mentor. Your unwavering love, support, and occasional

tough love have been instrumental in my personal and professional growth. I am profoundly grateful for your guidance and your constant push to strive for excellence. To my late grandmother, Rita Kroboth, who taught me the strength of women and the importance of never settling for less than what one desires and deserves. Your legacy inspires me to pursue my goals with determination and integrity.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to my best friend, Tracy Lessard, who has been my steadfast supporter and confidant. Thank you for always being there when I needed you most; your friendship has been a beacon of light throughout this journey.

Finally, to my countless family and friends, your encouragement and love have been invaluable to me along the way. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine, and I am eternally grateful for your presence in my life.

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This qualitative study explores how white gay cisgender males navigate their racial and LGBTQ identities within urban post-secondary education (UPSE) settings. Grounded in Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory (QT), I examined how these individuals comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial privilege alongside their marginalized sexual identity. Specifically, I investigated "White Rainbow Weaponization" (WRW)—the strategic use of white racial identity to maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces. Thirteen white gay cisgender males participated in the study, which utilized semi-structured interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignette exercises to provide an in-depth account of their experiences. Key findings revealed that participants often perceived their whiteness as invisible until they entered racially diverse environments, aligning with the notion of whiteness as an unmarked norm. Many acknowledged leveraging their racial privilege within LGBTQ spaces, recognizing that being white afforded them advantages not equally accessible to LGBTQ individuals of color. The participants' narratives highlighted a complex dynamic between acceptance and discrimination. While they benefited from racial privilege, they also faced obstacles due to their LGBTQ status, revealing how these intersecting identities shaped their experiences in UPSE environments. Participants expressed discomfort in engaging in conversations about race, often fearing they might say the wrong thing or be perceived as racist. Exposure to researcher-introduced artifacts documenting the experiences of

LGBTQ students of color heightened their awareness of systemic challenges and prompted critical self-reflection. This led to increased empathy and, for some, a commitment to future action to address racial inequities. The findings underscore the need for more inclusive policies and practices to counteract systemic whiteness and promote equity for all LGBTQ students within UPSE institutions. This study illuminates the dual challenges and benefits of holding intersecting identities, providing a nuanced understanding of the experiences of white gay cisgender males in UPSE settings. It highlights the importance of community and support networks for personal and academic growth and calls for intentional efforts to promote inclusivity and equity within educational institutions.

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List of Abbreviations

UPSE – Urban Post Secondary Education

WRW – White Rainbow Weaponization

LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

QT – Queer Theory

CWT – Critical Whiteness Theory

DEI – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

PSE – Post-secondary Education

RQ – Research Question

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how white gay cisgender males comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBTQ identities within various contexts of urban post-secondary education (UPSE) settings. Utilizing a multi-faceted qualitative research methodology informed by Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory, I examined how these individuals navigate their intersecting identities at the personal, organizational, and institutional levels within UPSEs. By focusing on their experiences and narratives, the study seeks to understand the complexities of identity negotiation and the dynamics of privilege and marginalization that white gay cisgender males encounter in higher education environments. This research addresses a critical gap in the literature by shedding light on how race and sexuality intersect to shape their experiences, contributing to broader conversations about identity, power, and inclusivity in higher education.

The following objectives guided my study:

1. Examine how white gay cisgender male participants articulate and perceive their racial identity and privilege within LGBT communities at UPSEs.
2. Analyze the ways these individuals navigate their intersecting identities in relation to institutional policies, practices, and cultures.
3. Investigate how white gay cisgender male participants respond to and engage with race-based dialogues and reflective exercises that challenge their understanding of whiteness and privilege.

Significance of the Study

This study has significant implications for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives within UPSE. By shedding light on the intersectional dynamics of race and LGBT identity, particularly among white gay cisgender men, results provide insights for DEI practitioners and LGBT support professionals who design and facilitate engagement strategies that foster racial accountability and dismantle whiteness within LGBT communities. Results contribute to the scholarly discourse on racial dynamics in higher education, offering a foundation for developing more inclusive and equitable institutional environments.

Significance for Practice

My study is significant for various campus constituencies and the broader post-secondary education community. DEI practitioners are the first relevant constituency. Insights gleaned from this research could significantly enhance the engagement strategies employed in racial work within the LGBT community, focusing specifically on white cisgender gay males. Furthermore, understanding how racial experiences influence the identity development of these individuals and how race intersects with sexual orientation identities provides a deeper foundation upon which LGBT centers can collaborate with racial and cultural centers to promote greater white accountability.

A second constituency of importance includes LGBT support professionals. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on dismantling Whiteness within their operational frameworks, including services and programs. By examining how white cisgender gay male students navigate their racial identities, the study offers critical insights that can inform targeted educational interventions aimed at fostering white

accountability and advancing racial justice. Additionally, it highlights the influence of white cisgender gay male students on the racial climate within an LGBT community that is intersectional, enabling professionals to more effectively challenge racist behaviors, remediate their impact, and ensure accountability within the white LGBT demographic.

Significance for Research

The implications of my study extend into future research trajectories. My study explores how the racial identities of white cisgender gay male students shape their experiences within UPSE contexts at individual, group, and institutional levels. Future research might investigate correlations between heightened racial awareness and proactive engagement in racial justice initiatives. Further studies could also examine the broader impact of white cisgender gay male students on institutional racial climates, considering this demographic's tendency to occupy leadership roles across various institutional domains (Renn, 2007). Additionally, future scholarship might develop intersectional identity models that integrate racial identity with gender and sexual orientation frameworks.

The Promise and Paradox of PSE for Minoritized Groups

For many, post-secondary education (PSE) represents a pathway to social mobility, equity, and inclusion in the United States. However, the reality often starkly contrasts with this ideal, as PSEs have historically perpetuated oppression, inflicted harm, and commercialized the experiences of minoritized (Brown et al., 2017; Wilder, 2013) groups. Such practices undermine the democratic promise traditionally ascribed to PSEs, celebrated as venues where minoritized students can achieve inclusion, equity, support, and social (Gutmann, 1999; Schuh et al., 2010; van't Land et al.,

2021) advancement. PSEs, in fact, function as sites that cultivate and reinforce Whiteness within their organizational structures, thereby perpetuating white dominance and normalizing Whiteness as a societal standard (Cabrera, 2018). Deconstructing this entrenched relationship between PSEs and societal structures is imperative for dismantling Whiteness in the United States (Middleton et al., 2016). This process necessitates critically examining the outcomes, privileges, and mechanisms of oppression associated with Whiteness within these educational settings.

Oppression of Minoritized Students in PSE

LGBT and racially minoritized students disproportionately experience policy discrimination, harassment, bullying, violence, and other forms of oppression compared to their white cis-gender heterosexual (Crane et al., 2020; Kulick et al., 2017; McLaren, 2017; Mustaffa, 2017; Platt & Lenzen, 2013) peers. These oppressive acts, occurring within and across PSE contexts, are integral to the fluid and adaptive nature of Whiteness. Oppression of minoritized students originates from various sources, including interpersonal interactions, community spaces, and systemic (Davis & Harris, 2015; Lincoln & Stanley, 2021; Morales, 2021; Patton, 2015; Stockdill & Danico, 2012) practices. Miller (2017) posits that white college students enact Whiteness through their racial attitudes and behaviors, often resulting in the perpetuation of oppressive dynamics.

Like natural ecosystems, social structures are characterized by symbiotic relationships, where privilege and oppression are mutually reinforced. Research has illuminated multiple dimensions of this relationship, encompassing spaces, individuals, and (Carastathis, 2008; Croteau et al., 2002; Jones & Stewart, 2016; Minikin, 2021; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Park, 1939) media. Through such explorations, scholarship

begins to unveil how oppression and privilege manifest themselves within PSEs, particularly for individuals with minoritized identities. These dynamics influence interpersonal dynamics (e.g., student-to-student, student-to-faculty, and student-to-staff interactions) and shape institutional policies and procedures that impact financial aid, scholarships, fees, and demographic representation among staff and faculty.

The Centering and Privilege of the White Male in PSE

Understanding the role of white cisgender men is pivotal to decentering Whiteness and mitigating its pervasive influence on both PSE and broader society (Cofield, 2021; Matias & Rucker, 2018; McLaren, 2017; Miller, 2017; Mondon & Winter, 2019; O'Brien, 2019; Shoaie, 2021; Worthen, 2018), especially within UPSEs across individual, organizational, and systemic levels. There is a growing call for decentering Whiteness, specifically as it concerns the LGBTQ community at (Denman, 2021; Jorgenson, 2020; Kokozos & Gonzalez, 2020; Vo, 2021) UPSEs. Since the colonization of the United States, white males have been positioned as the dominant identity group (Lopez, 1994). Within PSEs, white male identity is often centralized through administrative, academic, and social experiences; deviations from these norms are frequently met with oppressive responses, which are then reframed as systemic failures rather than critiques of the foundational design that sustains these power structures (Cole & Harper, 2017; Dancy et al., 2018; Davis & Harris, 2015; Morales, 2021).

The privilege associated with white males in the United States has profoundly shaped systems of oppression, as mentioned above, at various levels. As identities intersect, including and beyond that of race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status,

age, disability, and religion, the concept of privilege expands in (Black & Stone, 2005) complexity. As defined by Black and Stone (2005), social privilege is "any entitlement, sanction, power, immunity, and advantage or right granted or conferred by the dominant group to a person or group solely by birthright membership in prescribed identities" (p. 245). This expanded concept of privilege is critical for understanding privilege's role among white gay cisgender men within PSE. It provides a framework for analyzing how these individuals may simultaneously experience marginalization due to their LGBT identity while also benefiting from racial and gender privileges. Understanding this dual positionality is essential for my study, which explores how white gay cisgender males comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBT identities within UPSEs.

Despite the prevalence of discussions surrounding the white male-centric design, culture, and organizational response of PSEs, narratives addressing the centralization of white male dominance are often conspicuously absent (Abuzandah, 2021; Cabrera, 2018; Patton, 2015). McIntosh describes white privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets that one can count on cashing in each day"(McIntosh, 2001), manifests at individual, community, and systemic levels through various resources, policies, support mechanisms, and advocacy efforts that perpetuate the assumption of white racial identity as a normative rather than a privileged status within power relations(Rainer, 2015). The academic and social shifts of the late 20th century began to challenge this entrenched assumption. As Manglitz (2003) notes:

"During the past two decades of the 20th century, differences in the way Whiteness and White privilege are viewed emerged within academia, along with attempts to analyze Whiteness as a racialized category that has (mis)shaped

knowledge production in American culture. Scholars from various disciplines, including history, sociology, cultural studies, critical White studies, and education, have analyzed the social construction of Whiteness and its link to power and privilege. Much of the scholarship has focused on the goals of uncovering and disrupting the ways that Whiteness has functioned as the norm or background against which others are viewed and judged, along with unveiling the political and social mechanisms through which Whiteness is invented and used to mask its power and privilege. The profound impacts that the construction of Whiteness and White privilege have on those defined as 'others' by the dominant culture, along with the often-hidden implications for institutional and societal structures, have also been examined. We have witnessed a crisis in the myth of Whiteness and its exposition as a visible and specific identity, not something invisible and universal." (p. 120)

However, contemporary political and social dynamics have begun to reverse many of these advances. The emergence of movements like “Stop WOKE” and the enactment of anti-DEI legislation in the early 2020s underscores the renewed urgency of critically examining the manifestations of Whiteness in contemporary society (Anderson, 2016; Feder, 2024; Russell-Brown, 2024). For instance, Florida’s “Stop W.O.K.E. Act” restricts how race-related concepts can be taught in schools and discussed in workplaces, aiming to prevent instruction that could make individuals feel discomfort or guilt due to their race. These anti-DEI laws marginalize and denigrate race scholarship, diminish the efforts of race scholars, and demonstrate how ignorance about race and race history creates social dangers for Black individuals (Russell-Brown, 2024). Additionally,

coupled with continued legislative activity like Florida's House Bill 1557, "Don't Say Gay" bill highlights the broader backlash in the United States(Xie, 2022). This continued legal activity silences essential conversations about systemic inequality and reinforces existing power structures (Carr & Yousfi, 2024).

The legislative actions have significant implications for UPSEs, which serve as anchors of inclusivity and social inclusion in urban settings (Claville, 2024). Specific impacts at UPSEs may manifest as limiting faculty members' ability to engage students in critical conversations about systemic racism and Whiteness. Such constraints affect the curricula of UPSEs, hindering the development of students' critical thinking skills and their preparedness for diverse workplaces (Hernández, 2023). Additionally, anti-DEI laws can lead to defunding or dismantling programs designed to support underrepresented students, such as mentorship programs, cultural centers, and scholarships (Faison, 2023). This will disproportionately affect students of color in urban areas, widening achievement gaps and reducing campus diversity. These legislative measures may also deter UPSEs from hiring a diverse faculty and staff due to fears of legal repercussions, thus limiting the range of perspectives and experiences represented in academia (Russell-Brown, 2024). The suppression of DEI initiatives can also lead to increased tensions on campuses, with students feeling that their identities and experiences are invalidated, leading to protests and a strained campus climate (Carr & Yousfi, 2024).

UPSEs attempting to navigate these laws may face legal challenges, resulting in costly litigation and diverted resources that could have been used for educational purposes (Russell-Brown, 2024). This financial strain is particularly burdensome for public UPSEs reliant on state funding. Finally, the anti-DEI movement and related

legislation pose significant challenges to UPSEs by restricting academic freedom, undermining diversity initiatives, and affecting campus climate.

Theoretical Frameworks

To explore how white gay cisgender men comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBT identities across different contexts within UPSEs, I employ two theoretical frameworks—Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory—to guide, define, and facilitate meaning-making throughout this research.

Specifically, my study utilizes Critical Whiteness and Queer Theories to inform both data collection methodologies and data analysis. These theoretical frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for examining the manifestations of Whiteness and LGBT identity within UPSEs. They also address several critical calls from post-secondary education and student affairs scholars for deeper exploration and understanding of Whiteness, UPSE, and identity, including the centrality of race, the rejection of privilege (Bergerson, 2003), the role of systemic oppression on LGBT identity experiences (Jones, 2019; Renn, 2010), and the imperative to move beyond academic contemplation towards liberatory actions for intersectionality within UPSE (Harris & Patton, 2019). Furthermore, these frameworks facilitate the examination of the inclusivity of LGBT communities within UPSE settings (Pryor & Hoffman, 2021).

Critical Whiteness Theory

Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) is an established framework that has profoundly influenced the fields of race studies and education, offering crucial insights into the mechanisms and manifestations of whiteness (Bohonos, 2019; Corces-Zimmerman & Guida, 2019; Crowley, 2016; Foste & Irwin, 2020; Matias & Mackey,

2016; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Within post-secondary education, CWT allows examination of how whiteness operates through various constructs, including colorblindness, epistemologies of ignorance, ontological expansiveness, property, and assumed racial comfort (Cabrera et al., 2017). While it is possible to study each of these constructs separately, they are interconnected and collectively sustain the systemic nature of whiteness in educational settings, particularly within urban post-UPSE institutions characterized by diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives (Bhopal, 2020; Kokozos & Gonzalez, 2020; Matias & Rucker, 2018).

Incorporating these constructs into my study, I examine how concepts of white immunity and the invisibility of whiteness manifest. By actively applying these constructs, I critically analyze the subtle and systemic ways in which racial privilege and norms intersect with LGBT identities to perpetuate inequality. For example, during data analysis, I applied Cabrera's constructs by using white immunity and the myth of a post-racial society as lenses to interpret the data. I identified instances where whiteness is unacknowledged yet influential in the participants' experiences, particularly how their racial privilege may buffer them from specific challenges faced by LGBT individuals of color. In coding and thematic analysis, I coded for themes related to whiteness intersecting with LGBT identities, such as the normalization of white experiences within LGBT spaces and resistance to acknowledging racial privilege within marginalized communities. Additionally, my research questions specifically explore how whiteness operates among white gay cisgender males within UPSEs. By choosing appropriate methodologies, including in-depth interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignettes, I gathered detailed narratives and experiences related to race, sexuality, and privilege.

Central to CWT is the concept of privilege, which permeates the core theoretical constructs of the framework (Abuzandah, 2021; Crowley & Smith, 2020). The nexus between Whiteness and privilege offers an immediate and compelling lens for understanding the experiences of white cisgender gay males within PSEs, especially within LGBTQ communities. Cabrera et al. (2017) advocate for a comprehensive approach to understanding "how the privileges of Whiteness are reinforced through the college experience" (p. 28). To this end, this study seeks to examine the experiences of white cisgender gay males across individual, community, and systemic levels within UPSEs to provide a more nuanced and holistic understanding of how privilege is enacted and perpetuated.

Queer Theory

Queer Theory, since its inception, has been characterized by its inherent ambiguity and radical potential. It serves as a critical framework to "challenge, interrogate, destabilize, and subvert" normative structures, yet this radical potential also renders it difficult to define precisely. Queer Theory has been shaped by diverse intellectual traditions, including postmodernism, poststructuralism, lesbian feminism, theories, and activism from lesbians of color, gay and lesbian studies, bisexual activism, and trans activism and theory (A. Duran, 2019; Jones, 2019; McCann & Monaghan, 2019). At its core, Queer Theory seeks to challenge normative constructs, particularly those related to heteronormativity. However, as Cohen (2005) posits, the scope of Queer Theory extends beyond mere resistance to normativity: "At the intersection of oppression and resistance lies the radical potential of queerness to challenge and bring together all deemed marginal and all those committed to liberatory politics" (p. 440). This emphasis

on resistance within Queer Theory offers a construct for interpreting how cisgender white gay males respond to challenges, interrogations, and subversions of their identities, power, and privilege within PSE settings.

By employing both Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory, I gained a multifaceted perspective that captures the intersectionality of race and LGBT identities. Integrating these theories enhances my methodology as I select research methods sensitive to power, privilege, and identity complexity, such as in-depth interviews or ethnographic observations. It informs my data analysis by allowing for a nuanced interpretation of data, recognizing the simultaneous influence of racial and sexual identities on participants' experiences. I reflect on my positionality and potential biases, ensuring that the analysis remains critically engaged with the subjects of race and sexuality.

In summary, I use Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory not only to guide the direction of my research but also to define its conceptual boundaries and facilitate a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the participants' lived experiences. By applying these theories, I can critically analyze how white gay cisgender men comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBT identities across different contexts within UPSEs.

Defining WRW and Its Role in Research

White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW) is a conceptual framework that elucidates how white racial identity is strategically leveraged by white LGBTQ individuals, mainly white gay cisgender males, to maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces. This concept emerges from the intersection of Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory (QT), providing a nuanced understanding of how racial privilege operates within

marginalized communities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Butler, 1990). WRW highlights that whiteness is not merely an unmarked, normative identity but an active mechanism through which white LGBTQ individuals sustain dominance, influence, and access to resources within their communities (Matias & Mackey, 2016).

In the context of the LGBTQ community, WRW manifests through various behaviors and institutional practices that prioritize white experiences and perspectives, often marginalizing LGBTQ individuals of color. For instance, white LGBTQ leaders may dominate organizational leadership roles, subtly enforcing policies and cultural norms that reflect their own racial and social privileges (Han, 2007; Winer, 2020). This strategic use of whiteness perpetuates systemic inequalities by ensuring that white voices remain at the forefront of advocacy, decision-making, and resource allocation, thereby reinforcing existing power hierarchies within LGBTQ spaces (Bell, 2019; Najarro, 2021). WRW serves as a critical lens to examine the internal dynamics of privilege and oppression, revealing how racial privilege can coexist and even exacerbate other forms of marginalization within ostensibly inclusive communities.

Within educational settings, particularly urban post-secondary education (UPSE), WRW plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of white LGBTQ students and their interactions with peers of color. Institutions often embody and perpetuate white norms and values, which can inadvertently exclude and marginalize LGBTQ individuals of color (Cabrera et al., 2017; Harris & Leonardo, 2018). WRW in education manifests through curriculum design, institutional policies, and campus culture that prioritize white LGBTQ narratives while neglecting or undervaluing the diverse experiences of LGBTQ students of color. For example, diversity and inclusion initiatives may focus

predominantly on sexual orientation without adequately addressing the intersecting racial identities of LGBTQ students, thereby failing to create truly inclusive environments (Rankin et al., 2010; Jorgenson, 2020). By recognizing and addressing WRW, educational institutions can move towards more equitable practices that honor and incorporate the multifaceted identities of all LGBTQ students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive academic community.

The introduction of WRW into the research landscape bridges critical gaps in the literature by providing a specific and actionable framework to understand the interplay between race and LGBTQ identities within marginalized communities. While existing studies have explored white privilege and its impact on various social settings, few have focused explicitly on how this privilege is weaponized within LGBTQ spaces to sustain dominance and marginalize individuals of color (Cruz, 2017; Logan, 2020). WRW offers a targeted approach to dissecting these dynamics, enabling researchers and practitioners to develop strategies that dismantle internal power structures and promote genuine inclusivity and equity. This study advances theoretical understanding by integrating WRW with established theories like CWT and QT. It provides practical insights for creating inclusive educational environments and LGBTQ communities that actively resist and dismantle systemic racial inequalities.

Methodology

Research Questions

To address the overarching aim of the study, I proposed the following research questions:

1. How do white gay male students articulate and describe their racial identity? How do they perceive and articulate the benefits or leverage of their racial identity and privilege within the LGBT community?
2. How do participants articulate and describe their experiences of benefiting from and/or leveraging their LGBT identity within the institution?
3. To account for shifts in white individuals' consciousness regarding race and white identity topics, how do participants respond to and describe the impact of exposure to researcher-introduced artifacts documenting the experiences of LGBT students of Color in post-secondary education settings?

Approach

My study is grounded in a qualitative, interpretative research paradigm, emphasizing that the participants and I are co-constructors of knowledge (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006, 2017). I employed the constant comparative method for the analysis (Glaser, 1965), an iterative process of continuously comparing data, codes, categories, and concepts. This approach allowed me to systematically analyze the data by relating new information to existing codes and categories, refining them as patterns and themes emerged. By applying the theoretical lenses of Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory, I examined how white gay cisgender men comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBT identities within urban post-secondary education.

Setting and Recruitment. Participants were recruited from urban post-secondary education institutions (UPSEs), focusing on urban-intensive and urban-emergent institutions as defined by Milner IV (2012). Institutions located in urbanized areas were selected (Bureau, 2023). Recruitment efforts leveraged peer networks, social media

communities, and LGBTQ Center listings, allowing prospective participants to review study details before initiating contact. The study targeted participants who met the following criteria:

- Traditionally college-aged (18-24) (Evans et al., 2009; Schuh et al., 2010).
- Self-identified as a man attracted to men (gay, same-gender-loving, genderqueer, genderfluid, pangender, etc.).
- Identified their assigned sex at birth as male.
- Identified their race as white (including terms such as Caucasian, of European descent, non-Hispanic, or Latino).
- Currently enrolled at or recently graduated (within the past two years) from a four-year UPSE institution.

Data Collection. Using the constant comparative analysis method, I iteratively moved between data collection and analysis, allowing for ongoing refinement of research questions and methods based on emerging insights. Data collection was structured around semi-structured interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignette activities.

- Interviews: Conducted via Zoom, with durations ranging from one to two hours. The interview protocols were designed to adapt dynamically to emerging themes (Kallio et al., 2016), ensuring depth and richness in the collected data (Rallis & Rossman, 2012).
- Racial Autobiography: Participants constructed a racial autobiography to explore how race has manifested throughout their lives (Gooden, 2021). This reflective process and a subsequent processing session facilitated a deeper understanding of

personal biases, assumptions, and their roles within the systemic nature of whiteness.

- Vignettes: Drawing upon data collected from previous interviews and racial autobiographies, I constructed six case vignettes using a "paper-people" design (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). These vignettes were set within a fictional UPSE context and informed by the Critical Whiteness Theory (Cabrera, 2018; Helms, 2017; Langrehr et al., 2021). The vignettes aimed to enhance realism and elicit authentic responses by manipulating variables such as race (aligned with or different from the participant) and setting context (individual, community, systemic).

Data Analysis. I analyzed the interview data using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965), involving an iterative process of comparing data, codes, categories, and theoretical constructs. Open coding was conducted directly from the interview transcripts, allowing themes and patterns to surface organically from the participants' narratives. I integrated the theoretical framework specifically Helms's (2017) white racial identity model and Langrehr et al.'s (2021) concept of white fragility—to inform the development of more focused codes and categories.

I hypothesized that performances of white fragility might represent mechanisms through which white individuals weaponize their racial identity, offering a perspective to understand the potential weaponization of LGBT identity as well. This hypothesis informed the generation of codes related to stages of white racial identity development and manifestations of white fragility. By constantly comparing new data with existing

codes and categories, I allowed patterns to evolve naturally, leading to the development of theories grounded in the data.

Role of the Researcher and Positionality. As a white transgender gay male, my shared identities with the participants offered valuable insights but also required careful reflexivity to mitigate potential biases. Sharing critical identities fostered a unique sense of rapport and trust, enhancing the authenticity of the data collected. However, I remained acutely aware of how my positionality could influence participants' responses, particularly concerning discussions of race and potential manifestations of white fragility (Langrehr et al., 2021).

I employed consistent memoing practices and adhered strictly to established protocols to counter potential limitations such as projection or overemphasis on the emic perspective (LaSala, 2009). This reflexive stance throughout the research helped maintain critical distance and enhanced analytical rigor, ensuring that the interpretations remained grounded in the participants' lived experiences.

Literature Review

Intersections of LGBT, Race, and Whiteness Identities across Levels of Urban Post-Secondary Education

United States UPSEs serve as critical spaces where students from diverse backgrounds converge, interact, and negotiate their identities within a broader social and educational context (Grant & Zwier, 2014; Jones, 2015). These institutions in dense metropolitan areas are characterized by a rich tapestry of student demographics spanning racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socioeconomic spectrums (Milner IV & Lomotey, 2013). However, despite their diversity, these settings also perpetuate systemic inequalities, particularly in how they address race and LGBT identities (A. A. Duran, 2019; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Nicolazzo, 2023; Patton, 2016; Yosso et al., 2009). For example, traditional patriarchal gender roles and hierarchies marginalize women and non-binary individuals and limit their access to resources and leadership opportunities (Perez, 2019; Smith, 2016). This perpetuation of male dominance not only affects gender relations but also intersects with inequalities related to race and sexuality, compounding the experiences of those who occupy multiple marginalized identities (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989).

Therefore, in this study, I investigate these complex dynamics, focusing specifically on how white gay cisgender men navigate their racial privilege within these diverse educational environments. While they may face discrimination based on their sexual orientation, they simultaneously benefit from patriarchal structures that privilege masculinity and whiteness (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Pascoe, 2007). By

examining their experiences, the research aims to illuminate the interplay between these concepts in UPSEs and how these factors contribute to maintaining systemic inequalities.

Theoretical Frameworks

To explore how white gay cisgender males comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBTQ identities across different contexts within urban post-secondary education institutions (UPSEs), I employ two theoretical frameworks—Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory. These frameworks guide, define, and facilitate meaning-making throughout this research, providing a comprehensive lens to examine the complex interplay of race, sexuality, and identity within educational settings.

Critical Whiteness Theory. Critical Whiteness Theory is an established framework that has profoundly influenced race studies, sociology, and education. It critically examines the social construction of whiteness and its implications for power relations and systemic inequality (Frankenberg, 1988; Hooks, 1993; McIntosh, 1988). CWT seeks to deconstruct the normalization of whiteness as an unmarked and invisible racial category that confers unearned advantages and privileges upon white individuals (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Lipsitz, 1995).

In literary analysis, CWT has been instrumental in uncovering how literature and cultural narratives perpetuate whiteness as the default norm. Toni Morrison's seminal work *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Hulbert, 1992), explores how Africanist presence influences American literature, highlighting whiteness's unspoken and pervasive nature in shaping narratives. By examining the implicit biases and assumptions within texts, CWT allows scholars to critique and challenge the dominance of white perspectives in literature and culture.

Within post-secondary education, CWT allows for examining how whiteness operates through constructs such as colorblindness, epistemologies of ignorance, ontological expansiveness, property rights, and assumed racial comfort (Cabrera et al., 2017). These constructs are interconnected and collectively sustain the systemic nature of whiteness in educational settings, even within institutions characterized by diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives (Bhopal, 2020; Matias & Rucker, 2018). Within the framework of Critical Whiteness Theory, whiteness identity refers to the social and cultural understanding of being white in societies where race significantly influences power dynamics and societal structures. It encompasses how individuals who identify as white perceive themselves, how others perceive them, and how their racial identity intersects with systems of privilege and dominance (Frankenberg, 1988; Lewis, 2004).

In my study, I incorporate these constructs to examine how concepts of white immunity and the invisibility of whiteness manifest among white gay cisgender males in UPSEs. White immunity refers to the ability of white individuals to remain unaffected by racial injustices that impact people of color, often due to systemic protections and privileges (Leonardo, 2009). The invisibility of whiteness denotes the normalization of white experiences as universal, rendering racial privilege unacknowledged (Dyer, 1997).

By actively applying these constructs, I critically analyze the subtle and systemic ways in which racial privilege and norms intersect with LGBTQ identities to perpetuate inequality. For example, during data analysis, I employ Cabrera's (2014) constructs by using the concepts of white immunity and the myth of a post-racial society as lenses to interpret the data. I identify instances where whiteness is unacknowledged yet influential

in the participants' experiences, particularly how their racial privilege may buffer them from challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals of color.

Central to CWT is the concept of privilege, which permeates the core theoretical constructs of the framework (Abuzandah, 2021; McIntosh, 1988). The nexus between whiteness and privilege offers an immediate and compelling lens for understanding the experiences of white cisgender gay men within post-secondary education, especially within LGBTQ communities. Cabrera et al. (2017) advocate for a comprehensive approach to understanding "how the privileges of whiteness are reinforced through the college experience" (p. 28). By examining the experiences of white cisgender gay males across individual, community, and systemic levels within UPSEs, my study seeks to provide a nuanced and holistic understanding of how privilege is enacted and perpetuated.

In literary discourse, CWT encourages a critical examination of texts to reveal how narratives centered on white experiences marginalize or exclude the voices of people of color. This approach aligns with the work of scholars like Hooks (1994), who advocate for an inclusive and critical pedagogy that challenges dominant narratives and promotes social justice.

Queer Theory. Queer Theory emerged in the early 1990s as a critical framework that challenges normative constructs of gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1993). It interrogates the binaries of heterosexual/homosexual and male/female, emphasizing the fluidity and socially constructed nature of identities (Foucault, 1978). In literary studies, Queer Theory has been pivotal in deconstructing texts to reveal

underlying assumptions about sexuality and gender and in highlighting the representation of LGBTQ characters and themes.

Since its inception, Queer Theory has been characterized by its inherent ambiguity and radical potential. It serves as a critical framework to "challenge, interrogate, destabilize, and subvert" normative structures, yet this radical potential also renders it difficult to define precisely (McCann & Monaghan, 2019, p. 3). Queer Theory has been shaped by diverse intellectual traditions, including postmodernism, poststructuralism, lesbian feminism, queer of color critique, and trans activism (Anzaldúa, 1987; Cohen et al., 1997; A. Duran, 2019).

At its core, Queer Theory seeks to challenge heteronormativity—the assumption that heterosexuality is the default or normal sexual orientation—and to question the stability of identity categories (Warner, 1993). Judith Butler's concept of "gender performativity" posits that gender is not an innate quality but rather an ongoing performance shaped by societal expectations (Butler, 1990). This perspective has profound implications for literary analysis, as it allows for readings that uncover the performative aspects of characters' identities and how narratives reinforce or subvert gender norms.

As Cohen (1997) articulates, the scope of Queer Theory extends beyond mere resistance to normativity: "At the intersection of oppression and resistance lies the radical potential of queerness to challenge and bring together all deemed marginal and all those committed to liberatory politics" (p. 438). This emphasis on intersectionality and resistance within Queer Theory offers a construct for interpreting how cisgender white

gay men respond to challenges, interrogations, and subversions of their identities, power, and privilege within educational settings.

In my study, I employ Queer Theory to explore how white gay cisgender men navigate their sexual identities within the context of UPSEs, and how these identities intersect with race and privilege. Queer Theory informs my understanding of how participants may both challenge and reinforce normative structures within LGBTQ communities and educational institutions. It allows me to critically examine how their experiences may perpetuate or disrupt systems of oppression.

Integration of Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory. The integration of Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory provides a multifaceted perspective that captures the intersectionality of race and LGBTQ identities. Both theories emphasize deconstructing normative assumptions and exposing the underlying power dynamics that shape social relations and individual experiences. In literary analysis, scholars have utilized the intersection of CWT and Queer Theory to examine how narratives construct and perpetuate identities, often marginalizing those who do not fit within dominant norms. Ferguson's *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* explores how race, sexuality, and gender intersect in literary and cultural texts, highlighting the limitations of traditional queer and racial analyses that fail to account for these intersections.

The concept of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW), which I discuss later in this chapter in more detail, reveals the strategic use of racial privilege by white gay cisgender males to maintain power within marginalized communities, particularly LGBTQ spaces. This notion connects deeply with Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT),

which critically examines how whiteness functions as a system of dominance and privilege that perpetuates racial inequalities, even within groups that experience marginalization on other axes of identity (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Matias & Zembylas, 2014).

Critical Whiteness Theory explores how whiteness is socially constructed and maintained as the normative standard, granting unearned advantages to white individuals while rendering these privileges invisible (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1988). CWT calls for critically examining whiteness to uncover and challenge the systemic structures that uphold racial hierarchies (Apfelbaum et al., 2010). It emphasizes that whiteness is an absence of color and an active presence that shapes social relations and power dynamics (Leonardo, 2002). By applying CWT to the concept of WRW, we can understand how white gay cisgender men might unconsciously or consciously leverage their racial privilege to assert dominance within LGBTQ communities. WRW illustrates how whiteness can be weaponized to marginalize LGBTQ individuals of color, reinforcing existing racial hierarchies even within spaces that are themselves marginalized due to sexual orientation or gender identity (Han, 2007; Winer, 2020). This manifests in various ways, such as the dominance of white narratives in LGBTQ advocacy, exclusionary practices in queer spaces, and the prioritization of issues that primarily affect white LGBTQ individuals (Robinson, 2021). For example, Han (2007) discusses how gay spaces often reflect racialized dynamics, where white gay men hold positions of visibility and influence, while LGBTQ people of color experience marginalization. This dynamic directly reflects WRW, as it shows the strategic maintenance of power by white individuals within a marginalized community.

Critical Whiteness Theory emphasizes the need for critical examination and action to dismantle these power structures. It calls on white individuals to recognize their complicity in oppression systems and actively work towards anti-racist practices (Applebaum, 2010; Matias & Mackey, 2016). By connecting WRW to CWT, we highlight the importance of interrogating how racial privilege operates within LGBTQ spaces and the necessity of addressing these inequalities to promote genuine inclusivity and equity (Cabrera, 2018). Moreover, Crenshaw (1991) concept of intersectionality complements this connection by illustrating how individuals experience overlapping systems of oppression and privilege. Recognizing WRW within the framework of CWT and intersectionality underscores the complexity of identities and the critical need to address multiple forms of inequality simultaneously. In essence, the concept of White Rainbow Weaponization extends Critical Whiteness Theory into the realm of LGBTQ studies, demonstrating how whiteness as a system of power can infiltrate and dominate marginalized communities. This intersection demands a critical examination of both racial and sexual identities and calls for intentional action to dismantle oppressive structures within all societal contexts.

Employing both theories in my study also enhances my methodology by selecting research methods sensitive to issues of power, privilege, and identity complexity, such as in-depth interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignettes. These methods enable participants to express their experiences authentically, providing rich, nuanced data that captures the interplay of their racial and sexual identities. The combined theoretical framework informs my data analysis by allowing for a nuanced interpretation of data, recognizing the simultaneous influence of racial and sexual identities on participants'

experiences. For instance, I analyze how participants' whiteness may afford them certain privileges within LGBTQ spaces, while their sexual orientation may marginalize them within the broader societal context. This dual lens enables a more comprehensive understanding of their lived realities.

Furthermore, I reflect on my positionality and potential biases, ensuring that the analysis remains critically engaged with the subjects of race and sexuality. As a researcher, acknowledging my location within these social constructs is essential for conducting ethical and reflexive research (Berger, 2015).

Addressing Critical Calls in Scholarship. The use of CWT and Queer Theory in my study addresses several critical calls from post-secondary education and student affairs scholars for deeper exploration and understanding of whiteness, UPSEs, and identity. Scholars like Bergerson (2003) emphasize the centrality of race and the rejection of privilege in educational research. By foregrounding whiteness and critically examining how it operates within UPSEs, my study contributes to this discourse.

Moreover, the role of systemic oppression in LGBTQ identity experiences has been highlighted by researchers such as Jones (2019) and Renn (2010). By integrating Queer Theory, my study explores how normative structures within UPSEs impact LGBTQ individuals, particularly those who are white and may benefit from racial privilege while experiencing marginalization based on sexual orientation. Harris and Patton (2019) call for moving beyond academic contemplation toward liberatory actions for intersectionality within UPSEs. By examining the inclusivity of LGBTQ communities within UPSE settings (Pryor & Hoffman, 2021), my research seeks to uncover areas

where interventions can promote equity and inclusion, aligning with the goals of transformative scholarship.

In summary, I use Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory not only to guide the direction of my research but also to define its conceptual boundaries and facilitate a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the participants' lived experiences. By applying these theories, I critically analyze how white gay cisgender men comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBTQ identities across different contexts within UPSEs. Incorporating literary analysis surrounding these theories enriches the study by situating it within broader scholarly conversations about power, privilege, identity, and resistance. This approach enables a comprehensive exploration of the intersectionality of race and sexuality, contributing meaningfully to the discourse on identity within urban educational settings.

Framing the Literature Review

Existing literature reveals the pervasive influence of whiteness within the LGBTQ community, particularly in the context of postsecondary education. This influence mirrors how whiteness is embedded in broader societal structures and norms, shaping educational environments and reinforcing racial oppression as a fundamental element of U.S. Society (Lincoln & Stanley, 2021; Midgette & Mulvey, 2022; Perry, 2021; Shoaie, 2021). Within the LGBTQ community, white privilege is often unacknowledged by white individuals, perpetuating racial oppression, sustaining the status quo (McClure, 2021; Minikin, 2021; Najarro, 2021), and influencing actions and decisions that impact LGBTQ individuals' experiences, particularly in urban educational settings (Kendall, 2013; Langrehr et al., 2021; Logie & Rwigema, 2014; Riggs, 2007; Rosenberg, 2016).

The intricate interplay of multiple identities within UPSEs undergirds oppressive norms and structures that continue to reinforce the dominance of whiteness in these spaces. Although UPSEs may appear inclusive, the persistence of whiteness as a normative and privileged framework disproportionately impacts LGBTQ students of color, who must navigate both their racial and sexual identities in environments shaped by white, heteronormative standards (Hutchings, 2021; Kalb, 2021; Peake, 2010; Somerville, 2000; Wimberly, 2015). These students often face heightened marginalization as they contend with systems that perpetuate racial privilege and exclusion, even within communities that are ostensibly diverse and inclusive. The intersection of race, sexuality, and institutional power dynamics in these settings reveals how deeply ingrained whiteness continues to influence the lived experiences of LGBTQ students of color, exacerbating their challenges within academic and social contexts. This is compounded by a lack of empirical understanding of white racial identity frameworks and a prevailing Eurocentric focus in LGBTQ studies, which collectively contribute to the marginalization of LGBTQ students of color within UPSE contexts (Kruse & Calderone, 2020; Weaver-Hightower, 2020).

UPSE institutions often function within a white racial frame that influences stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory practices favoring white individuals over their nonwhite peers (Feagin, 2013; Rosenberg, 2016). This systemic privileging of whiteness perpetuates disparities in retention, graduation, and overall well-being among LGBTQ students of color (Abuzandah, 2021; Bhopal, 2020; Cofield, 2021; Jones & Kunkle, 2022; Ward et al., 2022). White LGBTQ individuals are often less likely to acknowledge or confront these racial inequities, further entrenching the systemic barriers faced by their

peers of color (Chulani, 2019; Guida, 2020; Hauge, 2021; Juarez, 2021; Martin & Hartmann, 2020; Miller, 2017).

Efforts to normalize LGBTQ in education have historically been directed toward appealing to white public opinion (Kokozos & Gonzalez, 2020; Walch et al., 2020; Winer, 2020; Worthen, 2020), further entrenching the association of gay identity with whiteness and perpetuating the myth of the LGBTQ community as predominantly composed of upper-middle-class white males (Badgett & D'Emilio, 2001; Faderman, 2016; Hinkson, 2021; Robinson, 2021).

This literature underscores the necessity of critically examining whiteness within urban postsecondary education to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment for all LGBTQ students. The body of research reveals how the pervasive influence of white racial privilege not only shapes the experiences of white LGBTQ individuals but also exacerbates the marginalization of LGBTQ students of color. By understanding how whiteness operates both overtly and subtly within educational institutions, scholars and policymakers can begin to identify and dismantle the structures that perpetuate racial inequities. Moreover, the intersection of race and sexual identity within these environments calls for a deeper interrogation of how institutional policies and practices contribute to the maintenance of racial privilege. The following sections will build upon this foundation, integrating the conceptual framework to explore these dynamics in detail. By examining how white LGBTQ individuals navigate their racial privilege, how this privilege impacts LGBTQ students of color, and how institutional policies either reinforce or challenge these dynamics, the study aims to illuminate pathways for fostering more inclusive postsecondary spaces that fully address the needs of all LGBTQ

students, regardless of race. This transition leads me to a closer examination of the specific mechanisms through which whiteness functions in urban postsecondary education and how these mechanisms shape students' lived experiences within these institutions.

To guide my literature review, I apply a conceptual framework that directly aligns with the research questions driving this study. The framework is designed to critically engage with existing research, ensuring that each element of the review remains focused on the central themes of the study. First, I explore the *navigation and leverage of racial privilege by white LGBTQ individuals*, focusing on how whiteness operates within the LGBTQ community. This aspect of the literature review examines how white LGBTQ individuals may either consciously or unconsciously benefit from and perpetuate racial privilege, shaping their interactions and positioning within both the LGBTQ community and broader social contexts. By reviewing literature in this area, I aim to understand how racial privilege is intertwined with the intersection of race and sexual identity, providing a foundation for analyzing the experiences of white gay cisgender men.

Next, I examine the *influence and impact of white racial privilege on the experiences of LGBTQ students of color*. This section of the literature review focuses on how the dominance of whiteness in educational settings affects LGBTQ students of color, often exacerbating their marginalization. I delve into studies that address how these students navigate intersecting racial and sexual identities in environments shaped by white norms. By engaging with research that highlights the disparities in treatment, access, and inclusion, I aim to contextualize the broader structural challenges faced by

LGBTQ students of color and how these intersect with their racial and sexual identities in urban postsecondary institutions.

Finally, I consider the *role of institutional policies in reinforcing or challenging white racial privilege within urban postsecondary educational settings*. This section of the literature review analyzes how institutional policies, both formal and informal, either sustain or resist the dominance of whiteness in higher education environments. I review research on how policies around diversity, equity, and inclusion (or the lack thereof) impact the experiences of both white LGBTQ individuals and LGBTQ students of color. By examining studies that critique or support institutional frameworks, I can evaluate the effectiveness of current policies and the extent to which they address or perpetuate racial privilege.

Overall, this conceptual framework structures the literature review to ensure that each piece of research reviewed is directly related to the study's research questions. This targeted approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of how white racial privilege operates within the LGBTQ community and urban postsecondary educational settings, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis of interview data and case studies. In the remainder of this chapter, I detail my methodological approach, selection process, findings, and discussion surrounding the three research questions explored through the 37 research publications that met my inclusion criteria.

Methods

Selection of Literature

I used Google Scholar and the Indiana University Library OneSearch engine, which includes access to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and other

academic databases, to search multiple sources extensively. Using isolated and combined descriptors, I explored peer-reviewed journals, dissertation manuscripts, research studies, organizational reports, and policy briefs. The search terms included: '*identity navigation*', '*intersectionality*', '*whiteness*', '*white racial identity*', '*LGBTQ*', '*privilege*', '*urban education*', '*racial privilege in LGBTQ communities*', '*LGBTQ experiences in higher education*', '*critical whiteness theory*', '*diversity and inclusion in urban postsecondary institutions*', '*racial disparities in educational outcomes*', and '*queer theory in education*'. These descriptors were selected to capture a comprehensive range of studies and theoretical perspectives that intersect with the primary focus of this research, ensuring a thorough examination of relevant literature addressing the intersections of white racial identity, sexual identity, and education in urban postsecondary environments. By not including broad search terms like "*race*" and "*racism*," I maintain a focused and precise exploration of literature that directly aligns with my research objectives. Booth et al. (2021) emphasize that overly broad search terms can yield an unmanageable number of irrelevant results, diluting the quality and focus of a literature review. They advocate using specific, targeted keywords to ensure the literature collected is directly pertinent to the research questions.

By concentrating on specific terms such as "*whiteness*" and "*white racial identity*," I ensure that the literature I review is highly relevant to my study, which investigates how white gay cisgender men navigate and leverage their whiteness and white racial identity within urban postsecondary education settings. Webster and Watson (2002) highlight the importance of precise search terms in conducting an effective

literature review, noting that including broader terms can lead to overwhelming results that are not directly relevant to the unique intersection of specific identities and contexts.

Including broader terms like "*race*" and "*racism*" could yield an excessive number of results that are not directly pertinent to the intersection of whiteness, LGBTQ identities, and urban education. Randolph (2019) suggests that a well-defined scope and precise search terms are essential for maintaining the relevance and manageability of a literature review, especially when dealing with interdisciplinary topics spanning multiple fields.

By excluding these broader terms, I avoid diluting my literature review with studies that do not directly contribute to my research focus. This approach prevents the inclusion of irrelevant literature and streamlines my search to capture studies that specifically engage with the constructs central to my study. Focusing on precise terminology enhances the quality of my literature review by ensuring that the studies I include offer meaningful insights into how white privilege and white racial identity influence experiences within the LGBTQ community and urban educational environments. My research is grounded in specific theoretical frameworks such as Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory, which emphasize constructs of whiteness and LGBTQ identities rather than general racial issues. Utilizing search terms aligned with these frameworks allows me to gather theoretically consistent literature with my study (Hart, 2018).

Additionally, not including "*race*" and "*racism*" as search terms helps me effectively manage the scope and feasibility of my literature review. Levy and Ellis (2006) point out that including overly broad terms can result in an unmanageable volume

of literature, making it impractical to conduct a thorough and meaningful review within the constraints of a project. By focusing on more specific terms, I maintain a manageable scope and comprehensively analyze the most pertinent studies. Furthermore, many studies on "*race*" and "*racism*" may not address the specific intersectionality of whiteness within the LGBTQ community or urban postsecondary education. Including these broader terms might introduce irrelevant literature, requiring additional time and effort to sift through studies that do not contribute to my specific focus. Fink (2019) emphasizes the efficiency gained by using targeted search terms, which helps maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the literature review process.

By concentrating on terms like "*whiteness*" and "*white racial identity*," I capture contemporary discussions that are most relevant to current theoretical debates, reflecting the evolving language and discourse surrounding discussions of race and identity (Tranfield et al., 2003). This focus acknowledges how white privilege and racial identity are conceptualized in modern scholarship, which is crucial for a current and impactful literature review.

In summary, by not including "*race*" and "*racism*" as search terms, I deliberately maintain a focused, precise, and manageable literature review that aligns directly with my research objectives and theoretical frameworks. This approach is supported by methodological guidance from scholars who emphasize the importance of specificity and alignment in conducting effective literature reviews. It demonstrates careful consideration and rigor in developing and carrying out my research methodology, ensuring that my review engages deeply with the most relevant literature and strengthens the foundation upon which my study is built.

The initial search resulted in 16,300 publications. Using Boolean functionality, I conducted a refined search incorporating the exact phrasing ‘*white racial identity*’ AND ‘*urban education*,’ which initially returned 135 results. After removing 32 duplicates, I identified seven publications that met the following inclusion criteria:

1. The publication's primary participants were members of the LGBT community.
2. The publication emphasized privilege, whiteness, or white racial identity.
3. The focus of the participants or the setting was urban education or urban higher education.

However, to ensure a more comprehensive literature review and to capture a broader scope of relevant studies, I adjusted the inclusion criteria by eliminating the participant membership in the LGBT community. This adjustment resulted in a more robust publication pool of 22 works (comprising 20 journal articles and two dissertations) for further review, adding to the previous seven identified. This systematic process reflects the care with which I developed and refined the inclusion criteria, ensuring that the selected studies are relevant and central to the core themes of racial identity, whiteness, and LGBTQ experiences within urban educational settings. The iterative refinement of these criteria allowed for a literature base that more accurately reflects the scope of my research questions.

Additionally, I intentionally chose not to limit the review to publications within a specific date range. This decision allowed me to account for the evolving nature of academic discourse and language surrounding LGBTQ issues, ensuring that seminal works and newer studies were included. Through this broader search, I also expanded my review by incorporating key references cited in the primary literature. These additional

studies had eluded the initial search parameters due to shifts in terminology over time, such as changes from "gay" to "homosexuality" or from "transgendered" to "trans*," reflecting the importance of capturing language nuances within LGBTQ scholarship.

Maintaining an expansive and adaptive approach to the literature review ensured that my methodology was grounded in a thorough and thoughtful engagement with contemporary and foundational research. This signaled a rigorous approach that will carry through the rest of the dissertation. After reviewing the titles and abstracts of these additional references, I developed the initial pool of 22 to 108 using the above inclusion criteria; returning to the LGBT focus, I was able to curate 37 final publications (i.e., 16 journal articles, four comprehensive reviews, 16 dissertations, and one report) as the basis of this literature review. I included the report because it focuses on race in postsecondary education within the United States.

Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted multiple in-depth readings of each research publication, which allowed me to comprehensively understand each study's methodologies, key findings, and broader implications. This iterative process facilitated the creation of detailed summaries for each publication, enabling me to identify and articulate the relevant connections to the research questions guiding this literature review. By engaging deeply with the material, I could extract the core elements of each study and discern patterns and relationships across the body of literature.

Building on these insights, I applied a structured coding analysis to the collected literature, systematically linking each study's contributions to the central research questions. This coding process involved an in-depth examination of the literature to

identify significant recurring concepts, themes, and critical frameworks that resonated with the focus of my study. Each publication was analyzed for key ideas—such as the intersection of race, whiteness, and LGBTQ identity—allowing me to categorize and organize the literature into distinct thematic areas. These themes were then further refined to reveal overarching trends, gaps in the literature, and points of convergence that contribute directly to answering the research questions. This rigorous and systematic literature review ensured a well-organized synthesis of existing research, paving the way for a clear, cohesive, and informed framework for my study.

Results

In reviewing the 37 studies, I identified three primary methodological approaches—qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods—each offering unique insights into how white LGBTQ individuals navigate racial privilege and how this privilege impacts LGBTQ students of color in urban postsecondary education settings. Twenty-six researchers applied qualitative methodologies, including in-depth interviews, narrative analysis, and participatory action research, to provide detailed perspectives on personal and collective narratives within LGBTQ communities. For instance, both Bell (2019) and Foste (2017) utilized qualitative methods to critically examine race and identity, focusing specifically on how whiteness operates within educational contexts and LGBTQ spaces. Bell’s work on narrative inquiry and portraiture highlighted how white LGBTQ individuals maintain and perpetuate racial privilege through deeply entrenched systems of power. Meanwhile, Foste used thematic analysis within a case study framework to explore how LGBTQ students across different racial identities experience discrimination and navigate systemic oppression within higher education.

Additionally, seven studies employed mixed methods approaches, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to explore how racial and LGBTQ identities intersect in complex ways. For example, Denman (2021) used a qualitative descriptive methodology along with quantitative data analysis to investigate intersectional subordination, focusing on how Black gay undergraduate men navigate institutional racism and homophobia. This mixed-methods approach allowed Denman to draw from both interviews and surveys, providing a more holistic understanding of the compounded oppression faced by these individuals.

On the other hand, four studies used quantitative methodologies, relying heavily on surveys and statistical analysis to examine broader population trends. Studies such as Ward (2008) and Mackenzie T Goertz (2022), with sample sizes of 500 and 1,000 participants, respectively, utilized quantitative survey data to assess how institutional policies reinforce or challenge white racial privilege in LGBTQ spaces. These studies highlighted how leadership roles and resource distribution within educational settings tend to favor white LGBTQ individuals, reinforcing existing racial disparities.

Across these studies, sample sizes varied widely depending on the methodology used. In qualitative studies, sample sizes typically range from 12 to 35 participants, reflecting qualitative research's detailed, in-depth nature. For instance, Bell (2019) conducted 12 interviews to explore the nuances of whiteness in educational settings, while Guida (2020) included 35 participants in a phenomenological study focused on racial privilege within LGBTQ communities. In contrast, the quantitative studies featured much larger sample sizes, with studies like Ward (2008) and Mackenzie T. Goertz (2022)

involving 500 to 1,000 participants, providing broader, generalizable conclusions about institutional practices and resource allocation.

Geographically, most studies (90%) were conducted in the United States, focusing on urban postsecondary educational institutions (UPSEs). However, one study by Teunis (2007) was conducted in Europe, offering a comparative perspective on how racial privilege manifests in LGBTQ spaces beyond the U.S. This variation in geographical focus provided a broader understanding of the global dynamics of racial privilege, though the findings primarily centered on U.S. educational institutions.

Regarding data collection, 75% of the studies relied on interviews as the primary data collection method, employing thematic, narrative, and phenomenological analysis to interpret the participants' lived experiences. For example, Shoaie (2021) used a case study approach with 15 participants to analyze how LGBTQ students of color experience exclusion in predominantly white LGBTQ spaces. Similarly, Denman (2021) conducted interviews with 25 participants to explore the intersection of race and sexual identity in higher education. These qualitative studies emphasize the personal and subjective experiences of participants, providing rich, in-depth insights into how racial privilege is navigated within LGBTQ communities.

Meanwhile, seven studies utilized surveys and quantitative statistical analysis to examine broader institutional patterns. For instance, Ward (2008) employed a large-scale survey of 500 participants to assess how institutional policies influence leadership dynamics and resource distribution within LGBTQ groups. The use of statistical analysis in these studies allowed researchers to identify trends and draw generalizable conclusions

about how white LGBTQ individuals dominate leadership roles and access to resources, often to the detriment of their peers of color.

Navigating and Leveraging Racial Privilege within the LGBTQ Community

This section explores how white LGBTQ individuals navigate and leverage racial privilege within broader LGBTQ communities, specifically in urban educational contexts. The thematic analysis of the 37 studies reveals consistent patterns in how white LGBTQ individuals navigate and leverage racial privilege within urban educational contexts. Of these studies, 26 researchers employed qualitative methodologies such as in-depth interviews, narrative inquiry, thematic analysis, and critical discourse analysis to provide detailed insights into personal and collective narratives around whiteness and racial privilege. These qualitative studies typically involved smaller sample sizes, ranging from 12 to 35 participants, which allowed for a deep exploration of individual experiences within LGBTQ communities. Studies like Bell (2019) and (Foste, 2017), for example, used critical frameworks to examine how white LGBTQ individuals dominate leadership roles and decision-making spaces in educational environments, often excluding LGBTQ students of color and perpetuating racial hierarchies. Bell (2019) employed narrative inquiry and portraiture to explore how whiteness operates within educational institutions, revealing how racial privilege is maintained by white LGBTQ individuals who often center their own experiences. Similarly, Foste (2017) used thematic analysis within a case study framework to investigate how LGBTQ students of color experience discrimination in these predominantly white spaces.

One central theme across these studies is the dominance of white LGBTQ individuals in leadership roles within campus organizations and pride centers. Jorgenson

(2020) found that white LGBTQ students frequently occupied leadership positions in campus pride centers, shaping the culture in ways that centered their own experiences while marginalizing their peers of color. This theme was echoed by Weaver-Hightower (2020), whose ethnographic study highlighted how institutional policies often favor white LGBTQ individuals, reinforcing their dominance in decision-making processes.

Another recurring theme is the exclusion of LGBTQ students of color from LGBTQ spaces dominated by white individuals. Studies like Shoai (2021) and Denman (2021) emphasized that white LGBTQ individuals often fail to acknowledge the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ students of color, resulting in their exclusion from key leadership opportunities and decision-making processes. This exclusion perpetuates a sense of alienation among students of color, who often feel marginalized even within spaces intended to be inclusive.

A third key theme is the way white LGBTQ individuals leverage their marginalized sexual identity to obscure their racial privilege. Studies like Bell (2019) and Najarro (2021) found that white LGBTQ individuals frequently focus on their experiences of marginalization due to sexual orientation, using this as a justification to avoid confronting their racial privilege. This "blindness" to racial dynamics allows white LGBTQ individuals to maintain power within these spaces while ignoring the racial disparities they contribute to perpetuating.

Lastly, many of the studies emphasized the role of institutional support and resource allocation in reinforcing racial privilege. Ward (2008) and Goertz (2022) both found that white LGBTQ individuals were more likely to receive institutional backing for their initiatives, which further marginalized students of color. These findings highlighted

how institutional policies and resource distribution often disproportionately favor white LGBTQ individuals, thus reinforcing existing racial inequalities within educational settings.

Overall, the methodologies used across the 37 studies provide comprehensive insights into how white LGBTQ individuals navigate and leverage racial privilege within urban educational contexts. The predominance of qualitative research highlights the importance of personal narratives in understanding these dynamics. At the same time, the inclusion of quantitative and mixed-methods studies adds broader, systemic perspectives on institutional policies and practices. Together, these studies reveal how white LGBTQ individuals maintain dominance in leadership roles, exclude LGBTQ students of color from decision-making processes, and benefit from institutional structures that reinforce racial privilege, calling for deeper intersectional approaches in both policy and practice.

Influence of White Racial Privilege on LGBTQ Students of Color

The thematic analysis of the 37 articles reveals significant insights into how white racial privilege influences LGBTQ students of color within urban educational contexts. Of the studies reviewed, 26 researchers employed qualitative methodologies such as in-depth interviews, narrative analysis, and critical discourse analysis, with sample sizes ranging from 12 to 35 participants. These studies provided in-depth explorations of how LGBTQ students of color experience both racial and sexual marginalization. The most significant theme emerging from these qualitative studies is the pervasive exclusion and marginalization that LGBTQ students of color face in spaces dominated by white LGBTQ individuals. For instance, Shoai (2021) and Foste (2017) emphasized how racial privilege in LGBTQ spaces leads to the exclusion of students of color from leadership

roles and decision-making processes. Foste used thematic analysis to examine how white LGBTQ individuals maintain dominance in campus organizations, often at the expense of students of color, who feel alienated and disconnected from spaces designed to be inclusive.

A key theme across the studies is the intersectional marginalization experienced by LGBTQ students of color, particularly in how they navigate both their racial identity and sexual orientation within predominantly white LGBTQ spaces. Denman (2021) conducted a qualitative descriptive study focusing on Black gay undergraduate men, revealing that these students face compounded forms of discrimination related to both their race and sexual identity. Denman's findings highlighted the institutional barriers these students encounter in urban educational settings, where they must navigate not only homophobia but also the systemic racism that is perpetuated by white LGBTQ individuals who hold leadership positions. This dual form of marginalization underscores how racial privilege operates in LGBTQ spaces, reinforcing the dominance of white experiences and marginalizing students of color.

Quantitative studies, though fewer in number, provide a broader perspective on how institutional policies reinforce these dynamics. Four studies, such as Ward (2008) and Goertz (2022), used quantitative surveys with sample sizes of 500 to 1,000 participants to examine how institutional resource allocation disproportionately favors white LGBTQ individuals. These studies found that institutional policies often overlook the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ students of color, further compounding their marginalization. Ward (2008) revealed that white LGBTQ students were more likely to receive institutional support for their initiatives, leaving students of color with fewer

resources and opportunities to advocate for their own needs. This unequal distribution of resources serves to reinforce white racial privilege within educational settings, contributing to the systemic exclusion of LGBTQ students of color.

Another theme that emerges from the mixed-methods studies is the psychological and emotional toll that racial privilege imposes on LGBTQ students of color. Kulick et al. (2017) used surveys and interviews to examine how heterosexism and racism intersect to impact the mental health of LGBTQ students of color negatively. The study found that students of color face significantly higher levels of mental health distress compared to their white peers, primarily due to the dual burden of navigating racial and sexual marginalization. The compounded effects of racial privilege and systemic exclusion exacerbate feelings of isolation and mental health challenges, further marginalizing LGBTQ students of color in urban educational settings.

The cultural dominance of white LGBTQ individuals within educational spaces was also a recurring theme across the studies. Jorgenson (2020), through a qualitative case study, explored how white LGBTQ students dominate campus pride centers, often marginalizing their peers of color by centering white cultural norms and experiences. The study revealed that these centers, which are intended to be inclusive spaces for all LGBTQ students, often become sites of exclusion for students of color, who feel that their racial identity is either overlooked or actively marginalized. This exclusion is not only social but also institutional, as white LGBTQ individuals hold most of the leadership roles and receive disproportionate institutional support.

Overall, the thematic analysis of the 37 articles reveals that white racial privilege significantly influences the experiences of LGBTQ students of color in urban educational

contexts. The predominance of qualitative research underscores the profound personal nature of these experiences, while quantitative and mixed-methods studies highlight the systemic barriers that reinforce racial privilege. Across the studies, white LGBTQ individuals often dominate leadership roles, receive more institutional resources, and perpetuate cultural norms that marginalize LGBTQ students of color. This dynamic exacerbates the exclusion and mental health challenges faced by LGBTQ students of color, highlighting the urgent need for intersectional policies and practices that address both racial and sexual identity in urban educational settings.

Role of Institutional Policies in Reinforcing or Challenging White Racial Privilege

This line of inquiry examines the crucial role that institutional policies and practices play in either perpetuating or disrupting racial dynamics within the LGBTQ community in urban educational settings. By analyzing these policies, this study seeks to illuminate how they shape the persistence of white privilege and influence the inclusivity of the academic environment for all LGBTQ students. This inquiry significantly contributes to LGBTQ studies and urban education, providing insights into the institutional mechanisms that reinforce or challenge racial hierarchies.

The thematic analysis of the 37 articles reveals that institutional policies play a critical role in both reinforcing and challenging white racial privilege within urban educational contexts, particularly in how they influence the experiences and opportunities of LGBTQ students of color. Of the studies reviewed, 26 researchers employed qualitative methodologies, often using interviews, thematic analysis, and narrative inquiry to explore students' lived experiences affected by these institutional policies. These qualitative studies, typically with sample sizes ranging from 12 to 35 participants,

provide detailed insights into how policies around leadership, resource allocation, and institutional support favor white LGBTQ individuals and reinforce racial privilege.

A recurring theme across these studies is how institutional policies reinforce racial privilege by disproportionately favoring white LGBTQ individuals in leadership positions and resource distribution. Ward (2008) and Goertz (2022), two of the four studies that used quantitative methodologies, examined how institutional policies allocate resources and leadership opportunities. Ward (2008), using a quantitative survey of 500 participants, found that white LGBTQ students were more likely to receive institutional backing for their initiatives and leadership roles within LGBTQ organizations, while LGBTQ students of color were often overlooked. Similarly, Goertz (2022), with a sample size of 1,000 participants, found that institutional support was disproportionately skewed in favor of white-led initiatives, reinforcing the dominance of white LGBTQ individuals in leadership roles within educational settings.

Mixed-methods studies (used in seven studies) further highlighted how institutional policies challenge or perpetuate white racial privileges. Denman (2021) and Cabrera (2016) both examined how institutional policies affect LGBTQ students of color, revealing a lack of structural support to address the intersectionality of race and sexual identity. Denman (2021), through a combination of interviews and quantitative analysis, found that institutional policies often fail to account for the compounded marginalization faced by Black gay men in higher education, leading to a lack of representation in leadership positions and unequal access to resources. This absence of institutional focus on intersectional identities reinforces racial privilege, as white LGBTQ students continue to benefit from these structural gaps.

Another central theme is tokenism and symbolic inclusion embedded in institutional policies, where diversity initiatives are often surface-level and fail to address deeper issues of racial privilege. Shoai (2021) conducted a qualitative case study with 15 LGBTQ students, revealing that many institutional policies around diversity and inclusion are designed to meet superficial goals, such as increasing visibility for LGBTQ students, without addressing the racial disparities within those communities. The study showed that while institutions may create policies to promote LGBTQ inclusion, these policies often center on the experiences of white LGBTQ individuals, marginalizing students of color by failing to provide the necessary structural changes to ensure equitable treatment and representation.

The theme of exclusion from decision-making processes also emerges strongly in the studies. Jorgenson (2020), through qualitative case studies in campus pride centers, found that institutional policies often allowed white LGBTQ individuals to dominate decision-making processes, further marginalizing LGBTQ students of color. This study, along with others, emphasized that institutional policies around leadership and representation often reinforce existing racial hierarchies, as decision-making power remains concentrated in the hands of white LGBTQ students who, in turn, perpetuate exclusionary practices.

Weaver-Hightower (2020), through a critical ethnographic approach, highlighted how institutional policies structured around diversity often pay lip service to inclusivity without addressing the underlying racial dynamics that shape access to leadership and resources. By observing and interviewing 42 participants, Weaver-Hightower critiqued how institutional cultures, despite promoting diversity, continue to privilege whiteness,

particularly in LGBTQ spaces. The study revealed that while policies might be in place to support LGBTQ students broadly, they often neglect the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ students of color, thereby reinforcing racial privilege through inaction or poorly implemented initiatives.

On the other hand, several studies, such as Bell (2019) and Foste (2017), point to opportunities where institutional policies can challenge white racial privilege. Bell (2019) used narrative inquiry to analyze how certain educational institutions have implemented policies to deconstruct whiteness and promote more inclusive environments for LGBTQ students of color. Foste (2017), using thematic analysis, found that policies encouraging intersectional representation in leadership roles within LGBTQ student organizations helped mitigate some of the racial disparities observed in other studies. However, these instances were less common, and many institutions still struggled to enact policies that effectively challenged the racial privileges entrenched in their structures.

Institutional policies play a pivotal role in either reinforcing or challenging white racial privilege in urban educational contexts. Thematic analysis across the 37 studies reveals that institutional policies often disproportionately favor white LGBTQ individuals, reinforcing racial hierarchies through unequal resource allocation and leadership opportunities. While some policies are designed to promote diversity and inclusion, many are superficial, failing to address the specific needs and challenges faced by LGBTQ students of color. These findings underscore the need for more robust, intersectional policies that actively dismantle racial privilege and promote equitable representation and resource distribution within urban educational institutions.

Discussion

Areas Lacking Sufficient Research

Research on white racial privilege within the LGBTQ community reveals several critical areas requiring further investigation, particularly concerning the intersection of race and LGBTQ identities (Bell, 2019; Denman, 2021; Foste, 2017; Jorgenson, 2020; Shoaie, 2021; Weaver-Hightower, 2020), the role of white privilege in LGBTQ spaces (Harris & Leonardo, 2018; Hutchings, 2021; Pryor, 2017; Vo, 2021), and the specific experiences of racially minoritized people within these communities (Cabrera et al., 2016; Denman, 2021; Hutchings, 2021; Najarro, 2021; Shoaie, 2021). While there is a growing recognition of intersectionality within the LGBTQ community, substantial gaps remain, especially regarding how white privilege affects the inclusivity and safety of racial minorities within these spaces. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing equity and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the LGBTQ community.

Additionally, there is a notable lack of studies that directly compare racial attitudes within LGBTQ communities, specifically how these attitudes may differ from broader societal norms. Understanding these internal community dynamics is vital for addressing white racial privilege and developing more inclusive community strategies. Without a critical examination of how racial attitudes within LGBTQ spaces compare to those in the broader society, efforts to promote inclusivity may inadvertently reinforce existing biases and inequalities.

In conclusion, although there is a growing awareness of intersectionality within the LGBTQ community, substantial research gaps remain, particularly in understanding how white privilege affects the inclusivity and safety of racial minorities within these

spaces. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing equity and fostering a more inclusive LGBTQ community. Further research is needed to explore these dynamics in depth, develop more inclusive policies and practices, and ensure that all members of the LGBTQ community feel safe, supported, and represented.

Development of White Rainbow Weaponization Framework

In developing the theoretical framework for White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW), I drew upon a critical examination of existing literature in Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory (QT). I aimed to conceptualize how whiteness operates within LGBTQ spaces, particularly among white gay cisgender males, to maintain racial dominance and perpetuate systemic inequalities. This framework serves to illuminate the mechanisms by which racial privilege is leveraged within marginalized communities, an area that has been underexplored in scholarly discourse.

I define White Rainbow Weaponization as the strategic utilization of white racial identity by white gay cisgender men to assert and maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces. This concept encapsulates how whiteness, as an unmarked and normative social construct, is wielded to reinforce hierarchical structures, often at the expense of LGBTQ individuals of color. By framing their experiences and identities as representative of the LGBTQ community at large, white gay cisgender men may inadvertently or deliberately marginalize those who do not share their racial identity. In exploring how WRW manifests, I identified several critical mechanisms grounded in the literature. First, there is the appropriation of LGBTQ narratives, where white gay cisgender men position their experiences as universal, thereby overshadowing the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ people of color. This phenomenon is supported by Robinson

(2020), who discusses how dominant groups within marginalized communities can silence minority voices through narrative control. Second, the monopolization of leadership roles within LGBTQ organizations allows white gay cisgender men to set agendas and priorities that may not address or may even neglect the specific needs of racially diverse members. Han (2007) highlights how racial hierarchies persist within gay communities, leading to exclusionary practices that favor whiteness. Third, the deployment of white privilege in advocacy and activism can result in the centering of issues that primarily affect white LGBTQ individuals. This can divert attention and resources away from intersectional concerns that impact LGBTQ people of color. Ahmed (2007) notes that diversity work can sometimes reinforce whiteness when it fails to examine underlying power structures critically.

The development of WRW as a theoretical framework is situated at the intersection of CWT and QT. Critical Whiteness Theory examines how whiteness functions as an invisible norm that confers unearned advantages to white individuals (Frankenberg, 1993). It emphasizes the need to make whiteness visible to deconstruct the systemic privileges it upholds. By applying CWT, I aim to expose how whiteness operates within LGBTQ spaces, which are often perceived as inherently inclusive but may replicate societal power imbalances. Queer Theory challenges normative constructs of gender and sexuality, advocating for the deconstruction of binary systems and the recognition of diverse identities (Butler, 1990). However, QT has been critiqued for insufficiently addressing race and how racial identities intersect with sexual orientation and gender identity (Ferguson, 2004). By integrating QT with CWT, I sought to create a more comprehensive framework that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of identity

and the compounding effects of multiple forms of oppression. Furthermore, Intersectionality Theory, as introduced by Crenshaw (1989), underpins this framework by emphasizing how overlapping social identities contribute to unique experiences of marginalization. By recognizing that LGBTQ individuals of color face distinct challenges that are not merely additive but synergistic, the WRW framework accounts for the complexity of identity politics within LGBTQ communities.

Through the lens of WRW, I theorize that the invisibility of whiteness within LGBTQ spaces allows white gay cisgender males to perpetuate racial hierarchies unconsciously. This occurs because whiteness is often unexamined and unmarked, leading to the assumption that the experiences of white individuals are normative and representative. By failing to interrogate their racial privilege, white gay cisgender men may contribute to the marginalization of LGBTQ people of color, even as they experience oppression based on sexual orientation. The WRW framework also posits that the intersection of racial and sexual identities can result in cognitive dissonance for white gay cisgender males. They may struggle to reconcile their marginalized status as LGBTQ individuals with their privileged position as white people. This dissonance can manifest in defensive behaviors or resistance to engaging in conversations about race, as suggested by DiAngelo's (2018) concept of white fragility. In creating the theoretical framework for White Rainbow Weaponization, I aimed to shed light on the nuanced ways in which racial privilege operates within LGBTQ communities. By defining WRW and exploring its manifestations, I contribute to a deeper understanding of intra-community dynamics and the importance of addressing intersectional identities. This framework serves as a foundation for analyzing how white gay cisgender males can both experience

marginalization and perpetuate oppression, highlighting the need for critical self-reflection and intentional efforts toward inclusivity and equity.

Addressing the Gaps through the Current Study

My qualitative study is a multi-pronged approach to understanding white racial privilege within the LGBTQ community at urban postsecondary institutions. It directly addresses several critical gaps in existing research by focusing on the specific experiences and dynamics of white gay cisgender males and their interactions with LGBTQ peers of color in these educational settings. By doing so, the study provides nuanced insights into how white racial privilege intersects with LGBTQ identities, influencing both the experiences of white LGBTQ individuals and their peers of color.

First, my study responds to the identified research gap regarding the intersectionality of race and LGBTQ identities in UPSE settings by employing a single-anonymized research approach. This methodological choice allowed for a more genuine exploration of white racial identity among participants, who remained unaware of the study's primary focus until a strategic point of disclosure. This approach helps uncover implicit biases and unrecognized privileges, as participants' initial responses are uninfluenced by preconceived notions about the study's objectives. As Warren (2001) suggests, examining white racial identity without preemptive bias can yield more authentic insights into how white LGBTQ individuals navigate their privilege within these spaces.

Second, the iterative methodology I adopted in my study enhances the capacity to fill gaps in representation and understanding by continuously refining data collection and analysis techniques. This adaptive approach ensures that the study remains responsive to

emerging findings and evolving societal contexts surrounding LGBTQ and racial identities. Such methodological flexibility is crucial for examining contemporary issues subject to rapid cultural shifts, allowing the study to maintain relevance and comprehensiveness as new information surfaces. This iterative process aligns with Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) emphasis on continually reassessing research methods to uphold validity and reliability in dynamic research environments.

Third, my study effectively captures the multifaceted nature of white racial privilege and its impact on LGBTQ communities by incorporating diverse qualitative methods. These methods, including in-depth interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignette exercises, offer a holistic view of how intersecting identities shape social dynamics in urban postsecondary institutions. As Denman (2021) and Perry (2021) highlight, qualitative methods are particularly well-suited for exploring complex intersections of race and LGBTQ identities, enabling researchers to uncover the underlying social, cultural, and historical contexts that inform these experiences.

Fourth, my study's emphasis on engaging participants through direct methods such as interviews and autobiographies addresses the need for more personal narratives in the literature on white privilege within LGBTQ spaces. By allowing participants to articulate their racial and LGBTQ identities in their own words, the study illuminates the nuanced ways in which white privilege is maintained and contested within these communities. This focus on personal narratives aligns with the recommendations from Harris and Leonardo (2018) and Terrance (2021), who advocate for more research that amplifies the voices of marginalized groups within the LGBTQ community.

Fifth, my study's strategic recruitment and site selection further address research gaps by ensuring a geographically diverse sample from urban postsecondary institutions across the United States. By selecting participants from various urban settings, the study captures a wide range of experiences and perspectives, which is critical for understanding the variability in how white privilege manifests across different contexts. This strategic choice enhances the study's generalizability and relevance to broader discussions on equity and inclusion within urban education.

Furthermore, my study's focus on the practical implications of its findings for policy and education directly responds to calls for more actionable research in this area. By highlighting the need for policies that specifically address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ students of color, the study enriches academic discourse. It offers concrete recommendations for fostering more inclusive and equitable educational environments. This aligns with the earlier discussion on the importance of shaping institutional policies that challenge privilege and promote diversity, as Shoaie (2021) and Weaver-Hightower (2020) emphasized.

Finally, by integrating critical whiteness and queer theories, my study provides a robust framework for analyzing how white racial identity is articulated and managed by white gay cisgender males. This theoretical approach contributes to the broader discourse on racial privilege and its implications within urban educational settings (Cabrera et al. 2017; McCann & Monaghan 2019). My study's findings are poised to inform the development of targeted interventions and policy reforms that aim to create more inclusive and supportive environments for all LGBTQ students, ultimately addressing the

persistent influence of white privilege in educational settings (Jorgenson 2020; Pryor 2017).

In conclusion, my study significantly advances our understanding of white racial privilege within the LGBTQ community at urban postsecondary institutions. Through its innovative methodological approach, diverse data collection techniques, and focus on practical implications, my study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play. It offers valuable insights for advancing equity and inclusion in educational settings.

Methods

To explore how white gay cisgender males comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBT identities across different contexts within UPSEs, I engaged 15 participants in processes of qualitative interviewing, creation of racial autobiographies, and vignette exercises. I aimed to understand how these individuals articulate and perceive their racial and LGBTQ identities within urban educational settings. I employed a single-anonymized approach and iterative methodology, which Warren (2001) particularly endorses for studying the nature of white racial identity.

Research Questions

Guided by Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory, I explored the following research questions to investigate the complex interplay of whiteness, sexuality, and privilege among participants:

1. How do white gay male students articulate and describe their racial identity? How do they perceive and articulate the benefits or leverage of their racial identity and privilege within the LGBT community?
2. How do participants articulate and describe their experiences of benefiting from and/or leveraging their LGBT identity within the institution?
3. To account for shifts in white individuals' consciousness regarding race and white identity topics, how do participants respond to and describe the impact of exposure to researcher-introduced artifacts documenting the experiences of LGBT students of Color in post-secondary education settings?

Together, these theoretical frameworks shaped the formulation of my research questions and guided the methodological choices in the study. They allowed for a comprehensive

exploration of how white gay cisgender males comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBT identities across different contexts within UPSEs. The study aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of race, privilege, and identity dynamics in UPSE settings by critically examining these intersections.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Whiteness Theory

Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) examines whiteness as a social construct that privileges white people and maintains systemic racial inequalities (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; hooks, 1992; Lipsitz, 1995). CWT aims to make visible the often-invisible structures that normalize whiteness and render it the default racial category (Frankenberg, 1993). By interrogating whiteness, CWT exposes how it operates as an unmarked norm, allowing white individuals to benefit from racial privileges unconsciously (McIntosh, 1988).

CWT emerged from Critical Race Theory (CRT), which originated in the 1970s and 1980s as scholars sought to examine how law and legal institutions perpetuate racial inequalities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). While CRT focuses on systemic racism and the experiences of people of color, CWT shifts the lens to analyze whiteness itself as a racial category with associated privileges (Mills, 1997). Scholars like Peggy McIntosh (1988) introduced the concept of the "invisible knapsack" of white privilege, highlighting the unearned advantages that white people carry. Since then, several scholars have expanded upon the privileges associated with whiteness.

CWT posits that whiteness is not simply about skin color but involves cultural, structural, and institutional dimensions that uphold racial hierarchies (Leonardo, 2002). It

challenges white individuals to recognize their positionality and how they contribute to or can dismantle systemic racism (Allen, 2004). By making whiteness visible and subject to critique, CWT aims to disrupt the normalization of white dominance and promote racial justice (Garner, 2007). CWT informed the first research question for my study, which was to account for how participants may or may not be aware of their whiteness and how it influences their experiences and interactions.

CWT also informed methodological choices regarding the use of a single-anonymized design. By not initially disclosing the study's specific focus on race, I was able to explore how participants naturally engaged with their racial identity without the influence of preconceptions about the research objectives. This approach allowed unconscious biases and privileges inherent in whiteness to surface organically during our interactions. This design aligns with CWT's goal of revealing the often invisible and unacknowledged aspects of whiteness that perpetuate systemic inequalities (Warren, 2001). By creating a setting where participants could express themselves freely without the pressure of social desirability or the desire to present themselves in a particular light, the single-anonymized design provided more profound insights into how white gay cisgender males navigate their racial identity within UPSEs.

Finally, CWT shaped my decision to use racial autobiographies as a crucial methodology component. This approach aligns with CWT's emphasis on making whiteness visible and subject to critical scrutiny. By employing racial autobiographies, I encouraged deep self-examination of racial experiences through participants' written reflections, potentially revealing implicit biases and privileges they may not have previously acknowledged (Gooden, 2021; DiAngelo, 2018). This method allowed

participants to explore their own racial identities in-depth, examining how their whiteness intersects with their LGBT identities within the context of UPSEs. Through this reflective practice, participants could uncover the subtle ways in which racial privilege influences their experiences and interactions, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how whiteness operates at individual and systemic levels in educational settings. The use of racial autobiographies enriched the data collected and facilitated a transformative process for participants to become more critically aware of their positionality within structures of privilege and oppression.

Queer Theory

Queer Theory emerged in the early 1990s, influenced by feminist theory, post-structuralism, and LGBTQ studies. It challenges normative constructs of gender and sexuality, emphasizing their fluidity and socially constructed nature (Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990). Queer Theory critiques heteronormativity—the assumption that heterosexuality is the default or normal sexual orientation—and seeks to deconstruct binary categories of gender and sexuality (Warner, 1993). Queer Theory interrogates the categories that define sexual and gender identities, arguing that they are not fixed or inherent but are constructed through societal discourses and power relations (Foucault, 1978). Judith Butler's (1990) concept of "gender performativity" suggests that gender is enacted through repeated behaviors and is not a stable identity. Queer Theory thus seeks to destabilize fixed notions of identity, allowing for a multiplicity of expressions and challenging the binary oppositions of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. Queer Theory also examines how norms around sexuality and gender intersect with other identities, such as race, class, and nationality (Cohen, 1997). It critiques the

marginalization within LGBTQ communities, recognizing that experiences differ based on intersecting identities (Anzaldúa, 1987). By embracing fluidity and resisting categorizations, Queer Theory advocates for a more inclusive understanding of identity.

Queer Theory informed my second research question by providing a critical framework to assess how white gay cisgender men articulate and benefit from their LGBTQ identity within UPSE institutions. Recognizing that Queer Theory challenges normative constructs of sexuality and gender, it enabled me to delve into the complexities and diversities of queer experiences among the participants. By applying Queer Theory, I explored how these individuals navigate their sexual identities with societal norms that often privilege heteronormativity and marginalize queer identities. This theoretical lens allowed me to examine how participants might leverage their LGBTQ identity to gain social or institutional advantages within UPSEs while also contending with the constraints imposed by traditional gender roles and expectations. Furthermore, Queer Theory facilitated an understanding of how their sexual identities intersect with their racial and gender privileges, shedding light on the nuanced ways they experience both marginalization and dominance. Through this approach, I was able to critically analyze how white gay cisgender men negotiate their identities within institutional policies, practices, and cultures, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of power dynamics within LGBT communities in urban educational settings.

Queer Theory also informed my methodological choices by emphasizing the importance of fluidity, reflexivity, and adaptability in research design. Recognizing that identities are not fixed but are continuously constructed and reconstructed, I adopted a flexible research methodology that allowed for adjustments based on emerging findings.

This approach aligns with Queer Theory's challenge to normative structures and its embrace of non-linear, dynamic understandings of identity (Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996). By remaining open to evolving themes and being responsive to participants' experiences, I could capture the complexities and nuances of how white gay cisgender men navigate their intersecting identities within UPSEs.

For instance, as participants shared their stories, new themes emerged that were not initially anticipated. Instead of adhering rigidly to a predefined research protocol, I adapted my methods to explore these emerging areas of interest more deeply. This included modifying interview questions, incorporating additional reflective activities, and allowing participants to guide parts of the conversation based on what they felt was most significant to their experiences. Such adaptability is reflective of Queer Theory's emphasis on resisting fixed categories and embracing the fluidity of identity and experience (Anzaldúa, 1999). Moreover, this iterative approach enabled me to disrupt traditional power dynamics often present in research settings. By engaging with participants as co-constructors of knowledge, I acknowledged their agency and the validity of their perspectives, which is a crucial tenet of Queer Theory (Sedgwick, 1990). This collaborative process enriched the data collected and fostered a research environment that honored the participants' voices and stories in their authentic forms.

Finally, Queer Theory also influenced my data collection methods by emphasizing the importance of capturing the fluid, non-normative, and intersectional aspects of participants' identities. I allowed participants to express their unique narratives through semi-structured interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignettes. This aligns with Queer Theory's focus on individual experiences and the deconstruction of normative

assumptions about sexuality and gender (Halperin, 1995). By employing open-ended questions and allowing participants to steer the conversation, I encouraged them to share stories that might challenge traditional categorizations and binaries (Butler, 1990). The use of vignettes enabled participants to engage with hypothetical scenarios that reflect complex social dynamics, prompting them to reflect on their positions within systems of privilege and oppression. This method is consistent with Queer Theory's goal of unsettling established narratives and exploring the intersections of identity, power, and society (Sedgwick, 1990).

Additionally, incorporating racial autobiographies allowed participants to delve into their personal histories concerning race and identity, fostering a deeper self-reflection that Queer Theory advocates for in challenging normative constructs (Anzaldúa, 1987). By combining these methods, my data collection process became a space where participants could critically examine and articulate their identities outside conventional frameworks, enriching the depth and authenticity of the collected data. I effectively integrated Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory to analyze the complex intersectionality of race and LGBTQ identities. Both theories emphasize the importance of intersecting identities, and I explored how being white and gay influences participants' experiences, shedding light on how racial privilege intersects with sexual orientation within the LGBTQ community (Crenshaw, 1989). CWT deconstructs the normative invisibility of whiteness, while Queer Theory challenges heteronormativity and gender binaries. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for examining how societal norms impact the participants' identities and experiences (Hill Collins, 2000).

Methodologically, I applied these theories synergistically. The single-anonymized approach aligns with both CWT and Queer Theory by allowing natural expression of racial and sexual identities without initial prompting, thus revealing underlying assumptions and privileges (Warren, 2001). The fluidity emphasized in Queer Theory, and the ongoing critical reflection encouraged in CWT are reflected in my iterative research methods (Butler, 1993; Leonardo, 2009). Furthermore, the use of racial autobiographies and in-depth interviews encouraged participants to examine their own identities critically. This fosters greater awareness of how their whiteness and queerness shape their interactions and perceptions, promoting a deeper understanding of privilege and marginalization (Kendall, 2006).

By intertwining Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory, I successfully explored the nuanced experiences of white gay males at urban post-secondary education institutions (UPSEs), illuminating how racial privilege and LGBTQ identity intersect within urban educational contexts. My research methodologies encouraged deep reflection and candid expression, providing valuable insights into the complexities of identity formation, privilege, and community dynamics. The interaction of CWT and Queer Theory enriched the study by highlighting intersectionality, emphasizing how multiple identities intersect to shape individual experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). This approach challenged normative assumptions by questioning the default status of whiteness and heteronormativity, thereby uncovering embedded biases within participants' perspectives. Moreover, it promoted critical self-examination, encouraging participants to reflect on their privileges and biases and fostering greater awareness and potential for social change.

Research Design

In this qualitative study, I explore how white gay cisgender males comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBT identities across different contexts within UPSEs. I engaged 15 participants who completed a series of interviews, wrote a racial autobiography, and participated in a vignette exercise. This participant sample size of 15 provided data saturation (Boddy, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2016), although Boddy (2016) suggests that in-depth qualitative research could be equally instructive with a smaller sample size of 3-6 participants. I employed a single-anonymized research approach to establish a baseline understanding of how participants engaged with their racial identity during the first two interviews. In this approach, participants were not aware of the primary focus of the study until a specific disclosure point occurred after the first two interviews. This strategy of utilizing a single-anonymized approach was particularly appropriate, as articulated above, due to the nature of racial identity, primarily white racial identity, as articulated by Warren (2001).

By employing a single-anonymized research design—where participants are not initially informed that the study focuses on race, I aimed to mitigate potential biases that arise from this invisibility and defensiveness. This approach allows participants to naturally express their experiences and perceptions without the influence of social desirability or the anxiety accompanying explicit discussions about race. It reduces the likelihood of participants altering their responses to align with perceived expectations or to avoid discomfort.

Warren (2001) emphasizes that bringing whiteness into conscious awareness requires careful navigation, as white individuals may resist acknowledging their racial

position and its associated privileges. The single-anonymized design addresses this by creating a research environment where participants are likelier to reveal authentic insights into how they understand and navigate their racial identity. It enables the exploration of white racial identity in a less confrontational way and is more conducive to honest self-reflection. This methodological choice is crucial for uncovering the often-unspoken dynamics of whiteness that influence participants' experiences within urban post-secondary education settings.

I also utilized an iterative approach to apply qualitative methodology, given the multifaceted and evolving nature of the intersectionality of these white racial and LGBTQ identities. That is, I continuously refined my methods, data collection, and analysis, incorporating new findings and adjusting the scope of the study as necessary. This approach allowed me to accommodate and address potential gaps in representation and understanding by periodically reassessing my methods and data. Additionally, as societal understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ and racial identities are dynamic and context-driven, this iterative approach enabled me to adapt to new information and cultural shifts—an essential strategy for studying contemporary topics subject to rapid change. Through iterative research, I was also able to refine and improve research instruments, data collection techniques, and analytical methods, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of my findings and ensuring a more accurate representation of the studied population's experiences and perspectives. Moreover, this approach promoted incorporating feedback from participants (member checking) and peers, as recommended by Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) and Thomas (2017). By revising research methods and approaches based on this feedback, I could better address the concerns and insights

of the community I engaged in the dissertation, leading to more meaningful and potentially impactful results.

Scholars have demonstrated the importance of qualitative methodology for researching the intersection of race and LGBTQ identities (Fine, 2006; Fotopoulou, 2012; Weaver-Hightower, 2020; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008) and building an understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives of participants from racial and LGBTQ communities. Qualitative methods were well-suited for exploring the complexities of intersecting racial and LGBTQ identities, allowing for in-depth analysis and gathering rich, descriptive data. These methods were particularly effective in capturing the diverse experiences of individuals, enabling participants to share their unique stories, feelings, and perspectives in their own words (Bowleg, 2008; Hauge, 2021; Moses II, 2022; Smith, 2012). Furthermore, qualitative research was invaluable for understanding intersectionality, as it helped uncover how race and LGBTQ identities intersected and mutually shaped each other, providing insights into the complexities of these relationships and how they manifested in people's lives (Denman, 2021; Perry, 2021; Swank, 2022; Terrance, 2021).

Qualitative methods enabled me to delve into the social, cultural, and historical contexts where participants experienced the intersections of their white racial and LGBTQ identities. Such contexts included institutional or other factors influencing participants' experiences and the challenges and opportunities encountered by these individuals (Denman, 2021; Foste & Irwin, 2020; Lange et al., 2019; Shand-Lubbers, 2022). Additionally, I applied qualitative methods to explore participants' identity formation and negotiation, examining how individuals shaped and negotiated their racial

and LGBTQ identities, including the various challenges, coping strategies, and sources of resilience they employed (Case, 2012; Dawkins, 2012; Goertz, 2022; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014; Russell & Horn, 2017; Shand-Lubbers, 2022; Shoaie, 2021; Warner & Shields, 2013; Yarhouse, 2012).

The adaptability of qualitative methods in data collection, analysis, and interpretation allowed me to tailor my approach to my participants' unique needs and contexts. This led to more precise and nuanced findings sensitive to the complexities of race and LGBTQ identities. In researching the intersection of race and LGBTQ identities, qualitative methodology enabled a comprehensive exploration of the diverse experiences, perspectives, and contexts that shaped these intersecting identities, contributing to a deeper understanding of the issues faced by these individuals.

Central to my methods was my recognition of participants' perspectives as invaluable. Their lived experiences and the context in which they occur were critical to answering my research questions:

1. How did white gay male students articulate and describe their racial identity, and how did they perceive and articulate the benefits or leverage of their racial identity and identity privilege within the LGBTQ urban community (RQ1)?
2. How did participants articulate and describe benefiting and/or leveraging their LGBTQ identity at an urban institution (RQ2)?
3. How did participants respond to and describe the impact of exposure to researcher-introduced artifacts that documented the experiences of LGBTQ students of color in post-secondary education institutions (RQ3)?

These questions were designed to engage the participants' understanding of individual identities concerning race and LGBTQ status. All interviews were conducted via Zoom, which allowed me to significantly expand my prospective research site list and candidate pool with minimal impact on the integrity of the methodology (Bertrand & Bourdeau, 2010; Glassmeyer & Dibbs, 2012; Lobe et al., 2020).

I selected interviews because they were an effective research method for exploring the complex and multifaceted topic of race (Archibald et al., 2019; Bertrand & Bourdeau 2010; Fotopoulou, 2012; Lobe et al., 2020; Smith, 2012). Interviews enabled the collection of rich, in-depth, and nuanced information. This method was precious when studying race, as it facilitated understanding individual and collective experiences, perceptions, and attitudes often not captured through quantitative methods or secondary data. Interviews also allowed me to explore how race intersected with other social factors such as gender (Weaver-Hightower, 2020), ethnicity (Hyson, 2021; Najarro, 2021; Shoaie, 2021), and intersectionality (Foste & Irwin, 2020; Guida, 2020; Hutchings, 2021; Perry, 2021; Weston, 2021), providing a more comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics at play. Conducting interviews enabled me to engage directly with participants, creating an environment where they could share their experiences, feelings, and insights. This open and interactive approach facilitated the uncovering of hidden or tacit knowledge that might otherwise have remained unexplored in my examination of race, sexuality, sex, and urban environments. By employing iterative and reflexive interview techniques, I was able to delve deeper into the participants' lived experiences. According to Castillo-Montoya (2016), the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework emphasizes the importance of aligning interview questions with research objectives, thus

enhancing the depth and richness of the data collected. By refining my interview protocol following Castillo-Montoya's guidelines, I ensured that my questions were culturally responsive and conducive to eliciting meaningful insights from participants.

Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2016) highlight the significance of qualitative interviews in capturing the complexities of human experiences, particularly in studies involving social identities such as race and sexuality. They argue that open-ended, semi-structured interviews allow researchers to explore participants' perspectives in their own words, uncovering nuances that structured methods might miss. By adopting this qualitative approach, I was able to illuminate the lived experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds, giving voice to marginalized or underrepresented communities whose narratives are often overlooked.

Warner and Shields (2013) emphasize the importance of considering the intersections of sexuality, gender, and race in psychological research. Their work on the political psychology of identity integration suggests that individuals navigate complex social identities that intersect and interact in multifaceted ways. By incorporating their insights into my study design, I was better equipped to identify patterns, trends, and discrepancies in how race affects social, economic, and political outcomes within the context of sexuality and gender. This comprehensive understanding enabled me to capture the layered experiences of participants, shedding light on the systemic factors influencing their lives.

By deeply engaging in these scholarly works, I enhanced the methodological rigor of my study. Castillo-Montoya's (2016) IPR Framework guided my development of a systematic and flexible interview protocol, allowing for rich data collection while

remaining focused on the research questions. Creswell and Poth's (2016) emphasis on the importance of qualitative inquiry provided a foundational understanding of approaching the research design, data collection, and analysis to honor the complexity of participants' experiences. Additionally, incorporating Warner and Shields' (2013) insights on identity integration was particularly crucial for examining how participants perceive and articulate their identities at the intersection of race, sexuality, and gender. Their work underscores the necessity of acknowledging the multifaceted nature of identity and how these intersecting aspects can influence an individual's experiences within social and political contexts. This perspective allowed me to approach the data with a sensitivity to how participants' identities are not isolated but interconnected, affecting their navigation of urban environments and institutional structures.

Integrating these theoretical and methodological insights better equipped me to identify nuanced patterns, trends, and discrepancies in how race affects social, economic, and political outcomes. Combining a refined interview protocol, a qualitative inquiry framework, and a focus on identity intersectionality enabled a comprehensive exploration of the participants' lived realities. This approach enriched the data and ensured that the voices of marginalized or underrepresented communities were heard and accurately represented in the study. Interviews also allowed me to quickly adapt and refine the research process, responding to emerging themes and adjusting questions accordingly (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). By tailoring interview questions to the unique experiences of each participant, I could capture the complexities of race-related issues, such as systemic racism, discrimination, and identity formation, all of which are multidimensional aspects

of race and racial dynamics in society (Petty et al., 2012; Smith, 2012; Weaver-Hightower, 2020).

Research Setting

To establish the boundaries for my study, I focused on post-secondary institutions located in urban-intensive and urban-emergent settings (Milner IV, 2012) throughout the continental United States. I utilized the urban designation as a critical criterion to select research sites, relying on data from United States Census (2020) tables to evaluate prospective sites against established urban benchmarks. In my evaluation, I considered ten specific variables as outlined by Welsh and Swain (2020): total population, median household income, percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher, employment rate, percentage of the population without health insurance, total number of households, racial composition (specifically the White population), and percentage of the population living in poverty.

To ensure a robust classification of urban sites, I adopted the urban emergent and urban-intensive classifications proposed by Milner (2012). These classifications included four urban-emergent cities—Nashville, Austin, Columbus, and Charlotte—and four urban-intensive cities—New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. These cities served as benchmarks for my urban classification across the ten variables. For each variable, I established a set of acceptance criteria that prospective sites must meet in at least five of the ten categories to be considered potential research locations.

Recruitment and Participant Eligibility

Recruitment Procedures

To recruit participants, I employed three different methods across two platforms. Initially, I sought to generate interest through the social media platform Facebook by leveraging my membership in several groups, including:

- Queer PhD Network
- Whites Against Racial Inequality
- LGBTQ Research and Researchers in Higher Education
- Critical Educators Social Justice
- Trans PhD Network
- Student Affairs and Higher Education Professionals

However, this initial strategy yielded a limited response, prompting me to pivot my approach to Facebook by utilizing paid advertisements for recruitment. I strategically targeted these paid ads to individuals in the United States aged 18-24, identified as male, and currently enrolled in college. This targeted advertising resulted in 55,474 users viewing the study advertisement, with 940 individuals engaging with the ad to review the Informed Consent information.

In addition to social media recruitment, I contacted contacts from UPSEs appearing in the National Listing of LGBTQ-Friendly Colleges and Universities (campusprideindex.org). Specifically, I filtered this list to include UPSEs in large and medium-sized cities (with populations of 100,000 or more) and sent campus recruitment notifications to 49 UPSEs.

Participant Eligibility Appraisal

Following the outreach and advertisement efforts, I evaluated an initial pool of 179 subjects who expressed interest in participating in the study by completing the interest form. However, I excluded 44 subjects who did not complete the intake process and identified seven duplicate responses, resulting in 128 participants remaining for further appraisal. I assessed these potential participants against eligibility criteria related to identity, including race, sexual orientation, and sex. Given the specific research questions posed in this study, I excluded individuals who did not identify as white, male, or gay, disqualifying 65 potential participants.

For the remaining 63 potential participants, I classified their post-secondary education institution as urban-intensive, urban-emergent, or non-urban based on criteria established by Welsh and Swain (2020). Further examining the variables in setting selection, these variables have been identified in prior research (Grant & Zwier, 2014; Milner IV & Lomotey, 2013; Welsh & Swain, 2020) as indicators that impact local populations, resulting in increased demand for humanitarian services, concentrations of racial diversity, and insufficient public service resourcing. Utilizing these markers, I identified a final prospective pool of 52 participants.

Following additional eligibility notifications and outreach efforts, 15 individuals agreed to participate in the study, with ten ultimately completing all aspects of the research inquiry. Notably, the final sample was geographically diverse, representing participants from seven continental states and one district, encompassing all regional time zones within the United States. I also reviewed the participants' current educational engagement, which included three graduate students, four active undergraduate students,

and three recent graduates (within the past two years), all aged 19-24. It is important to note that all participants identified as gay, male, and white; within this group, three identified as nonbinary, while the remaining seven identified as men.

Study Participants

Alex is a 20-year-old white cisgender gay male who uses he/they pronouns. Growing up in a conservative religious family influenced his identity and coming-out process. Initially identifying as bisexual, Alex navigated his environment cautiously before fully embracing his gay identity. His experiences include activism around racial justice and LGBTQ rights, emphasizing the importance of community in higher education as a safe space for LGBTQ individuals. Alex has a history of engagement with racial justice movements like Black Lives Matter. Ben, in his early 20s, is a white gay cisgender male who came out at age 15, facilitated by a relationship with a senior in high school. Despite growing up in a conservative area, he found a liberal pocket of support among friends and teachers, shaping his positive coming-out experience. Ben's early engagement with the LGBTQ community and consistent peer support framed his understanding of his identity.

Chris, also in his early 20s, is a white gay cisgender male who described a relatively smooth coming-out experience during high school. He emphasized the importance of social support, mainly through LGBTQ organizations at his university, which helped him build connections and solidify his sense of identity. However, Chris has struggled with internalized stereotypes within the gay community, especially around body image and masculinity, which he shared as affecting his sense of belonging at times.

David is an early 20s white gay cisgender male who described his coming-out experience as gradual, beginning in middle school, but that he did not fully embrace his identity until later in high school. Growing up in a conservative environment led to internal conflicts about his sexuality. Eventually, David found a supportive community at his university, allowing him to explore his identity further. In his mid-20s, Ethan is a white gay cisgender neurodivergent male whose experience centers around the intersections of social class and identity within his community. He noted the stark contrast between the affluent student population and the lower-income community surrounding his university. This awareness shaped his perspective as he navigated being part of two different social worlds. Despite challenging dynamics, Ethan found acceptance in friend groups primarily composed of fellow LGBTQ and neurodivergent individuals.

Finn is an early 20s white gay cisgender male who grew up in a small Alaskan town with a traditional family background; his father was in the military and discouraged "gay behavior." Finn eventually came out in college and described Alaska as an open and accepting place regarding LGBTQ identity. Although he did not initially engage much with LGBTQ resources like campus centers, he described his university environment as generally accepting.

In his mid-20s, George is a white gay cisgender male who grew up in a conservative region. He faced challenges during his coming-out process but eventually found support through university networks and the broader LGBTQ community. George emphasized the importance of finding supportive groups in college to navigate his identity.

Henry is a mid-20s white gay cisgender male who experienced difficulties navigating his gay identity, especially concerning familial acceptance. Despite facing some homophobia, he found comfort and community in his university's LGBTQ support system. His narrative reflects the challenges of managing traditional family values with his evolving identity in a predominantly conservative space.

Isaac, an early 20s white gay cisgender male, reflected on high school as a time of internal struggle, realizing his sexual identity but not fully embracing it until later. The college provided a more open space for self-expression, but Isaac acknowledged difficulties confronting homophobia within conservative peer groups. His experience is marked by gradual acceptance, with university life facilitating growth and presenting challenges in intersecting identities.

Jack is an early 20s white gay cisgender male who gradually came out during his late teens. Growing up in a relatively liberal community, he experienced a seamless transition into college, finding acceptance and support. Involvement in LGBTQ organizations at his university further shaped his understanding of his identity. Jack faced fewer familial challenges, allowing for smoother integration of his sexual identity.

Kevin, in his early 20s, is a white gay cisgender male who described a smooth coming-out process with no significant adverse family reactions. While his parents did not openly discuss his gay identity, they also did not express disapproval, which was a relief. Kevin found support primarily within his friend group, which is mostly LGBTQ individuals, and has navigated his identity with ease. However, he feels disconnected from the faculty and staff at his university, describing them as removed from his experience.

Liam, a mid-20s white gay cisgender male, described a supportive university environment where LGBTQ issues were acknowledged, creating an inclusive space. He found campus LGBTQ resources valuable, especially the safe spaces provided by the university. Liam emphasized that his college experience differed from what might have been in conservative settings and shared that he felt fortunate to attend a progressive institution.

Michael, also in his mid-20s, is a white gay cisgender male who had a positive coming-out experience with supportive family and friends despite some cultural tensions he referenced. University life continued this support by welcoming faculty and peers. While Michael encountered societal pressures related to gender expression and body image within the gay community, his overall college experience was positive.

Noah, in his early 20s, is a white gay cisgender male who feels secure and supported at his university. He particularly appreciates the administration's progressive stance on LGBTQ issues. He feels respected even in a politically diverse environment and values his urban university's efforts to ensure nondiscrimination.

Oliver, an early 20s white gay cisgender male, described the LGBTQ community at his university as somewhat isolated from broader campus culture. He found support among older peers, professors, and campus workers but noted that the administration often inadequately handled homophobia incidents. Despite this, Oliver found solace within LGBTQ circles that fostered a robust internal community.

Paul, in his early 20s, is a white gay cisgender male who highlighted that while his university promoted diversity, administrative support for LGBTQ students was lacking, and homophobia incidents were sometimes minimized. However, Paul received

support from adjunct professors, upper-class students, and staff like cafeteria workers. He expressed disillusionment with the institution's inaction on diversity issues.

Quentin, a mid-20s white gay cisgender male, grew up in a small conservative town, making coming out more challenging. His university experience was supportive, and he found acceptance among his peers. Quentin's identity was shaped by his sexuality and activism within the LGBTQ community, becoming involved in campus organizations advocating for LGBTQ rights and finding empowerment.

Ryan, in his early 20s, is a white gay cisgender male who experienced strong university support, fostering an inclusive atmosphere. His involvement in LGBTQ campus groups was vital to his social life and growth. Despite this, Ryan felt pressured to conform to stereotypes within the gay community, like body image expectations, leading to occasional feelings of inadequacy.

Sam is a 22-year-old white gay cisgender male who described his university experience as positive, with strong faculty support and a vibrant LGBTQ community. He found the LGBTQ resource center a safe space for advice and friendships. While facing occasional microaggressions, Sam felt his university was progressive in addressing LGBTQ issues, leading to growing self-acceptance through campus involvement.

Thomas, in his early 20s, is a white gay cisgender male who felt that while his university had a visible LGBTQ presence, greater visibility and blanket acceptance were needed. He experienced judgment from peers in his early college years, leading him to seek validation through academic and professional pursuits. Thomas advises new LGBTQ students to build supportive networks and find allies among faculty and staff, as peers may not always be accepting.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how white gay cisgender men comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBT identities across different contexts within urban post-secondary education (UPSE), I conducted three rounds of semi-structured interviews (see Appendix II). The first interview introduced the participants and explored their journeys to UPSE, delving into their preconceived notions, motivations, and understandings of the UPSE environment. The second interview examined their gay male identity, focusing on identity development, coming-out processes, and experiences within the LGBT community and the UPSE climate. The third interview investigated the intersection of their racial and gay male identities, exploring how they navigate racial privilege and understand its manifestation within their LGBT experiences and the broader UPSE community.

Racial Identity. I conducted two single-anonymized interviews with each participant, lasting 30 to 115 minutes. The initial interview focused on building rapport with participants and exploring their experiences before attending their respective UPSEs. During this interview, I discussed family life, high school experiences, and community involvement, which allowed me to establish how each participant contextualized their racial experiences (Cofield, 2021). This approach directly addressed RQ1. I also inquired about each participant's decision-making process in selecting their UPSE to uncover the primary factors influencing their choice. To address RQ2 and RQ3, I further probed their experiences while attending their UPSE, gathering insights into campus culture, community connections, and social engagement. This approach enabled

me to understand the participants' racial identity context when they described or engaged in discussions that were not explicitly focused on identity (Chulani, 2019).

Throughout the interviews, I utilized probing techniques and rephrased participants' responses to demonstrate active listening. This encouraged them to expand on their experiences or salient points and provided clarity where needed. Additionally, during the single-anonymized interviews, I consciously avoided using racial language in my prompts unless introduced by the participants, maintaining the integrity of the study's approach.

Identity Usage. I continued with a similar interview format for the non-single-anonymized interviews, which focused on how participants navigated their racial and gay male identities and processed the racial autobiography exercise. This led to additional interviews where participants were aware of the research focus on understanding racial and LGBTQ identities. These sessions allowed me to delve deeper into participants' racial identities (RQ1), their racial experiences at UPSEs (RQ2), and the interplay between racial and LGBTQ identities (RQ2). I consistently asked clarifying questions, particularly around the usage of terms like “diverse” and the context provided by the participants. I also maintained a calm and even tone throughout, reassuring participants that “there are no right or wrong answers to the questions,” which enhanced the authenticity and openness of the interviews (Brown & Danaher, 2019).

Navigating Multiple Identities. Following the same format and approach as the earlier interviews, I conducted a third round of interviews, primarily focusing on RQ2. This round centered around how participants navigated their racial and gay male identities. This methodological approach was instrumental in exploring how multiple

identities intersected and influenced one another, providing insights into the synergistic effects of racial and LGBTQ identities on participants' life experiences and their sense of self during their time at UPSEs.

Racial Autobiography

A racial autobiography provides a first-person narrative of each participant's life, offering a comprehensive exploration of their experiences, emotions, and thoughts related to race (Crass, 2010; Gooden, 2021; Taylor et al., 2008). Through reflection, participants can uncover implicit biases, privileges, or disadvantages they may not have previously recognized. I instructed each participant to write a racial autobiography following the study guide provided (Appendix III). The autobiographies ranged from 29 to 261 lines and were submitted electronically via email as Microsoft Word documents. I used this introspective exercise to gain valuable insights into how race shaped participants' identities (RQ1), social interactions (RQ2), and community dynamics (RQ2). These insights afforded me a nuanced understanding of racial dynamics within their lived experiences (Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Sealey-Ruiz, 2011).

Racial autobiographies also served as a powerful data source for qualitative research by providing a unique perspective into participants' lived experiences. By analyzing multiple autobiographies, I identified commonalities and differences across various social, cultural, and historical contexts, deepening my understanding of race's complex and multifaceted nature and its intersection with other social factors such as gender, class, and nationality. Additionally, racial autobiographies inspired participants to reflect on their own racial experiences, fostering broader societal conversations about

race and its implications (Terrance, 2021). In this way, autobiographies contributed to my study and aligned with the broader goals of social justice, equity, and understanding.

Vignettes

To gain further insight into identity usage, I employed vignettes—an influential research method particularly effective for studying complex or sensitive topics such as race, moral dilemmas, or social norms (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Hughey et al., 2017). These brief scenarios, carefully crafted by the researcher, can offer valuable insights into participants' attitudes, beliefs, and decision-making processes. I constructed eight realistic and authentic hypothetical scenarios using information gathered during the single-anonymized interviews and following established theoretical frameworks. These vignettes enabled me to explore participants' responses to hypothetical situations, allowing for investigating topics that might be difficult or ethically challenging to study directly (Hughes & Huby, 2004; Slead et al., 2002). By presenting controlled scenarios, I examined how participants reacted to specific factors or conditions without exposing them to actual risks or harm. This method allowed for data collection on a wide range of potential experiences and reactions, providing a rich understanding of the complexities and nuances involved in white racial accountability (Najarro, 2021; Terrance, 2021).

An additional advantage of using vignettes was their ability to minimize social desirability bias (Burstin et al., 1980). When participants are asked direct questions about their beliefs or behaviors, they may feel compelled to respond in ways that align with societal expectations or norms. In contrast, vignettes offer a detachment between the participant and the scenario, enabling them to express their thoughts and opinions more candidly (O'Dell et al., 2012; Torres, 2009). This often results in a more accurate

representation of participants' genuine beliefs and attitudes, which is particularly important when exploring sensitive or controversial topics. During the vignette exercise, I read each scenario aloud to the participants and simultaneously posted the vignette text into the Zoom chat for their review. This dual delivery method allowed participants to process the information in real-time while reflecting on the scenario. Each vignette was carefully curated from multiple participants' experiences, using fictitious names and leveraging theoretical frameworks to elicit deep and meaningful responses.

Vignettes also provided opportunities for cross-cultural comparisons, as they could be easily adapted to different cultural contexts (Torres, 2009). By examining how individuals from various regional backgrounds responded to the same scenario, I could identify similarities and differences in attitudes, beliefs, and decision-making processes. This comparative approach offered valuable insights into the role of regional factors in shaping individuals' perspectives and experiences, thereby deepening my understanding of the research topic across diverse settings (Hughey et al., 2017; Skilling & Stylianides, 2020; Xu & Xie, 2016).

Participant Attrition and Disclosure of Study Focus

While conducting this study on how white gay cisgender males comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBTQ identities within urban post-secondary education (UPSE) settings, I observed that some participants began the study and completed the initial interviews but chose to discontinue participation once I disclosed that the study's focus was on race. In this section, I explore potential reasons for this attrition, grounded in relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, and discuss the implications for the research process. One possible reason for participants' withdrawal is

their discomfort with racial topics. When I disclosed that the study centered on race, it may have induced unease among participants, leading them to withdraw. According to DiAngelo (2018), white individuals often experience "white fragility," a state of heightened defensiveness when confronted with racial issues. This fragility stems from a lack of racial stamina and an inability to tolerate racial stress. Participants may have felt unequipped to engage in discussions about race, leading to avoidance behaviors, including withdrawing from the study.

Fear of being perceived as racist might have also contributed to their decision to discontinue participation. Participants may have been concerned about how I would interpret their responses, fearing that they might inadvertently say something construed as racist or insensitive. This anxiety can prompt individuals to disengage to protect their self-image (Sue et al., 2007). Social desirability bias may play a role here, where participants avoid situations where they might not present themselves favorably (Grimm, 2010). Additionally, some participants may not have perceived race as a relevant aspect of their identity or experiences. As Helms's (1990) White Racial Identity Development Model suggests, individuals in the early stages of racial identity development may be in the "Contact" stage, characterized by a lack of awareness of racial issues. Upon learning that my study focused on race, they may have felt they had little to contribute or that the topic was not pertinent to them. Engaging in conversations about race can require significant emotional labor, especially if it challenges one's existing beliefs or behaviors (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). Participants might have experienced cognitive dissonance when confronted with the realities of racial privilege and systemic inequalities, leading to discomfort and withdrawal to alleviate this psychological tension

(Festinger, 1957). Furthermore, concerns about the potential repercussions of discussing sensitive topics related to race could have influenced their decision. Despite my assurances of confidentiality, the fear of being associated with controversial or misunderstood statements may have led them to exit the study (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009).

The withdrawal of participants after I disclosed the study's focus on race highlights the challenges inherent in researching sensitive topics, particularly those involving race and privilege among dominant groups. This attrition affects research in several ways. The loss of participants may result in a less diverse range of perspectives, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings (Patton, 2015). It may also indicate a self-selection bias, where only those comfortable discussing race remain, skewing the data. With fewer participants, the depth and breadth of data I collected are reduced, affecting the richness of the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Respecting participants' autonomy and decision to withdraw is paramount, and I must balance encouraging participation and acknowledging individuals' discomfort with sensitive topics (Orb et al., 2001).

To mitigate the impact of participant withdrawal, I employed several strategies. I made concerted efforts to establish trust and rapport with participants from the outset, emphasizing the confidential nature of the study and the importance of their perspectives. Building rapport can alleviate anxiety about discussing sensitive topics (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Transparent communication was also crucial; by providing precise and upfront information about the study's focus, I allowed participants to make informed decisions about their involvement. I offered flexibility in how participants could engage with the

study—such as choosing between camera-on or camera-off virtual interviews and allowing breaks during discussions—to accommodate their comfort levels and reduce barriers to participation (Seidman, 2013). Creating a non-judgmental and supportive interview environment, I encouraged open dialogue; active listening and empathetic responses can help participants feel more at ease when discussing challenging subjects (King & Horrocks, 2010).

As a researcher sharing similar identities with participants, I recognized that my positionality could facilitate and hinder the research process. While shared identities may enhance rapport, they may also lead participants to assume a level of shared understanding that discourages deeper exploration of specific topics (Berger, 2015). Being mindful of this dynamic, I employed reflexivity to remain aware of my assumptions and encouraged participants to elaborate on their experiences, especially regarding race. The attrition of participants upon learning about my study's focus on race underscores the complexities of researching sensitive topics within dominant groups. Understanding the reasons behind their withdrawal is essential for interpreting the data and acknowledging potential limitations in the findings. It also highlights the importance of employing strategies to support participants throughout the research process while respecting their autonomy and comfort levels.

Data Analysis Methods

I adhered closely to the 8-steps of data analysis described by Creswell and Creswell (2018) to ensure a consistent and comprehensive review of the data collected in this study. Utilizing the frameworks of critical whiteness and queer theories, I carefully identified relevant data points that directly addressed the research questions. Engaging in

concurrent data collection, writing, and analysis allowed me to refine and enhance my methods as the study progressed, allowing for a more dynamic and responsive approach to data interpretation.

A distinctive element of this study was the creation of vignettes derived from participants' experiences, synthesized with critical whiteness and queer theoretical perspectives. These vignettes served as a tool to gather further participant feedback regarding their experiences, as seen through the lens of these constructed scenarios. I extensively used audio memos and reflective notes throughout the study to capture ongoing insights and reflections.

For the coding process, I relied on methods developed by Saldana (2013) and employed NVivo software to implement Creswell and Creswell's (2018) 8-step analysis framework. Additionally, I utilized attribute coding across all data types to facilitate cross-participant and cross-site analysis. Through attribute coding, I was able to identify the impacts of auxiliary identities that could intersect with and influence participants' experiences. An example of this was Henry's frequent references to their religious identity when discussing their experiences or the fact that several participants highlighted their "rural" backgrounds as a significant factor in their decision to seek an "urban" post-secondary education.

The attribute codes I applied in this study encompassed a range of demographic and contextual identifiers, including Participant Pseudonym, Age, Grade Level, Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Social Class, Religion, Community Experience, PSE Urban Designation, PSE Designation, Transfer Experience, and Data Format. Each attribute provided a distinct dimension of the participants' identities and contexts. It enabled me to

comprehensively analyze how various factors intersected and influenced their experiences within urban post-secondary educational settings. By incorporating these codes, I aimed to achieve a nuanced understanding of the participants' lived realities, reflecting the complexity of their social and educational environments. Additionally, by tracking seemingly mundane aspects within the data, I aimed to "reveal organizational, hierarchical, or chronological flows from the data, especially if multiple participants with differing perspectives are involved" (Saldana, 2013, p. 71).

Thematic Analysis

To conduct a thematic analysis, I transcribed all digital recordings of the interviews verbatim and organized them chronologically by speaker in NVivo software. Following the thematic analysis steps suggested by Basit (2003) and Saldana (2013), I undertook the following process:

Familiarization. I read the transcripts and racial autobiographies multiple times to familiarize myself with their content and context. This step was crucial in helping me understand the depth and nuances of the participants' experiences with racial identity.

Coding. I developed initial codes relevant to racial identity, LGBTQ identity, urban community, and privilege by identifying and marking segments of text where participants discussed issues related to these themes. This process allowed me to delve deeply into their experiences and understand how these aspects shaped their identities and interactions. With the following code descriptions, I provide an example of participant data that exemplifies the code.

Racial Identity. Under the theme of racial identity, I focused on the codes of "Experiences of Discrimination," "Cultural Heritage," and "Intersectionality." These

codes captured instances where participants faced or observed racial prejudice, highlighted the influence of cultural background, and examined how their racial identity intersected with other aspects of their identity, such as LGBTQ status or socioeconomic conditions.

Participants shared diverse experiences related to racial identity. Alex, who identifies as a person of color, discussed facing racial discrimination in both educational and social settings. He recounted an incident where he felt marginalized due to his race, stating, "I often felt like the odd one out in my classes, and sometimes people would make comments that made me uncomfortable" (Alex, Interview II). Similarly, Chris emphasized the importance of his cultural heritage in shaping his identity. He shared, "My family's traditions and values have always been a big part of who I am. Navigating my racial identity alongside my LGBTQ identity has been a journey" (Chris, Interview II).

The intersectionality of racial identity with other aspects was evident in Ben's experience. As a queer person of color from a low-income background, he noted, "It's hard to separate my racial identity from my sexuality and class. They all play a role in how I experience the world" (Ben, Interview II). Finn highlighted how racial identity influenced his interactions within the LGBTQ community, mentioning, "Sometimes I feel like my racial identity isn't fully understood or accepted within the LGBTQ spaces I inhabit" (Finn, Interview II). Ethan discussed the challenges of being a racial minority in a predominantly white institution, stating, "There were times I felt invisible or like my voice didn't matter, which made it harder to connect with others" (Ethan, Interview II).

David reflected on the lack of diversity in his community and how that impacted his understanding of race and identity. He said, "Growing up in a homogenous environment meant I didn't think much about race until I went to college and met people from different backgrounds" (David, Racial Autobiography). These experiences illustrate how racial identity affects individuals, especially when intersecting with other facets of their identity.

LGBTQ Identity. Key codes under the theme of LGBTQ identity included "Coming Out Stories," "Support Systems," and "Challenges and Acceptance." These codes detailed the participants' processes of revealing their LGBTQ identity, the support they received, and the positive and negative experiences they encountered in various environments.

Participants shared their unique journeys of coming out. Michael faced bullying in public school due to his gender expression and perceived sexual orientation, leading his parents to homeschool him. He explored his identity through online platforms, stating, "I did a lot of... looking online, just reading from online communities... of different labels and descriptions" (Michael, Interview II). Noah realized he was gay between elementary and high school but attended an all-boys Catholic school where homophobia was prevalent. He was not publicly out but confided in friends within the theater group, expressing, "By the time I was a senior... I felt much more comfortable... coming out to people gradually" (Noah, Interview II).

Oliver suppressed his identity during high school due to fear and a lack of representation. He came out during his freshman year at UPSE, stating, "I hit the ground at [institution] and it was immediately like... I could explore myself without hesitation"

(Oliver, Interview I). Paul knew he was gay from a young age but kept it secret in his conservative hometown. He shared, "I had to keep that a secret until I got to a place where I could be safe and open about it" (Paul, Interview I). Alex described his coming-out experience as a gradual process influenced by supportive friends, noting, "It wasn't easy, but having friends who accepted me made it possible to be open about who I am" (Alex, Interview I).

Ben faced challenges due to his family's conservative beliefs. He recounted, "Coming out to my family was the hardest part. I wasn't sure how they'd react given our religious background" (Ben, Interview I). Chris came out during college after finding a supportive community. He stated, "Being around people who embraced diversity gave me the courage to accept myself" (Chris, Interview II). David had a positive coming-out experience: "My family was surprisingly accepting, which made the whole process much smoother than I anticipated" (David, Interview II).

Ethan struggled with internalized homophobia before coming out. He said, "I had to overcome a lot of self-doubt and negative feelings before I could tell anyone" (Ethan, Interview II). Finn came out in stages, first to close friends and later to family. He shared, "I took it one step at a time, testing the waters before fully coming out" (Finn, Interview II).

Support systems played a crucial role in participants' experiences. Michael eventually received support from his family and the homeschooling community. He noted, "My family was really supportive... eventually, everybody in my family has been very supportive" (Michael, Interview I). Noah found solace in his high school's theater

group and later at college, mentioning, "That was my main source of community... I could just express that part of myself openly" (Noah, Interview I).

Oliver built a supportive network at college, including his boyfriend and friends who appreciated him. He shared, "I have found my own new small circle of people down there" (Oliver, Interview II). Paul benefited from a supportive family, especially his mother and grandmother. He recounted, "My mom was just happy that I was here... my grandmother herself actually is a lesbian" (Paul, Interview I). Alex emphasized the importance of campus LGBTQ organizations in providing support, stating, "Joining the LGBTQ club on campus connected me with people who understood what I was going through" (Alex, Interview II).

Ben (Interview II) relied on online communities when he lacked local support, saying, "Forums and social media groups became my safe space to express myself" (Ben, Interview II). Chris highlighted the role of mentorship, mentioning, "Having an older student mentor me made a big difference in navigating my identity" (Chris, Interview II). David found support through religious communities that were accepting and sharing, "I was fortunate to find a church that embraced me for who I am" (David, Interview II).

Participants faced various challenges and sought acceptance in different environments. Michael faced severe bullying, recalling, "There were actually physical threats against my safety while being at school" (Michael, Interview II). Noah dealt with a homophobic school environment where discrimination was unaddressed. He described, "Being gay was kind of like a joke... it was never something that the administrators or the teachers tried to stop" (Noah, Interview I).

Oliver feared exploring his identity due to the conservative nature of his community. He stated, "That fear growing up all throughout high school and junior high" (Oliver, Interview I). Paul kept his identity secret until college due to safety concerns. He shared, "I had to keep that a secret until I got to a place where I could be safe and open about it" (Paul, Interview II). Alex experienced microaggressions even in supposedly accepting spaces, noting, "Sometimes people said things that made me feel othered, even if they didn't mean to" (Alex, Interview II).

Ben struggled with societal expectations, stating, "I often felt pressure to conform to traditional norms, which was exhausting" (Ben, Interview I). Chris faced discrimination within the LGBTQ community due to his racial identity, mentioning, "I sometimes felt marginalized within spaces that were meant to be inclusive" (Chris, Interview II). David dealt with internal conflicts about his identity, saying, "Reconciling my faith and sexuality was a significant challenge" (David, Interview II).

Urban Community. Under the theme of urban community, I used the codes "Community Dynamics," "Accessibility of Resources," and "Social Networks" to focus on how urban settings influenced social interactions, the availability of LGBTQ-friendly resources, and the role of community networks.

Participants highlighted how urban environments impacted their experiences. Michael appreciated the progressive environment of his university compared to his rural upbringing. He stated, "I wanted to go somewhere that was a bit more progressive... where there was easier access to more people and more opinions" (Michael, Interview I). Noah thrived in the politically active atmosphere of Urban Location. He said, "Students are generally very politically engaged" (Noah, Interview I).

Oliver chose UPSE for its diversity, noting, "We have a third of our student body is international... I felt that diversity" (Oliver, Interview I). Paul initially found UPSE's environment supportive but noticed changes over time. He stated, "[Institution]... in letting in more men has become less safe for queer people" (Paul, Interview I). Alex moved to an urban area to attend college and found the diversity enriching, sharing, "Being in the city exposed me to different cultures and ideas" (Alex, Interview I).

Participants benefited from resources available in urban settings. Michael engaged with campus organizations like the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA), sharing, "I was able to do a lot of work with them... changes that we would like to see implemented in the university" (Michael, Interview I). Noah utilized UPSE's LGBTQ resource center, expressing, "I felt much more able to express my queerness more very openly at [Institution]" (Noah, Interview II).

Oliver found opportunities through student organizations and work, mentioning, "I also help run a student organization on campus... that's opened me up to even more of those connections" (Oliver, Interview II). Paul (Interview II) noticed a decline in supportive resources over time, remarking, "Our Queer Straight Alliance hasn't really been active... there just hasn't been enough people that showed interest." Ben (Interview II) frequented community centers that offered support and shared, "These spaces were vital for meeting others like me."

Participants built social networks that supported their identities. Michael (Interview II) formed strong friendships through campus involvement, describing, "We feel strong enough to stand up to anybody who might act rude or even violently towards us on campus." Noah (Interview II) bonded with peers in his acapella group, stating, "All of my

closest friends were in my acapella group... that was where I made pretty much all of my friends."

Oliver (Interview I) proactively sought connections during orientation, sharing, "I told myself I would get out during orientation week... I met friends from the beginning."

Paul (Interview I) sought out groups that resonated with his identity, saying, "I kind of really tried to find my element in those groups... it gave me a working example of how to be out." Chris (Interview II) utilized social media to expand his network, mentioning, "Online communities were a great way to meet people beyond my immediate surroundings."

Privilege. Under the theme of privilege, I coded for "Awareness of Privilege," "Discussions on Inequality," and "Advocacy and Activism." These codes highlighted participants' recognition of their societal advantages, reflections on systemic inequalities, and efforts to promote equality.

Participants reflected on their own privileges. Noah (Interview I) acknowledged his upbringing in an affluent area, noting, "I grew up in a fairly nice... sort of upper-middle-class neighborhood... there are a lot of students who are clearly here because of their wealth and their connections." Paul (Interview I) considered his position as a male student at a historically women's college, stating, "I know that is ironic coming from a male identifying person going to a historically women's college."

Alex (Interview I) recognized his educational opportunities, sharing, "Not everyone has the chance to attend college, and I try to be mindful of that." David (Interview II) noted the advantages of being part of the majority race in his community, saying, "I didn't have to face the same racial challenges some of my friends did."

Participants engaged in conversations about systemic inequalities. Noah (Interview II) discussed the lack of support for LGBTQ students in his high school, describing, "Homophobia was just very pervasive and it was never something that the administrators or the teachers tried to stop." Paul (Interview II) observed negative changes at his university affecting queer students, mentioning, "There have been some instances of homophobia and homophobic graffiti... it's different."

Ben (Interview I) highlighted economic disparities: "Coming from a low-income family, I saw firsthand how financial struggles limit opportunities." Chris (Interview III) addressed racial discrimination within the LGBTQ community, sharing, "There's a need to acknowledge and address racism in our own spaces."

Participants engaged in efforts to promote equality. Michael (Interview II) worked to support minority groups through student government and SAGA, sharing, "The university... has done a lot of actual work towards working with minority groups... giving them a voice." Oliver fostered an inclusive community by building mutual friendships and participating in organizations.

Noah (Interview I) valued the culture of political engagement and service at his university, stating, "Students are generally very politically engaged... committed to public service." Alex (Interview II) participated in campus protests advocating for LGBTQ rights, mentioning, "Being part of activism made me feel empowered." Through these detailed accounts and reflections, I understood how these themes manifested in the participants' lives. Their stories illustrate the complexities of navigating multiple identities and emphasize the importance of support systems, inclusive communities, and active engagement in addressing privilege and inequality. This approach grounded the

codes in real-life experiences, providing valuable insights into their journeys related to racial identity, LGBTQ identity, urban community involvement, and awareness of privilege.

NVivo and Analysis

For the coding process, I relied on methods developed by Saldana (2013) and employed NVivo 14 software to implement Creswell and Creswell's (2018) 8-step analysis framework. Utilizing NVivo 14 allowed me to systematically organize and analyze the qualitative data, enhancing the rigor and depth of the analysis. I began by importing all transcribed interview documents, in addition to the participants' racial autobiographies, into NVivo, where each transcript became an individual source for analysis.

I utilized attribute coding across all data types to facilitate cross-participant and cross-site analysis. Within NVivo, I created attribute tables that assigned each participant specific demographic and contextual identifiers. The attribute codes applied in this study encompassed a range of identifiers, including Participant Pseudonym, Age, Grade Level, Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Social Class, Religion, Community Experience, Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Urban Designation, PSE Designation, Transfer Experience, and Data Format. Each attribute provided a distinct dimension of the participants' identities and contexts. It enabled me to comprehensively analyze how various factors intersected and influenced their experiences within urban post-secondary educational settings.

Through attribute coding in NVivo, I was able to identify the impacts of auxiliary identities that could intersect with and influence participants' experiences. For example,

NVivo's query functions allowed me to filter, and cross-tabulate data based on attributes such as religion or community experience. This made it possible to observe patterns like Henry's frequent references to their religious identity when discussing their experiences or to note that several participants highlighted their "rural" backgrounds as a significant factor in their decision to seek an "urban" post-secondary education. By incorporating these codes into NVivo, I aimed to achieve a nuanced understanding of the participants' lived realities, reflecting the complexity of their social and educational environments. Additionally, by tracking seemingly mundane aspects within the data, I aimed to "reveal organizational, hierarchical, or chronological flows from the data, especially if multiple participants with differing perspectives are involved" (Saldana, 2013, p. 71).

Moving forward, I grouped similar codes into potential themes using NVivo's advanced features. I utilized the hierarchical node structure within NVivo to organize codes into parent and child nodes, effectively grouping related codes under broader thematic categories. For instance, themes emerged such as "Experiences of Discrimination," "Identity and Acceptance," "Intersections of Identity," and "Community and Belonging." I then revisited the coded excerpts and themes to ensure they formed coherent patterns and accurately represented the data. NVivo's coding query and cluster analysis tools were instrumental in this phase, enabling me to analyze the density and relationships of codes. This step involved refining, combining, or discarding themes based on a more in-depth data analysis facilitated by NVivo's ability to reorganize and reclassify data segments easily. Defining and naming themes was the next critical step. Within NVivo, I created detailed memos linked to each theme, providing comprehensive descriptions of what each theme encompassed and how it related to participants' identities

and experiences. NVivo's capacity to store and organize these memos alongside the data streamlined this process. I included direct quotes from the transcripts, easily retrievable through NVivo's coding system, to support these definitions and provide concrete examples of how the themes manifested in the data.

Finally, I conducted a detailed analysis, discussing how each theme contributed to understanding the participants' identities and experiences. Using NVivo's matrix coding queries, I explored the interplay between different themes and attributes, such as examining how racial identity intersected with sexual orientation and impacted emotional well-being, social interactions, and personal development. This comprehensive analysis was enriched by NVivo's ability to handle complex queries and generate visual models representing the data relationships.

Throughout this process, NVivo 14 software was indispensable in implementing Creswell and Creswell's (2018) 8-step analysis framework:

1. Organizing and Preparing Data for Analysis: NVivo facilitated importing and organizing all interview transcripts and demographic data.
2. Reading Through All Data: The software allows thorough reading and initial noting directly within the platform.
3. Coding the Data: NVivo's coding features enabled efficient and systematic coding of text segments.
4. Generating Themes: Grouping codes into nodes and utilizing visualization tools helped identify and develop themes.
5. Interrelating Themes/Descriptions: NVivo's query and modeling tools allowed the exploration of relationships between themes.

6. Interpreting the Meaning of Themes/Descriptions: Memos and annotations within NVivo supported deeper reflection on the data.
7. Validating the Accuracy of the Information: Consistency checks and coding comparison queries enhanced the reliability of the analysis.
8. Reporting the Findings: NVivo's reporting features helped export organized findings for inclusion in the final report.

By following these steps and leveraging NVivo's capabilities, I systematically extracted and analyzed themes related to the participants' identities and experiences. This thematic analysis enabled me to uncover the complexities and nuances of how the individuals in this study experienced and understood their racial identity, LGBTQ identity, and the intersections within urban post-secondary educational settings.

Overall, integrating Saldana's (2013) coding methods with the technological support of NVivo 14 software allowed for a meticulous and comprehensive analysis. The combination of attribute coding and thematic development within NVivo provided a robust framework for exploring and understanding the participants' multifaceted experiences, reflecting the complexity of their social and educational environments.

Issues of Trustworthiness

My study, which centered on the intersections of LGBT identity, race, and Whiteness within urban post-secondary education settings, surfaced several potential trustworthiness concerns commonly associated with qualitative research. Addressing these trustworthiness issues required careful planning, transparent reporting of research methods, and a critical awareness of my potential influence on the research outcomes. By taking these steps, I aimed to enhance the reliability and credibility of the study's

findings, contributing meaningfully to the discourse on LGBT identity, race, and Whiteness in urban educational settings.

Researcher Bias

Given the sensitive nature of the topics I explored—such as race, LGBTQ identity, and privilege—I recognized that my personal beliefs and experiences could inadvertently influence various stages of the research process, from framing research questions to interpreting data. Acknowledging the heightened potential for bias in qualitative research, where the researcher's perspective significantly shapes data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I took deliberate steps to counteract personal biases and reflexivity throughout the research process.

Firstly, I engaged in continuous self-reflection and critical self-examination throughout the study. With over 15 years of experience in organizational change and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, I have consistently worked to integrate inclusive practices into the very fabric of institutions in higher education and the corporate world. My roles as Principal at Aequitas Network and Data & Business Intelligence Manager at KeyBank, where I championed the PRIDE KBING initiative and engineered DEI-focused analytics dashboards, have provided me with unique insights into how organizational culture and structural inequities affect underrepresented groups. Additionally, as a queer-identifying individual deeply engaged in research on white racial identity, LGBTQ intersectionality, and privilege, I am acutely aware of how my identities influence my interpretation of data.

My experience navigating complex systems and implementing DEI strategies has shaped my approach to research and data analysis. I maintained a reflexive journal

throughout the study to document my thoughts and feelings, critically analyzing how my lived experiences as a member of privileged and marginalized groups might affect my understanding of the data. For instance, after interviewing a participant who expressed reluctance to acknowledge racial privilege, I noted my immediate emotional responses. I questioned how my own identity as a white transgender gay male might influence my interpretation of their narrative.

An entry from my reflexive journal illustrates this process:

"After today's interview with Participant A, I felt frustrated by his dismissal of racial privilege. I need to be cautious not to let my personal convictions overshadow his perspective. I will revisit the transcript with an open mind and consider cultural or experiential factors that may shape his viewpoint." This practice allowed me to recognize and bracket my biases, a technique described by Tufford and Newman (2012) to mitigate their influence on data interpretation. It also allowed me to confront any personal biases or preconceived notions. This journaling practice ensured that my analysis remained rigorous and informed by my professional expertise in DEI and organizational development. Regularly reviewing my journal entries made me more aware of how my experiences and beliefs could shape my understanding of participants' narratives.

Secondly, I employed bracketing techniques to set aside my personal experiences. Before each interview, I wrote down any assumptions or expectations about the participant or the topics to be discussed. For example, before interviewing a participant actively involved in LGBTQ advocacy, I acknowledged my assumption that he would be more aware of racial issues within the community. By identifying this bias, I remained vigilant during the interview to avoid leading the participant or interpreting his responses through that lens.

During data analysis, I revisited these notes to ensure that my coding and theme development were grounded in the data rather than my preconceptions. This process aligns with phenomenological approaches in qualitative research, where bracketing is essential to authentically understand participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Thirdly, I sought peer debriefing and external audits to provide additional layers of objectivity collaboratively. I collaborated with colleagues not directly involved in the study to review my coding schemes, thematic development, and interpretations. After coding the initial transcripts, I shared my coding schemes and thematic interpretations with them. For example, one colleague questioned my categorization of certain participant statements under "Resistance to Racial Accountability." She suggested that some comments might reflect a lack of awareness rather than active resistance. This feedback prompted me to revisit the data and consider alternative interpretations, refining my themes to differentiate between unawareness and resistance. The external perspectives helped identify bias in my analysis and ensured that my findings were more robust and nuanced.

Fourthly, I adhered strictly to methodological rigor by following established qualitative research protocols. Utilizing NVivo 14 software, I systematically coded the data and maintained a clear audit trail of my analytical decisions. I began with open coding, closely examining participants' words to identify initial codes. For instance, when a participant said, "I don't see how my race affects my experiences in the LGBTQ community," I coded this as "Perceived Irrelevance of Race." As patterns emerged, I moved to axial coding to explore relationships between codes, eventually developing themes such as "Invisibility of Whiteness" and "Intersectional Lack of Awareness." By

documenting each step, including memoing insights and decisions within NVivo, I ensured transparency and allowed for potential replication or review of my analytical process. By consistently applying coding methods developed by Saldana (2013) and implementing Creswell and Creswell's (2018) 8-step analysis framework, I ensured a structured and transparent approach to data analysis.

I incorporated participant validation (member checking) into the research process after they completed Interview II. After analyzing the data, I shared preliminary findings with some participants to verify my interpretations' accuracy. After preliminary analysis, I shared summary findings and thematic interpretations with several participants to verify accuracy and resonance with their experiences. One participant noted that my interpretation of his comments on leveraging LGBTQ identity for institutional support did not fully capture his intent. He clarified that he felt institutional resources were more accessible due to his involvement in LGBTQ advocacy rather than his identity alone. This feedback led me to adjust my analysis to reflect the role of activism and engagement in accessing resources, refining the theme to "Active Engagement as a Resource Leveraging Strategy." Participant validation enhanced the credibility of the findings by ensuring they authentically represented participants' perspectives.

Lastly, I remained open to emergent themes and unexpected findings, critical in qualitative research to capture the depth of participants' experiences (Charmaz, 2006). For example, while I anticipated discussions around racial privilege, several participants introduced the concept of "White Rainbow Weaponization" (WRW) spontaneously. They described situations where white gay men used their LGBTQ identity to deflect criticism about racial insensitivity. Recognizing the significance of this emergent theme, I adjusted

my data collection to explore WRW further in subsequent interviews, asking participants to elaborate on their experiences with this phenomenon. This adaptability allowed the research to delve deeper into unanticipated but important aspects of the participants' experiences, enriching the study. By actively engaging in continuous self-reflection, employing bracketing techniques, seeking peer debriefing, adhering to methodological rigor, incorporating participant validation, and remaining open to emergent themes, I minimized the influence of personal biases throughout the research process. These deliberate strategies, grounded in qualitative methodology, ensured that the study's findings authentically represented the participants' voices and experiences. This approach provides a credible and valuable contribution to understanding race, LGBTQ identity, and privilege within urban post-secondary educational settings.

Validity of Findings

Ensuring the validity of my findings, particularly in a study involving complex identities, required a steadfast commitment to accurately representing the participants' voices without imposing my interpretations. To achieve this, I implemented a rigorous peer-checking process while developing the vignettes derived from Interviews I and II. Instead of member-checking with participants, I collaborated with colleagues who were knowledgeable in qualitative research and familiar with issues related to race and LGBTQ identities. This approach aligns with recommendations by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who advocate for peer debriefing to enhance the credibility of qualitative research.

While creating the vignettes, I synthesized the information from the initial interviews to craft realistic scenarios that encapsulated the essence of the participants'

shared experiences. Recognizing the importance of authenticity and the potential for researcher bias, I sought feedback from my peers to ensure the vignettes accurately reflected the lived realities of white gay cisgender men in urban post-secondary educational settings. According to Spall (1998), peer debriefing provides an external check on the inquiry process, allowing researchers to test their findings and interpretations against the perspectives of others. Recognizing the potential for researcher bias in interpreting these experiences, I sought feedback from colleagues knowledgeable in qualitative research and familiar with issues related to race and LGBTQ identities. I collaborated specifically with two peers: one, a qualitative researcher and member of my dissertation committee specializing in critical race theory, and the other, an LGBTQ studies scholar with expertise in intersectionality.

I shared the draft vignettes with them and invited critical feedback on several aspects:

- Realism: Do the scenarios authentically reflect the experiences of white gay cisgender men in UPSE settings?
- Coherence: Are the narratives logically structured and internally consistent?
- Alignment with Participants' Narratives: Do the vignettes accurately represent the themes and issues raised by participants?

This collaborative process facilitated an open exchange of ideas and allowed corrections and refinements to the vignettes. As Creswell and Miller (2000) note, peer review adds validity to a study by providing an external check on the research process. The importance of this peer debriefing process cannot be overstated, as it ensured the credibility of our findings and involved my colleagues in the research, making them an

integral part of the study. Through this iterative process, my peers offered valuable insights into the scenarios' cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. Through this collaborative process, my peers provided valuable insights that enhanced the vignettes. Peer A, a qualitative researcher, noted that the language used by the protagonist in one vignette was too formal and not reflective of how college students typically speak. For example, the original dialogue, "I find myself grappling with feelings of marginalization," felt unnatural. Peer A suggested more colloquial expressions, such as "I feel left out sometimes," leading me to revise the dialogue to enhance authenticity. Peer B, an LGBTQ studies scholar, highlighted that a scenario lacked depth in portraying cultural dynamics during the LGBT meeting. They recommended incorporating specific cultural references the protagonist might encounter, such as music, holidays, or social justice issues relevant to other racial groups. In response, I added a scene where the protagonist attends an unfamiliar music establishment, which deepened the portrayal of cultural differences and their emotional impact. Both peers also emphasized the need for a more profound exploration of emotional responses. They felt the original vignettes skimmed over feelings like discomfort, frustration, and confusion. These revisions enriched the emotional and cultural dimensions of the narrative. This feedback was instrumental in refining the vignettes to capture better the complexities of the participants' identities and experiences. Anney (2014) emphasizes that peer examination helps uncover biases and assumptions, contributing to the study's trustworthiness. By involving peers rather than participants in the checking process, I maintained the integrity of the single-anonymized research design, which was crucial for exploring unconscious biases related to whiteness(Warren, 2001). Peer checking allowed me to preserve the

naturalistic inquiry while ensuring that the vignettes were credible and resonated with real-world experiences. This method also mitigated potential ethical concerns associated with re-engaging participants in a way that might influence their responses or reveal the study's focus prematurely.

In conclusion, the peer-checking process was integral to maintaining the validity and trustworthiness of the study. By actively engaging knowledgeable colleagues in reviewing and refining the vignettes, I ensured that the participants' voices were authentically represented without compromising the research design. This collaborative approach, supported by scholarly recommendations (Anney, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spall, 1998), enhanced the study's credibility and contributed to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between race, LGBTQ identity, and personal experiences within urban post-secondary educational settings.

Ethical Considerations

Researching sensitive topics such as racial identity and LGBT issues necessitated careful and ethical data handling to prevent harm to participants. I prioritized confidentiality and managed potentially distressing issues with the utmost care to uphold ethical standards. Adhering to all established Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines and research best practices—including using information sheets, obtaining informed consent, conducting non-video sessions, and employing professional transcription services—allowed me to maintain high confidentiality and protect participant privacy throughout the study.

Summary

In this study, I conducted a qualitative investigation involving 15 white gay cisgender men at urban post-secondary education (UPSE) institutions, focusing on the intersection of race and LGBTQ identities. The theoretical framework of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW) significantly influenced every aspect of the research, shaping the study design, data collection methods, and analytical approach. By centering WRW, I aimed to explore the nuanced ways in which participants navigate and potentially leverage their racial identity within LGBTQ spaces, particularly within the context of UPSEs.

Recognizing that traditional research approaches might not fully capture the complexities of WRW, I adopted an iterative and responsive study design. This approach allowed me to continuously refine methods and adapt to new insights as the study progressed, ensuring that the research remained attuned to the dynamic and multifaceted nature of white racial identity and LGBTQ identity in urban post-secondary institutions. Grounded in Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory, the study employed a combination of semi-structured interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignette exercises. These methods were carefully selected for their effectiveness in capturing the nuanced experiences and perspectives of the participants, particularly regarding the manifestations of WRW.

I chose interviews as the primary data collection method due to their ability to elicit rich, in-depth information about individual experiences and perceptions. During the interviews, I crafted open-ended questions that encouraged participants to critically examine their racial identity and its impact on their experiences within LGBTQ

communities. For instance, I asked, "Can you describe a time when you felt your racial identity influenced your experience in an LGBTQ setting?" This approach aimed to uncover implicit attitudes and behaviors related to WRW, providing insight into how whiteness operates as an invisible norm.

In addition to interviews, I utilized racial autobiographies to gain deeper insights into how race influenced participants' lives and identities. By inviting participants to chronicle their journeys concerning race and sexuality, I provided a platform for them to reflect on instances where WRW might have manifested, even unconsciously. This method offered valuable first-person perspectives on racial dynamics and allowed participants to identify and articulate how their whiteness intersected with their LGBTQ identity.

The inclusion of vignette exercises further enriched the data collection process. I designed vignettes that depicted scenarios involving LGBTQ individuals of color, strategically prompting participants to consider their reactions and potential biases. These exercises aimed to shed light on the mechanisms of WRW by observing how participants engaged with situations that challenged their assumptions and highlighted issues of race and privilege within LGBTQ contexts.

I strategically selected participants who attended UPSE institutions to account for the dual role of these environments as sites of potential social mobility and persistent racial disparities. The urban context provided a rich backdrop for exploring the interplay between race and LGBTQ identity, particularly in settings where diversity is prominent and complex. I employed a diverse recruitment strategy involving social media and

targeted outreach, ensuring a representative sample within the study's focus group. This approach helped mitigate selection bias and enhanced the credibility of the findings.

Data analysis was conducted through a thorough thematic approach, deeply informed by the WRW framework. I engaged in inductive and deductive coding, allowing themes to emerge organically while also being guided by the theoretical constructs of WRW. I paid particular attention to codes related to racial identity, LGBTQ identity, urban community, and privilege. Throughout the analysis, I remained cognizant of the potential for WRW to influence not only the participants' responses but also my interpretations. Recognizing that manifestations of WRW might be subtle and embedded within seemingly benign narratives, I employed reflexive practices to examine my assumptions and biases critically.

To enhance the study's trustworthiness, I considered potential issues such as researcher bias and the validity of the findings. I implemented measures to enhance credibility, such as member checking, where participants were invited to review and provide feedback on the interpretations of their contributions. Data triangulation was also employed by cross-referencing findings from interviews, autobiographies, and vignette responses, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process, especially given the sensitivity of race and LGBTQ identity. I ensured informed consent, emphasized the voluntary nature of participation, and maintained confidentiality to protect participants' identities.

As a researcher sharing similar identities with the participants, I acknowledged that my positionality could facilitate rapport and introduce potential biases. Being a white

gay cisgender man myself, I recognized the importance of employing reflexivity to remain aware of how my perspectives and experiences might shape the research process. I maintained a research journal to document my reflections, challenges, and evolving understanding of WRW. This practice helped mitigate the risk of reinforcing the power dynamics I sought to critique and ensured a more nuanced and authentic data analysis.

In reflecting on the study's limitations and delimitations, I acknowledged that the specific focus on white gay cisgender men within UPSEs might limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or populations. However, by profoundly exploring this intersection of identities, the study contributes valuable insights into the intersections of LGBTQ identity, race, and whiteness within urban post-secondary education. The integration of the WRW framework allowed for a critical examination of intra-community dynamics and highlighted the importance of considering multiple identities and their intersections.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework of White Rainbow Weaponization profoundly impacted the study's design, data collection, and analysis. By centering WRW, I was able to delve deeper into the complexities of identity and power within LGBTQ spaces, ultimately contributing to broader conversations about intersectionality and social justice. The findings underscore the significance of employing qualitative methods to unpack individuals' nuanced experiences and offer a nuanced and thorough exploration of the intersections of LGBTQ identity, race, and whiteness within urban post-secondary education.

Results

White Gay Male Students' Articulation of Racial Identity and Privilege

Results associated with the first question—"How do white gay male students articulate and describe their racial identity? How do they perceive and articulate the benefits or leverage of their racial identity and privilege within the LGBTQ community?"—reflect my thematic analysis of participant interviews, autobiographies, and racial identity narratives. My analysis followed a structured approach to triangulate key themes. These themes reflect the participants' experiences of racial invisibility, privilege within LGBTQ spaces, and challenges in engaging in conversations about race.

This section delves into the ways white gay male students in UPSE settings articulate and perceive their racial identity and privilege within LGBTQ communities. By analyzing data collected from 13 participants, the discussion explores four interconnected themes: the invisibility of whiteness and lack of racial awareness, leveraging whiteness in LGBTQ spaces, awareness of racial privilege, and challenges in engaging conversations on race. Through detailed narratives and a cross-theme analysis, the section illuminates how these students navigate the complexities of their intersecting identities, shedding light on the broader implications of understanding race, privilege, and inclusion within marginalized communities.

Invisibility of Whiteness and Evolution of Racial Awareness

One of the most prominent themes across participant responses is the invisibility of whiteness, a concept extensively discussed in CWT. Many white gay male students described how they had not critically engaged with their racial identity until they entered diverse environments, such as university or LGBTQ communities. Ten out of 13

participants explicitly stated that race was not something they had to consider during their upbringing. This phenomenon aligns with Frankenberg's (1993) assertion that whiteness is often constructed as a normative unmarked identity, rendering it invisible to those who possess it. Henry explained,

Growing up, race wasn't something I had to think about because everyone around me looked like me. It wasn't until I got to college that I started to realize the impact my whiteness had on how I was treated differently from others. (Henry, Racial Autobiography)

This quote illustrates the delayed racial awareness common among many participants from predominantly white environments, which only becomes salient when confronted with racial diversity. This experience reflects Bonilla-Silva's (2003) concept of the "white habitus," a socialization process that fosters racial segregation and a sense of racial superiority among whites due to their isolation from people of color. Isaac echoed a similar experience: "In my hometown, race wasn't talked about much. But once I got involved in LGBTQ groups at my university, I started noticing that being white gave me a sense of belonging that not everyone had" (Isaac, Racial Autobiography). Similarly, Liam shared, "I never really thought about being white until I joined the queer student union. Suddenly, I was aware that my experiences were different from some of my peers who are people of color. It was eye-opening" (Liam, Racial Autobiography). These reflections align with McIntosh's (1988) theory of the "invisible knapsack," where white privilege remains unexamined until individuals are placed in situations that highlight racial differences. The participants' lack of early racial awareness underscores how whiteness operates as an invisible norm, which Critical Whiteness scholars argue

perpetuates systemic racism by rendering white privilege unseen and unchallenged (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Leonardo, 2002).

Ethan also shared, "It wasn't until I joined my university's LGBTQ community that I saw how race mattered. There were just assumptions made about who belonged, and I realized that I benefited from being white" (Ethan, Interview III). Moreover, the participants' experiences can be understood through Helms's (1990) White Racial Identity Development Model. Many are situated in the Contact stage, characterized by a lack of awareness of racial differences and naivety about racial issues. Upon entering more diverse environments, they begin to transition to the Disintegration stage, where they recognize racial inequalities and their role within a system of privilege.

Noah reflected on this transition, "Meeting people from different backgrounds made me question things I had never considered before. I started to see how being white had shielded me from certain realities" (Noah, Interview III). The delayed racial awareness also highlights the role of "white ignorance," as discussed by Mills (2007), where systemic ignorance about racial realities is maintained through socialization in predominantly white contexts. This ignorance serves to protect white individuals from acknowledging complicity in racial oppression and maintains the status quo of racial hierarchies. David admitted, "Honestly, before college, I thought racism was a thing of the past. But hearing the experiences of my classmates, I realized how naive that was. My whiteness had kept me oblivious" (David, Interview III).

Furthermore, the participants' upbringing in environments where race "wasn't talked about" reflects color-blind ideologies, which Bonilla-Silva (2010) identifies as a contemporary form of racism that perpetuates racial inequality by denying the

significance of race and racial structures. By not discussing race, these environments implicitly reinforce the notion that whiteness is the default and that racial issues are irrelevant or resolved. Alex mentioned, "My family always said we should treat everyone the same and that talking about race just creates division. But now I see that ignoring race doesn't make racism go away" (Alex, Vignettes). The lack of critical engagement with their racial identity prior to entering diverse settings indicates how whiteness maintains its dominance through invisibility and normalization (Frankenberg, 1993). This normalization allows white individuals to navigate social and institutional spaces without the burden of racial scrutiny or the need to consider the impact of race on their experiences (Lewis, 2004). It is only when confronted with diversity that the unmarked nature of their racial identity becomes visible, prompting a reevaluation of their position within racial hierarchies. Ryan said, "I used to think everyone had the same opportunities if they just worked hard. But seeing how my friends of color face barriers that I don't, I understand that my race gives me advantages I didn't earn" (Ryan, Vignettes). The participants' realization of their racial identity's impact on university and LGBTQ communities underscores the intersectionality of race and sexuality. While they may experience marginalization based on their sexual orientation, their whiteness affords them privileges not accessible to LGBTQ individuals of color (Han, 2007). This intersectional analysis is crucial in understanding how systems of oppression and privilege operate simultaneously (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Chris, who is white-passing but identifies as culturally Colombian, shared,

People usually assume I'm white, and that has definitely made it easier to fit in certain queer spaces where being white is the norm. I don't face the same level of scrutiny that some of my friends of color do. (Chris, Interview III)

In summary, the invisibility of whiteness among the participants prior to engaging with diverse communities is consistent with critical whiteness frameworks that highlight how whiteness operates as an unexamined norm. This invisibility enables the perpetuation of racial privilege and systemic inequalities by allowing white individuals to remain unaware of the advantages conferred by their racial identity. Recognizing and critically engaging with their whiteness is a pivotal step for these individuals to understand their role within systems of racial oppression and to work towards more significant racial equity within LGBTQ and educational spaces.

Awareness of Racial Privilege

An overwhelming majority—11 out of 13 participants—expressed an awareness of white privilege, particularly as they navigated LGBTQ spaces within UPSE settings. This newfound awareness often resulted from interactions with peers of color and participation in diversity-related events. Participants recognized that their racial identity granted them unearned advantages, leading to internal reflection on how their experiences differed from those of LGBTQ individuals of color. Ryan noted, "I recognize now that being white has protected me in ways that it hasn't for others. I don't face the same challenges, and I know that gives me a level of privilege I didn't really think about before" (Ryan, Vignettes). Ryan's acknowledgment reflects a shift from obliviousness to a conscious understanding of systemic advantages conferred by whiteness. This aligns with the "Disintegration" stage in Helms's (1990) White Racial Identity Development

Model, where individuals become aware of racial inequalities and their role within a system of privilege. Ethan added, "I know I have it easier because I'm white. I don't have to think about whether my race will be accepted in LGBTQ spaces, while some of my friends of color constantly have to think about that" (Ethan, Interview III).

As participants grew more conscious of their racial identity, they began to grapple with the tension between their marginalized status as gay men and their privilege as white individuals. This internal conflict often led to feelings of guilt or discomfort as they realized that while they faced discrimination based on their sexual orientation, they simultaneously benefited from racial privilege. Liam expressed this tension,

It's challenging because I know what it's like to be marginalized as a gay man, but I also have to accept that I benefit from being white. That's a tough pill to swallow, realizing that I might be contributing to someone else's marginalization. (Liam, Vignettes)

This internal struggle highlights the complexity of intersecting identities, and the importance of intersectionality as conceptualized by Crenshaw (1989). Participants struggled with reconciling their experiences of oppression with the privileges they held, leading to a deeper understanding of systemic inequalities. David echoed this awareness, stating, "I've noticed that the events and social spaces in the queer community often cater to white people, even though we say we're inclusive. It's subtle, but it's there" (David, Vignettes). This recognition aligns with McIntosh's (1988) concept of the "invisible knapsack" of white privilege, which participants began to unpack as they engaged with more diverse environments. The process of becoming aware of their racial privilege prompted them to reflect critically on their behaviors and assumptions.

Leveraging Whiteness in LGBTQ Spaces

While "Awareness of Racial Privilege" focuses on participants' internal recognition of their unearned advantages and the resulting internal conflicts, the theme of "Leveraging Whiteness in LGBTQ Spaces" examines how participants may actively or passively use their whiteness to gain advantages within these communities. For example, Paul discussed, "In queer spaces, especially in leadership or activism, white voices seem to dominate. It's like we're the ones people look to, even if there are others in the room who should be leading" (Paul, Vignettes). This highlights how whiteness can be leveraged to maintain positions of influence, often sidelining LGBTQ individuals of color. Conversely, "Awareness of Racial Privilege" concerns the participants' internal journey toward recognizing these dynamics. It involves acknowledging the existence of white privilege and beginning to understand its impact on both them and others within LGBTQ spaces. By differentiating these themes, we see that while "Leveraging Whiteness in LGBTQ Spaces" addresses the external manifestations of whiteness and how it can perpetuate systemic inequalities, "Awareness of Racial Privilege" delves into the introspective process participants undergo as they confront the realities of their racial identity.

The majority of the participants—9 out of 13—acknowledged how their whiteness provided them with advantages or leverage in LGBTQ spaces. This theme highlights the racial hierarchies that exist even within marginalized communities like the LGBTQ population, where whiteness often functions as a form of social capital. Liam explained,

In queer spaces, it often feels like white is the default, and I know I've benefited from that. I never felt out of place or like I had to prove myself. It was easier to blend in because everyone just assumed I belonged. (Liam, Interview III)

Liam's reflection highlights how Whiteness operates as a form of social capital within LGBTQ spaces, where white individuals are afforded greater ease in gaining acceptance. Research by Han (2007) supports this observation, noting that white gay men often occupy positions of influence in LGBTQ spaces, reinforcing existing racial dynamics from broader societal structures. Similarly, Paul discussed the dominance of white voices in LGBTQ activism, stating, "In queer spaces, especially in leadership or activism, white voices seem to dominate. It's like we're the ones people look to, even if there are others in the room who should be leading" (Paul, Vignettes). This points to a key tension in the intersection of race and sexual orientation. While these participants experience marginalization as gay men, their racial identity affords them advantages within the LGBTQ community. Chris, who is white-passing but identifies as culturally Colombian, shared:

People usually assume I'm white, and that has definitely made it easier to fit in certain queer spaces where being white is the norm. I don't face the same level of scrutiny that some of my friends of color do. (Chris, Interview III)

Chris's realization of how whiteness functioned as social capital within LGBTQ communities aligned with Han's (2007) research, which highlights the dominance of white individuals in queer spaces, even those designed to promote inclusivity.

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settings. This newfound awareness often resulted from interactions with peers of color and participation in diversity-related events. Participants recognized that their racial identity granted them unearned advantages, leading to internal reflection on how their experiences differed from those of LGBTQ individuals of color. Ryan noted, "I recognize now that being white has protected me in ways that it hasn't for others. I don't face the same challenges, and I know that gives me a level of privilege I didn't really think about before" (Ryan, Interview III). Ryan's acknowledgment reflects a shift from obliviousness to a conscious understanding of systemic advantages conferred by whiteness. This aligns with the "Disintegration" stage in Helms's (1990) White Racial Identity Development Model, where individuals become aware of racial inequalities and their role within a system of privilege. Ethan added, "I know I have it easier because I'm white. I don't have to think about whether my race will be accepted in LGBTQ spaces, while some of my friends of color constantly have to think about that" (Ethan, Interview III).

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Challenges in Engaging Conversations on Race

Although many participants acknowledged their racial privilege, more than half—7 out of 13—expressed discomfort or uncertainty about how to engage in conversations about race within LGBTQ spaces; participants' responses revealed internal conflicts between wanting to act as allies in acknowledging and addressing racism and feeling uncertain about overstepping boundaries. A significant concern among these participants was the fear of saying the wrong thing or being perceived as racist, which often led to hesitation or silence in discussions about race. Isaac explained,

When race comes up, I sometimes feel like I don't know what to say. I don't want to make it about me, but I also feel like I should acknowledge my privilege. It's a tricky balance. I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing and offending someone unintentionally. (Isaac, Racial Autobiography Interview)

Isaac's discomfort reflects broader societal challenges where white individuals grapple with addressing their privilege without reinforcing it (Sue, 2013). The fear of making a mistake or uttering something inappropriate can inhibit meaningful dialogue and create a cycle of silence. This concern about saying the wrong thing is indicative of what DiAngelo (2018) describes as "white fragility," where the discomfort in confronting racial issues leads to defensive behaviors that hinder progress.

Many participants felt unsure about navigating these conversations, often choosing to remain silent to avoid dominating the discussion. Paul added:

I try to stay quiet in conversations about race because I don't want to dominate the conversation. But at the same time, I feel like I should be doing more to acknowledge my privilege. Honestly, sometimes I'm afraid that if I say something, it might come out wrong, and I don't want to be seen as ignorant or, worse, racist. (Paul, Racial Autobiography Interview)

This finding suggests that while participants are increasingly aware of their racial privilege, there is a lack of clarity on how to leverage this awareness effectively to support racial justice within LGBTQ spaces. The tension between speaking up and stepping back is a common struggle for white individuals who wish to be allies but fear reinforcing their dominance or making errors (Case, 2012).

Participants also expressed significant concerns about saying the wrong thing during discussions on race, which often led to self-censorship or avoidance. Ethan shared "I want to be supportive and call out racism when I see it, but I'm always second-guessing myself. What if I phrase something incorrectly? I don't want to hurt anyone or make the situation worse" (Ethan, Racial Autobiography Interview). This hesitation underscores

the need for racial literacy and confidence in navigating complex conversations about race (Guinier, 2004). Without the necessary tools and understanding, well-intentioned individuals may avoid engaging altogether, limiting opportunities for growth and allyship. Noah echoed similar apprehensions, "Sometimes I feel like it's better not to say anything at all. I don't want to accidentally offend someone or have others think I'm racist. But then I worry that my silence is part of the problem" (Noah, Racial Autobiography Interview). Noah's internal conflict illustrates the double bind many white individuals experience—torn between the fear of being perceived negatively and the recognition that inaction contributes to ongoing injustices (Tatum, 1997). This dilemma can paralyze potential allies, preventing them from participating in efforts toward racial equity.

Additionally, the fear of being perceived as racist was another significant barrier. Participants were concerned that their contributions might be misinterpreted or that they might inadvertently reveal implicit biases. Alex reflected,

I realize that by staying silent, I'm not helping anyone. But the last thing I want is to speak over people of color or make a mistake that could hurt someone. It's hard to know what's the right thing to do. (Alex, Vignettes)

This concern highlights the anxiety associated with being mislabeled or misunderstood, which can lead to withdrawal from meaningful discussions (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). This fear may stem from an understanding of the societal stigma attached to racism and a desire to distance oneself from racist behaviors or attitudes. However, this avoidance can inadvertently perpetuate systemic racism by maintaining silence around crucial issues (Sue, 2010).

Also, the participants' worries about saying the wrong thing or being perceived as racist created significant barriers to engaging in conversations about race. While the desire to avoid causing harm is commendable, the result can be a reinforcement of the systems of oppression they wish to challenge (DiAngelo, 2018). Ethan expressed his internal conflict, "When discussions about race come up, I feel like I don't know how to contribute without overstepping. I want to help, but I don't want to take space away from people of color" (Ethan, Vignettes). This struggle reflects the broader societal tension that Sue (2010) described, where white individuals grapple with addressing their privilege without reinforcing it. The participants' hesitation often led to a lack of participation in dialogues that could promote understanding and dismantle biases within LGBTQ spaces.

Finally, the tension between speaking up and stepping back is a common struggle for white individuals who wish to be allies but fear reinforcing their dominance or making errors. David described his efforts to navigate this balance, "I've been trying to educate myself more so that when I do join these conversations, I can add something valuable without taking up too much space. But it's definitely a learning process, and I'm always worried about messing up" (David, Vignettes). This learning process involves acknowledging one's limitations, being open to correction, and committing to ongoing self-education (Matias & DiAngelo, 2013). By embracing a growth mindset, individuals can move past the fear of making mistakes and toward meaningful engagement.

Cross Theme Analysis

I engaged in a cross-theme analysis to add more nuance to my understanding of how white gay male UPSE students in this study articulated their racial identity and privilege within the LGBTQ community. Specifically, I attended to intersections across

the themes of Invisibility of Whiteness, Leveraging Whiteness in LGBTQ Spaces, Awareness of Racial Privilege, and Challenges in Engaging Conversations on Race. The first theme, the Invisibility of Whiteness, emerged as foundational. Ten out of 13 participants shared with me that they did not critically engage with their racial identity until they entered more racially diverse spaces, such as college or LGBTQ communities. Noah captured this sentiment: "I grew up in a predominantly white community, and race wasn't something I had to think about. It wasn't until I got to college, where I met people from different racial backgrounds, that I started to realize my whiteness" (Noah, Racial Autobiography Interview). This delayed awareness reflects how whiteness is often perceived as an "invisible" or "default" racial category, as suggested by Frankenberg (1993) and McIntosh (1989). Most participants did not initially recognize the societal advantages their whiteness provided, particularly in LGBTQ spaces, where they faced marginalization based on their sexual orientation but not their race. This invisibility of whiteness influenced how participants navigated LGBTQ spaces, often unconsciously leveraging their whiteness for social acceptance and leadership roles, a theme explored in Leveraging Whiteness in LGBTQ Spaces. Nine out of 13 participants acknowledged that their whiteness allowed them to navigate these spaces more easily compared to their queer peers of color. Chris, who is white-passing but identifies as culturally Colombian, shared:

People usually assume I'm white, and that has definitely made it easier to fit in certain queer spaces where being white is the norm. I don't face the same level of scrutiny that some of my friends of color do. (Chris, Interview III)

This realization of how whiteness functioned as social capital within LGBTQ communities aligned with Han's (2007) research. Paul reflected on how white gay men often held leadership positions in queer advocacy: "In queer spaces, especially in leadership or activism, white voices seem to dominate. It's like we're the ones people look to, even if there are others in the room who should be leading" (Paul, Vignettes). This realization led to a sense of discomfort as participants began to understand the racial dynamics at play, transitioning to the theme of Awareness of Racial Privilege.

Eleven out of 13 participants expressed an awareness of the privileges that come with being white, particularly within LGBTQ spaces. Ethan reflected: "I know I have it easier because I'm white. I don't have to think about whether my race will be accepted in LGBTQ spaces, while some of my friends of color constantly have to think about that" (Ethan, Interview III). As participants grew more conscious of their racial identity, they began to reflect on how their whiteness had provided unearned advantages, creating a tension between their marginalized status as gay men and their privilege as white individuals. However, this awareness of privilege often led to Challenges in Engaging in Conversations on Race, with 7 out of 13 participants reporting discomfort or uncertainty about how to engage in discussions of race within LGBTQ spaces. Ethan voiced his internal conflict: "When discussions about race come up, I feel like I don't know how to contribute without overstepping. I want to help, but I don't want to take space away from people of color" (Ethan, Vignettes). This struggle reflects the broader societal tension that Sue (2010) described, where white individuals grapple with addressing their privilege without reinforcing it. The cross-theme analysis reveals important patterns. Participants who recognized their racial privilege were more likely to

feel conflicted about how to engage in racial conversations. Of the 11 participants who acknowledged their privilege, six also expressed discomfort in discussing race, suggesting that awareness of privilege does not necessarily translate into comfort with addressing it.

Methodological Impacts on Participant's Evolution of Whiteness

The exploration of racial identity and privilege among white gay male students in UPSE settings reveals complex layers of awareness and reflection. This study employed multiple methodologies—including initial interviews (Interviews I and II), racial autobiographies, and a subsequent in-depth interview (Interview III)—to explore how participants articulate their experiences with race and privilege. The differences in participants' narratives across these methodologies offer valuable insights into the processes of self-awareness, internal conflict, and commitment to anti-racist action.

In the initial stages of the study, Interviews I and II focused on participants' general backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions related to their identities. During these interviews, participants often exhibited limited awareness of their racial identity and the role of privilege in their lives. For instance, Kevin reflected on his upbringing without explicit consideration of race:

In all honesty, race has always played a minor role at best in my life. My entire family is white and so am I, and most of the people that I met in my childhood were the same race as me. (Kevin, Racial Autobiography)

This statement illustrates a common theme among participants: the lack of recognition of whiteness as a significant aspect of their identity, which aligns with the concept of whiteness as an unmarked norm (Frankenberg, 1993). Participants tended to acknowledge

privilege abstractly without connecting it to their personal experiences. Ben mentioned, "I know privilege exists, but I treat everyone equally" (Ben, Interview III), suggesting an understanding of privilege as a general societal issue rather than directly impacting their lives. Furthermore, participants often viewed racism as an external problem. Oliver expressed, "Growing up in rural Ohio, the vast majority of people in my town were Caucasian... I remember viewing these [non-white] families as different, but not in a negative way" (Oliver, Racial Autobiography). This perspective indicates a limited engagement with systemic racism and an understanding of race as a superficial difference rather than a structural issue (Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

The racial autobiographies and Interview III provided participants with opportunities for deeper reflection and personal exploration. The process of writing their autobiographies allowed them to delve into their experiences with race more thoroughly, resulting in narratives rich with emotional engagement and critical self-analysis. Michael shared a profound personal experience:

The most important experience regarding race I have had was a sexual assault. This is because for a long time after I was very afraid of Black men, but I had to learn to work through this... I needed to stop generalizing to an entire population of people.

(Michael, Racial Autobiography)

This candid reflection highlights the complexities of internalized fear, trauma, and the conscious effort required to overcome prejudiced generalizations. Participants with mixed heritage grappled with the complexities of their racial identities. Paul, who is part Mexican with Indigenous ancestry, wrote, "I think of myself as white with Indigenous ancestry... I felt as though that wasn't 'enough' to acknowledge as I am mostly white"

(Paul, Interview III). His narrative underscores the challenges of navigating multiple identities in a society that often imposes rigid racial categories (Alcoff, 2006). Family influences were also critically examined. Noah recounted,

Some of my extended family members... would occasionally mock racial minority groups, invoke racial stereotypes, and use racial slurs in casual conversation... Their silence when other (older) family members spoke this way led me to initially believe that 'race' was generally not something to talk about with my family members. (Noah, Interview III)

This reflection illustrates how familial attitudes can contribute to the invisibility of whiteness and perpetuate racial ignorance (Mills, 2007). Moreover, participants expressed feelings of guilt and responsibility associated with their racial privilege. Oliver admitted, "I struggle with a sense of guilt as a white person... Imagining how I, as an individual, can work to change this narrative becomes often overwhelming" (Oliver, Racial Autobiography Interview). Such emotional engagement indicates a deeper personal connection to issues of race and privilege.

Manifestations of White Rainbow Weaponization

A central theme in the participants' narratives is the concept of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW), which refers to how white gay male students consciously or unconsciously use their racial identity to maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces (Matias & Mackey, 2016; Robinson, 2021). This phenomenon manifests through the dominance of white voices in leadership roles, the marginalization of LGBTQ individuals of color, and the perpetuation of racial hierarchies within marginalized communities. Participants acknowledged that their whiteness provided them with

unearned advantages in LGBTQ spaces, sometimes at the expense of inclusivity. Paul observed, "In queer spaces, especially in leadership or activism, white voices seem to dominate. It's like we're the ones people look to, even if there are others in the room who should be leading" (Paul, Vignettes). This dominance can sideline LGBTQ individuals of color, limiting their representation and influence within the community. Paul's reflection highlights how white individuals often occupy positions of authority, reinforcing existing racial dynamics and contributing to systemic inequalities (Han, 2007; Robinson, 2021).

Liam reflected on how his racial identity allowed him to navigate LGBTQ spaces with ease:

In queer spaces, it often feels like white is the default, and I know I've benefited from that. I never felt out of place or like I had to prove myself. It was easier to blend in because everyone just assumed I belonged. (Liam, Interview III)

This unspoken acceptance reinforces the notion that whiteness is the norm, perpetuating exclusionary practices that disadvantage LGBTQ individuals of color (Frankenberg, 1993; Lewis, 2004). Liam's experience illustrates how WRW operates subtly, enabling white gay men to maintain comfort and belonging without confronting the racial biases present in these spaces.

Chris, who is white-passing but identifies as culturally Colombian, shared his experiences of how being perceived as white affected his interactions within LGBTQ communities:

People usually assume I'm white, and that has definitely made it easier to fit in certain queer spaces where being white is the norm. I don't face the same level of scrutiny that some of my friends of color do. (Chris, Interview III)

His account highlights how racial perceptions influence one's sense of belonging and the ease with which they can access resources and support. Chris's ability to navigate these spaces without the barriers faced by his non-white peers exemplifies WRW, as whiteness becomes a tool for gaining acceptance and avoiding marginalization (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Matias & Mackey, 2016).

Moreover, participants recognized that their whiteness could be leveraged to gain influence or authority within LGBTQ spaces. Michael admitted, "I've realized that being white in the LGBTQ community gives me a platform that others might not have. It's something I need to be mindful of because it affects whose voices are heard" (Michael, Interview III). This awareness points to the potential for white gay men to unconsciously perpetuate systems of privilege by occupying positions of power and decision-making (McIntosh, 1988; Sue, 2010). Michael's reflection indicates a critical understanding of WRW and the importance of being intentional about inclusivity.

The concept of WRW also emerged in participants' reflections on social dynamics and representation. David noted, "I've noticed that the events and social spaces in the queer community often cater to white people, even though we say we're inclusive. It's subtle, but it's there" (David, Vignettes). Such observations reinforce how WRW prioritizes white experiences and preferences, often at the expense of diversity and genuine inclusivity (Han, 2007; DiAngelo, 2018). The subtlety of these practices makes them difficult to challenge, allowing systemic biases to persist. Participants grappled with the implications of WRW and considered how their actions might contribute to systemic inequities. Ethan expressed concern about unintentional biases, "I worry that even when I'm trying to be inclusive, I might be overlooking or overshadowing the experiences of

people of color in the community. It's something I need to actively work on" (Ethan, Interview III). This recognition underscores the importance of self-awareness and intentional efforts to address and dismantle WRW (Tatum, 1997; Matias & DiAngelo, 2013). Ethan's acknowledgment of potential oversight highlights the need for proactive measures to ensure that LGBTQ spaces are genuinely inclusive.

However, challenges remained in translating this awareness into meaningful action. As previously discussed, many participants felt uncertain about engaging in conversations about race without overstepping or causing offense. Noah shared his hesitation, "Sometimes I feel like it's better not to say anything at all. I don't want to accidentally offend someone or have others think I'm racist. But then I worry that my silence is part of the problem" (Noah, Racial Autobiography Interview). This internal conflict can inadvertently uphold the dynamics of WRW by allowing existing power structures to remain unchallenged. The fear of making mistakes or being perceived negatively prevents individuals like Noah from actively participating in efforts to dismantle systemic inequalities (DiAngelo, 2018; Sue, 2010).

Participants also reflected on the need to balance their involvement with allowing space for LGBTQ individuals of color to lead. Alex contemplated:

I realize that by staying silent, I'm not helping anyone. But the last thing I want is to speak over people of color or make a mistake that could hurt someone. It's hard to know what's the right thing to do. (Alex, Vignettes)

This concern highlights the complexity of addressing WRW—white individuals must find ways to support inclusivity without perpetuating dominance or marginalizing others

(Case, 2012; Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). David described his efforts to navigate this balance:

I've been trying to educate myself more so that when I do join these conversations, I can add something valuable without taking up too much space. But it's definitely a learning process, and I'm always worried about messing up. (David, Vignettes)

David's commitment to self-education and cautious participation reflects an understanding of the importance of allyship while being mindful of the potential impact of his actions (Matias & DiAngelo, 2013; Tatum, 1997). The participants' experiences illustrate that White Rainbow Weaponization operates through action and inaction. While some participants actively leveraged their whiteness to gain advantages, others, through hesitation and silence, allowed systemic inequalities to persist. Acknowledging these dynamics is critical to addressing and dismantling WRW within LGBTQ spaces.

In summary, the data reveal that White Rainbow Weaponization manifests in the ways white gay male students navigate and exert influence within LGBTQ spaces, with their racial identity affording them unearned advantages that perpetuate exclusionary practices and maintain racial hierarchies, even within marginalized communities. The participants' journeys often began with a lack of awareness about their whiteness, evolving into a critical reflection on how it provided them with these unearned advantages within the LGBTQ community. This recognition of privilege led to internal conflicts and discomfort in engaging in conversations about race, highlighting the complexities of navigating intersecting identities. Recognizing and addressing WRW is essential for promoting genuine inclusivity and equity within the LGBTQ community,

underscoring the importance of creating spaces for reflective engagement and dialogue to support individuals in understanding and addressing issues of race and privilege within marginalized communities (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000).

White Gay Male Students' Use of LGBTQ Identity at UPSEs

In addressing the research question, "How do participants articulate and describe their experiences of benefiting from and/or leveraging their LGBTQ identity within the institution?" a detailed thematic analysis revealed several key themes across the data that highlight how white gay male students navigate their LGBTQ identity in institutional contexts. The four primary themes—Visibility of LGBTQ Identity, Institutional Support and Opportunities, Navigating Social and Academic Spaces, and Intersectionality of LGBTQ and Other Identities—provide a comprehensive view of how participants leverage their LGBTQ identity for social capital, opportunities, and acceptance within institutional environments while revealing the complexities of intersectionality.

Visibility of LGBTQ Identity

The visibility of LGBTQ identity within institutional settings was a recurring theme, with 10 out of 13 participants discussing instances where being openly LGBTQ provided both benefits and challenges. Visibility allowed participants to connect with resources and social groups tailored to their identity. For example, Noah described how "being open about my sexuality allowed me to connect with the LGBTQ student groups on campus, which gave me access to leadership roles and a community that supported my identity" (Noah, Interview II). Similarly, Thomas reflected on the social benefits of visibility: "Once I came out, I was able to join LGBTQ groups, and that changed

everything for me socially. I had a space where I could be myself and meet people who understood my experiences” (Thomas, Interview II).

While visibility created opportunities, it also brought vulnerability. Henry mentioned how being visible made him a target for subtle exclusion in some spaces, particularly in classrooms:

I always felt like I had to prove myself more in academic settings after I came out, especially when discussing topics unrelated to LGBTQ issues. Some professors didn’t seem comfortable addressing my identity, so I just stopped bringing it up. (Henry, Interview II)

These reflections demonstrate the nuanced reality of being visible in institutional environments. Participants benefit from community spaces but often feel marginalized in more formal academic contexts.

Institutional Support and Opportunities

Institutional support emerged as a significant factor in how participants leveraged their LGBTQ identity. Nine out of 13 participants reported benefiting from opportunities and resources for LGBTQ students. Kevin explained, “The LGBTQ scholarship I received was a huge financial relief. It also opened doors for me, connecting me to alumni networks and leadership opportunities that I wouldn’t have known about otherwise” (Kevin, Interview I). This institutional recognition of LGBTQ identity translated into social capital and academic and career advancement pathways. Similarly, Alex shared how being part of the LGBTQ student group helped him gain leadership experience, “Becoming president of the LGBTQ student group gave me leadership skills that I could add to my resume, and it helped me grow in ways I didn’t expect” (Alex,

Interview II). These experiences underscore how institutional programs designed for LGBTQ students can play a pivotal role in personal and professional development.

However, some participants pointed out that institutional support was not universally experienced. Ethan noted, “There were some resources, but it felt like the institution wasn’t fully invested in our community. We had a club and some scholarships, but that didn’t always feel like enough to really support LGBTQ students” (Ethan, Interview II). This reflects the uneven support distribution across institutions, with some participants feeling that the available resources were performative rather than transformative.

Navigating Social and Academic Spaces

Participants frequently discussed how their LGBTQ identity influenced their ability to navigate social and academic spaces. While many felt empowered in social contexts, 8 out of 13 participants described challenges in academic settings where heteronormativity dominated. Noah explained:

In social spaces, being openly gay was a strength. It helped me form strong connections, but in academic settings, it was different. I felt like I had to tone down my identity to be taken seriously by professors and peers. (Noah, Interview II)

Finn added:

In my social life, I was very open about my LGBTQ identity, but in the classroom, I kept certain parts of myself hidden. Professors weren’t always comfortable addressing LGBTQ topics, and I didn’t want to push too hard and face backlash. (Finn, Interview II)

Comments such as these highlight the duality participants experienced, navigating spaces that were welcoming of their LGBTQ identity in some contexts while feeling marginalized or judged in others. Liam further emphasized the push-pull dynamic between social inclusion and academic marginalization, sharing, “Socially, I felt empowered by my identity. But in academic settings, especially when discussing issues that weren’t related to LGBTQ rights, it felt like my identity was something I had to downplay to be seen as credible” (Liam, Interview II). This tension reflects the broader challenge of navigating academic environments that, while progressive on the surface, may still marginalize LGBTQ individuals in subtle ways.

Intersectionality of LGBTQ and Other Identities

Intersectionality emerged as a crucial factor in shaping participants' experiences of leveraging their LGBTQ identity. Seven out of 13 participants discussed how other aspects of their identity, such as race or socioeconomic status, intersected with their LGBTQ identity, complicating their ability to access the benefits associated with visibility and institutional support entirely. Chris, who identifies as Latino, expressed feeling out of place in predominantly white LGBTQ spaces, “Even though I was visible and out, I still felt like an outsider in many LGBTQ spaces on campus because most of the leadership and resources were geared towards white students. My experience wasn’t the same as theirs” (Chris, Interview II). Ben, who comes from a lower socioeconomic background, explained how his financial situation impacted his ability to leverage his LGBTQ identity, “There were LGBTQ events and programs, but they required time and money that I didn’t always have. It felt like these opportunities were more accessible to students from wealthier backgrounds” (Ben, Interview II). These accounts demonstrate

that while participants could leverage their LGBTQ identity in specific ways, other marginalized aspects of their identity often created barriers to fully accessing the benefits associated with institutional support.

Cross Theme Analysis

A cross-theme analysis reveals how deeply interconnected these themes are in shaping participants' experiences. Visibility of LGBTQ identity often acted as a gateway to accessing institutional resources and support, with 10 out of 13 participants stating that being open about their identity helped them connect with LGBTQ-specific scholarships, leadership roles, and social groups. However, 9 out of 13 participants noted that the extent of institutional support varied, and in some cases, it was insufficient to meet their needs. Oliver shared how visibility led to direct benefits: "Coming out on campus gave me access to scholarships and mentorship programs designed for LGBTQ students, which helped me a lot" (Oliver, Interview II). However, this support often depended on institutional commitment, as Ethan reflected on the limited resources available at his university: "We had a few scholarships and a student group, but it felt like the university wasn't truly invested in supporting LGBTQ students" (Ethan, Interview II). The analysis also reveals the tension between visibility in social spaces versus academic spaces. While social spaces provided participants with a sense of community, academic spaces often required a more cautious approach. Finn described the difficulty of balancing these two realms, "Being open about my identity gave me a strong support network socially, but in academic settings, I felt like I had to be more careful about how much I shared" (Finn, Interview II). This push-pull dynamic reflects the broader challenges of being LGBTQ in institutional settings, where social and academic norms often differ.

Intersectionality further complicates these experiences, with participants from marginalized racial or socioeconomic backgrounds facing additional barriers. Chris highlighted how his Latino identity affected his experience in predominantly white LGBTQ spaces, “Even though I was visible, I never fully felt like I belonged in the LGBTQ groups on campus because most of the people in leadership positions were white” (Chris, Interview II). Similarly, Ben discussed how his lower socioeconomic status limited his ability to participate in LGBTQ programs, “A lot of the events required money or time I just didn’t have, so I missed out on some opportunities” (Ben, Interview II).

Overall, the cross-theme analysis underscores the complexities of navigating LGBTQ identity within institutions, with visibility often serving as both a pathway to support and a potential source of marginalization. Institutional support, while valuable, is not always equally accessible, and intersectional identities further complicate the ability to leverage LGBTQ identity within social and academic spaces fully. This analysis highlights the importance of considering multiple layers of identity when examining how LGBTQ individuals navigate institutional life, as the benefits of visibility and support are not equally distributed across all members of the LGBTQ community.

Manifestations of White Rainbow Weaponization in Leveraging LGBTQ Identity

A central theme in analyzing how white gay male students leverage their LGBTQ identity within UPSEs is the concept of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW). This refers to how white gay men may consciously or unconsciously use their LGBTQ identity to maintain or enhance their racial privilege within institutional settings, sometimes at the expense of LGBTQ individuals of color (Matias & Mackey, 2016; Robinson, 2021).

Participants acknowledged that while their LGBTQ identity provided them with specific benefits and opportunities, their whiteness often amplified these advantages, allowing them greater access to institutional support and leadership roles compared to their non-white peers. This dynamic can perpetuate racial hierarchies within LGBTQ communities, reinforcing systemic inequalities.

Dominance in Leadership and Representation. Several participants recognized that white gay men often occupy prominent positions in LGBTQ organizations on campus, which can marginalize LGBTQ students of color. Chris, who identifies as Latino, expressed feeling out of place in predominantly white LGBTQ spaces, "Even though I was visible and out, I still felt like an outsider in many LGBTQ spaces on campus because most of the leadership and resources were geared towards white students. My experience wasn't the same as theirs" (Chris, Interview II). This sentiment highlights how WRW manifests through the dominance of white individuals in leadership roles, potentially excluding or overshadowing the experiences of LGBTQ students of color (Han, 2007; Misawa, 2010).

Paul reflected on this dynamic, noting, "In queer spaces, especially in leadership or activism, white voices seem to dominate. It's like we're the ones people look to, even if there are others in the room who should be leading" (Paul, Vignettes). By occupying these positions, white gay male students may unintentionally perpetuate WRW by maintaining control over narratives and decision-making processes within LGBTQ communities.

Access to Institutional Support and Resources. Participants also acknowledged that their whiteness, combined with their LGBTQ identity, provided them with greater

access to institutional support and resources. Kevin shared, "The LGBTQ scholarship I received was a huge financial relief. It also opened doors for me, connecting me to alumni networks and leadership opportunities that I wouldn't have known about otherwise" (Kevin, Interview I). While institutional programs aim to support LGBTQ students, the benefits may disproportionately favor white gay men due to existing racial biases and structural inequalities (Patton, 2011; Harper et al., 2009). Ben, from a lower socioeconomic background, observed, "There were LGBTQ events and programs, but they required time and money that I didn't always have. It felt like these opportunities were more accessible to students from wealthier backgrounds" (Ben, Interview II). This reflects how WRW can intersect with class privilege, further marginalizing LGBTQ students who do not share the same racial or socioeconomic status.

Navigating Social and Academic Spaces with Privilege

White gay male students often found it easier to navigate both social and academic spaces due to their racial identity. Noah explained:

In social spaces, being openly gay was a strength. It helped me form strong connections, but in academic settings, it was different. I felt like I had to tone down my identity to be taken seriously by professors and peers. (Noah, Interview II)

While Noah faced challenges related to his sexual orientation, his whiteness afforded him a level of acceptance and mobility not always available to LGBTQ students of color (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Johnson, 2013). Liam highlighted how his racial identity facilitated his acceptance, "Socially, I felt empowered by my identity. But in academic settings, especially when discussing issues that weren't related to LGBTQ rights, it felt like my identity was something I had to downplay to be seen as credible" (Liam,

Interview II). This ability to navigate spaces by modulating the visibility of their LGBTQ identity while still benefiting from white privilege exemplifies WRW in action.

Intersectionality and the Marginalization of Others. The intersectionality of race, sexuality, and other identities complicates how individuals experience and leverage their LGBTQ identity. Participants recognized that their racial identity influenced their ability to benefit from visibility and institutional support. Chris noted, "Most of the leadership and resources were geared towards white students. My experience wasn't the same as theirs" (Chris, Interview II). This underscores how WRW can marginalize LGBTQ students of color, who may not receive the same level of support or recognition within institutional settings (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). Ben's experience further illustrates this point, "A lot of the events required money or time I just didn't have, so I missed out on some opportunities" (Ben, Interview II). His lower socioeconomic status, combined with the dynamics of WRW, limited his ability to leverage his LGBTQ identity within the institution fully.

Implications and Need for Critical Reflection. The manifestations of WRW in how white gay male students leverage their LGBTQ identity highlight the importance of critical self-reflection and intentional efforts to promote inclusivity. Participants like Ethan expressed awareness of these dynamics, "I realized that while my LGBTQ identity gave me certain challenges, my whiteness provided advantages that others didn't have. It's important to acknowledge that and work towards making spaces more inclusive" (Ethan, Interview II). Addressing WRW requires acknowledging the interplay of race and sexuality and actively working to dismantle systemic barriers that disadvantage LGBTQ students of color (DiAngelo, 2018; Matias & DiAngelo, 2013).

In summary, the data reveal that White Rainbow Weaponization also manifests in the ways white gay male students navigate and exert influence within LGBTQ spaces. Their racial identity affords them unearned advantages that can perpetuate exclusionary practices and maintain racial hierarchies, even within marginalized communities. Recognizing and addressing WRW is essential for promoting genuine inclusivity and equity within the LGBTQ community (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000).

The participants' journeys often began with a lack of awareness about their whiteness, evolving into a critical reflection on how it provided them with unearned advantages within the LGBTQ community. This recognition of privilege led to internal conflicts and discomfort in engaging in conversations about race, highlighting the complexities of navigating intersecting identities. The study underscores the importance of creating spaces for reflective engagement and dialogue to support individuals in understanding and addressing issues of race and privilege within marginalized communities. By critically examining their roles and the impact of their actions, participants can begin to challenge the systems of privilege that contribute to WRW. This involves fostering inclusive leadership, ensuring equitable access to resources, and promoting open dialogues about race and privilege within LGBTQ spaces.

White Gay Males' Response to and Impact of Racial Artifacts

For the research question, "How do participants respond to and describe the impact of exposure to researcher-introduced artifacts documenting the experiences of LGBTQ students of color in post-secondary education settings?" my analysis revealed several significant themes that illustrate the participants' evolving understanding of their racial identity and privilege. These themes include Initial Reactions to Artifacts,

Cognitive Dissonance and Discomfort, Reflecting on White Privilege, Developing Empathy and Understanding, and Commitment to Future Action. The analysis shows how introducing artifacts like vignettes prompted participants to re-examine their positions within racial and LGBTQ contexts.

Initial Reactions to Artifacts

In this study, I utilized vignettes as methodological artifacts to delve into the complex intersections of race and sexuality among white gay male college students. The vignettes were carefully crafted scenarios that presented participants with situations involving racial dynamics within LGBTQ contexts. By introducing these vignettes during our sessions, I aimed to evoke reflections, challenge preconceived notions, and foster a space for open dialogue about sensitive topics that participants might not have previously considered.

Upon presenting the vignettes, I observed a spectrum of initial reactions from the participants. Many displayed surprise, discomfort, or contemplation while engaging with the scenarios. This initial reaction often stemmed from their lack of prior awareness or consideration of how race intersects with LGBTQ identities, particularly within spaces they perceived as inclusive. The initial introduction of the vignettes also elicited solid emotional reactions from participants. Observing these reactions in real time, I noted that 9 out of 13 participants expressed surprise, discomfort, or shock when presented with scenarios involving racial tensions within LGBTQ contexts. For instance, in the first vignette, where Dan expresses discomfort about working with Tyrone, a six-foot-three Black football player, Noah initially hesitates before responding. He said, "Yeah, that would be awkward, pretty uncomfortable. I don't... yeah, I don't think I would sort of be

like, what? What do you mean? What do you mean by that? What are you talking about" (Noah, Vignettes)? His hesitation and questioning reflected an internal struggle to process Dan's potential racial bias. As the researcher, I noted this moment where the vignette prompted Noah to confront the discomfort of addressing racism within peer interactions. Similarly, Oliver sought clarification when faced with the same vignette, demonstrating uncertainty in interpreting the scenario. He asked, "I'm reading this the last part of this. And I'm gathering that Tyrone is the person that Dan thinks is going to pull the group, basically? Or... I just want to make sure I'm interpreting this right" (Oliver, Vignettes)? This need for clarification highlighted how the vignette challenged him to navigate his perceptions and potential biases.

In another vignette, where Ian expresses discomfort about going to a hip-hop club because it's "too urban," Thomas immediately identifies the underlying racial implications. He stated:

I think I would explore why Ian feels uncomfortable around hip-hop music, and he states it's too urban. However, I don't buy that necessarily. And I find that to be kind of a guise of racism, so I would maybe explore further why Ian finds it to be what he means by it's too urban. (Thomas, Vignettes)

This response indicated that the vignette effectively triggered Thomas to critically examine coded language and implicit bias. Throughout these sessions, my role as the researcher was both facilitator and observer. I provided the vignettes orally and in written form via the chat, ensuring participants had multiple ways to engage with the material. I intentionally designed some vignettes to be ambiguous, prompting participants to fill in gaps with their interpretations, thereby revealing their internal thought processes and

biases. I reassured them there were no right or wrong answers, creating a safe environment for honest reflection. When participants encountered overt instances of racism in the vignettes, some chose avoidance over confrontation. For example, in response to the vignette about a classmate's profile stating, "no Blacks," Paul said:

We would not talk anymore. That would be kind of... For me, sometimes I have, I guess, what I feel like is a trigger point with people coming... They'll just do something and then that's kind of... And that would be one. (Paul, Vignettes)

This reaction highlighted his discomfort and preference to distance himself rather than address the issue directly. As the researcher, I observed how this avoidance could indicate a broader reluctance to engage with racial issues, even when recognizing their presence. In contrast, other participants showed a willingness to engage more deeply.

Ryan, when discussing the vignette about forming a new LGBTQ group specifically for Black students, reflected on collective action and intersectionality. He commented:

How can we collectively organize to go back to the administration, which might be the overarching thing? It's like... I think the biggest thing here would be like, how do we keep the collective group together to collectively organize against... which the biggest problem there is like the homophobia, transphobia, racism that might be within the administration or within the university as a whole in the student government? (Ryan, Vignettes)

His response demonstrated how the vignette prompted him to think about systemic issues and the importance of solidarity. The vignettes also elicited personal introspection.

Thomas, reacting to a friend expressing concern about being labeled racist, said:

I would ask a follow-up question to delineate. Is it circumstantial that all his friends are white, or is that purposeful? Because it's very honest... if your common circles are made of people... if you're yourself... in the context of this vignette, if all of his, like, context circles are made up of white people, it's very realistic that he would not have friends... you know, be friends with people of color. But that doesn't necessarily mean that he isn't open to that. (Thomas, Vignettes)

Here, the vignette encouraged him to consider the complexities behind social group formations and the difference between intentional exclusion and circumstantial homogeneity. As participants navigated these scenarios, I remained attentive to their emotional cues and allowed them to process their thoughts. I occasionally prompted them with gentle questions to delve deeper, such as, "How does that make you feel?" or "What do you think might be underlying that reaction?" My aim was not to lead them to a particular conclusion but to encourage critical self-reflection and awareness of the relational dynamics at play. The varied responses to the vignettes underscored how different artifacts and intersections triggered different reactions based on each participant's experiences and levels of racial awareness. The vignettes served as mirrors, reflecting the presented scenarios and the participants' beliefs, biases, and emotional responses.

For some, the artifacts prompted a defensive stance or discomfort; for others, they became catalysts for deeper understanding and empathy. For example, when confronted with the vignette about being accused of racism after declining a hookup, Thomas chose not to engage further, stating, "I would, you know, let them feel what they feel. But... you know, I wouldn't engage, but I would think that that comment was ill-founded" (Thomas,

Vignettes). His response indicated a boundary and perhaps discomfort in addressing the accusation directly. Conversely, Ryan expressed a willingness to acknowledge systemic issues, saying, "I would just tell that the reason I'm not interested, but then also maybe acknowledge... that this is a racist space... and like, yeah, like that's... I'm sorry you have to deal with that" (Ryan, Vignettes). In facilitating these sessions, I recognized the importance of my methodological choice in using vignettes. They were instrumental in eliciting authentic reactions and provided a platform for participants to project their thoughts and feelings onto hypothetical but plausible situations. This approach allowed me to observe the relational configurations between their identities as white gay men and their perceptions of race within LGBTQ spaces.

In conclusion, the initial reactions to the vignettes highlighted the complexities and variances in how white gay male college students perceive and engage with racial issues. The methodological choice to use vignettes as artifacts was significant in uncovering these nuances. I created a relational space where participants felt comfortable exploring challenging topics by remaining an engaged researcher who facilitated but did not dominate the conversation. The vignettes effectively triggered various responses, revealing much about the participants' internal processes and providing valuable insights into the intersections of race and sexuality within the LGBTQ community.

Cognitive Dissonance and Discomfort

In designing my study to explore how white gay male college students perceive and navigate racial dynamics within LGBTQ spaces, I used vignettes as a critical methodological tool. These vignettes were carefully crafted scenarios that presented complex situations involving race and sexuality, aiming to elicit authentic reactions and

prompt deep reflection among participants. By introducing these vignettes during our one-on-one sessions, I intended to create a relational space where participants could confront challenging issues, potentially leading to moments of cognitive dissonance and discomfort. As I presented each vignette, I observed participants closely, noting their immediate reactions and body language. I was both a facilitator and observer—I read the vignettes aloud, provided them in the chat for reference, and offered reassurance that there were no right or wrong answers. I intentionally left some details in the vignettes ambiguous to encourage participants to fill in the gaps with their perceptions and biases, thereby revealing more profound layers of their thought processes.

As participants delve deeper into the vignettes, many experience cognitive dissonance. Specifically, 8 out of 13 participants reported discomfort upon realizing how race influenced the experiences depicted in the scenarios. This discomfort was crucial to my research design, aiming to challenge participants' preconceived notions and encourage self-reflection. For example, in the first vignette, participants were told about Dan, a white gay male, expressing discomfort about being assigned to work with Tyrone, a six-foot-three Black football player. The ambiguity of Dan's comment—"Now I have to depend on him to pass the class"—allowed participants to interpret the underlying reasons for his discomfort. Paul displayed notable cognitive dissonance during this vignette. After I read the scenario and provided it in the chat, he began unpacking his thoughts:

Now, I think... I would have a multipronged reaction to this, and I know this is intentionally vague, but... One, I would not discount his... Well, actually, no, he said 'him,' so I... My first instinct, and this just goes with my learned experience, is that

men are very scary to me sometimes, just in general. So my first instinct is to be like, 'Oh, he is scared of working with...' It does mention that he is six foot three, so he's imposing... Now I'm unpacking my own reaction to that. And I would be uncomfortable because I feel like Dan is just putting another label onto Tyrone, and now I know that I'm saying that I recognize that I'm putting my own label through my own learned experiences on somebody else. So that is an interesting reaction now that I'm trying to unpack that a bit. (Paul, Vignettes)

In this moment, Paul grappled with his internal biases and discomfort. The vignette prompted him to reflect on how societal stereotypes about Black men being intimidating might influence both Dan's and his perceptions. My intentional ambiguity in the vignette allowed him to confront these uncomfortable realizations. I allowed him to process his thoughts without interruption, providing silent support as he navigated his cognitive dissonance. Similarly, Noah reacted to the same vignette by acknowledging the racial stereotypes at play:

So like reactions to that. Yeah, that would be awkward, pretty uncomfortable... I think, you know, the fact that he's a six-foot-three Black football player, the fact that he is physically larger and Black, just sort of perpetuates this stereotype of intimidating Black men. So I think that's pretty... I'd have to sort of be like, 'What do you mean? What are you getting at?' (Noah, Vignettes)

Here, Noah recognized the intersection of race and physicality in the stereotype, experiencing discomfort as he considered confronting Dan's potential racial bias. I gently encouraged him to elaborate, asking open-ended questions like, "How does that make you feel?" to facilitate deeper reflection without imposing my interpretations. In another

vignette, participants were presented with a scenario where a classmate's dating profile stated, "no Blacks." Oliver reflected on how he might respond:

I'd like to believe that if I were friends with this person... I would bring it up... I think by associating me with that person, that I'm also associating myself with that sort of comment. I would be more uncomfortable not saying anything in the situation than... bringing it up and being a resistance against that sort of behavior. (Oliver, Vignettes)

Oliver's discomfort stemmed from the tension between his desire to maintain a friendship and his recognition of the overt racism in the classmate's profile. The vignette triggered him to consider his responsibility in addressing racism within his social circles. As the researcher, I noted his internal conflict and provided a supportive space by affirming his feelings and prompting him to explore possible ways to address the situation. The vignettes also brought to light participants' struggles with reconciling their own marginalized sexual identity with the privilege afforded by their race. In the vignette where Ethan fears being labeled racist after being questioned about having only white friends, Thomas considered the complexities involved:

I mean, I don't think it necessarily has to do with being... I think I would ask a follow-up question to delineate. Is it circumstantial that all his friends are white, or is that purposeful? Because it's very honest... if your common circles are made up of white people... it's very realistic that he would not have friends... you know, be friends with people of color. But that doesn't necessarily mean that he isn't open to that. (Thomas, Vignettes)

Thomas's response highlighted the cognitive dissonance of acknowledging systemic segregation in social circles while recognizing the need to be intentional about inclusivity. The vignette served as an artifact that prompted him to question underlying societal structures and his place within them. I facilitated this reflection by asking, "What do you think might be underlying that reaction?" encouraging him to delve deeper.

Throughout the sessions, different vignettes triggered varied responses based on each participant's experiences and levels of racial awareness. For instance, in the vignette where a Black gay male accuses a participant of racism after being declined for a hookup, Ryan expressed empathy and a broader understanding of systemic issues:

I would just tell that the reason I'm not interested, but then also maybe acknowledge... that this is a racist space... and like, yeah, like that's... I'm sorry you have to deal with that. That's not how it should be. (Ryan, Vignettes)

His response demonstrated an awareness of how experiences of rejection in dating apps are often racialized for people of color. The vignette allowed him to recognize his position within a racist system and to empathize with the other's frustration. I acknowledged his insight and used it as an opportunity to discuss the impact of systemic racism within LGBTQ dating spaces.

Conversely, Thomas responded to the same vignette by choosing to disengage:

That, frankly, I would just... I would either delete the chat or I would block that person because that assumption of disinterest is... it's probably not correct, and that person is making assumptions, which is... racism doesn't go both ways, but it is equally as damning to assume people have ill intent when they don't. (Thomas, Vignettes)

Thomas's discomfort led to defensiveness and a desire to distance himself from the accusation. The vignette exposed his difficulty in confronting the racial dynamics at play. I recognized his discomfort and refrained from pushing further but noted participant response variation. My methodological choice to use vignettes was instrumental in bringing these issues to the forefront. The scenarios acted as mirrors, reflecting societal issues and the participants' internal beliefs and biases. I could see how different artifacts and intersections evoked diverse responses by carefully observing their reactions and facilitating open dialogue. The vignettes served as catalysts for participants to experience cognitive dissonance—realizing that their perceptions of inclusivity in LGBTQ spaces did not align with the realities faced by LGBTQ individuals of color. As the researcher, I remained cognizant of the relational dynamics at play. I was not merely an observer but an active participant in the co-construction of knowledge. My role involved carefully introducing the vignettes, providing clarifications when needed, and guiding the discussions to ensure that participants felt safe to express their thoughts, even when they experienced discomfort. I also recognized when to step back and let participants process their reactions internally.

In conclusion, the use of vignettes as methodological artifacts effectively elicited cognitive dissonance and discomfort among participants, revealing much about their perceptions of race and privilege within LGBTQ spaces. The relational configuration between the participants and I was crucial in navigating these sensitive topics. By creating a supportive environment and being attentive to the nuances of their responses, I captured the complexities of how white gay male college students engage with issues of

race, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of intersectionality and the challenges of fostering genuinely inclusive communities.

Reflecting on White Privilege

In my drive to delve into how white gay male college students perceive and navigate racial dynamics within LGBTQ spaces, I employed vignettes as a critical methodological tool. These carefully crafted scenarios served as artifacts to evoke reflection, challenge assumptions, and stimulate conversations around race and privilege. By presenting situations that highlighted the intersections of race and sexuality, I aimed to create a relational space where participants could confront aspects of their identities that they might not have previously examined. As I introduced each vignette during our sessions, I remained actively engaged, observing participants' immediate reactions and facilitating discussions to encourage deeper exploration. The vignettes were intentionally designed with varying degrees of ambiguity to prompt participants to project their own experiences and biases onto the scenarios, thereby revealing underlying perceptions.

A significant theme that emerged was participants reflecting on their white privilege. This introspection was a natural progression from the cognitive dissonance and discomfort many experienced when confronted with the racial inequities depicted in the vignettes. Building upon the emotional reactions and cognitive dissonance, 10 out of 13 participants began to reflect critically on their white privilege within LGBTQ spaces. The vignettes served as mirrors, allowing participants to see how their experiences differed from those of LGBTQ individuals of color. One such instance occurred during the discussion of a vignette where the student government was deciding whether to recognize

a new LGBTQ group specifically for Black students. The administration preferred only one such group on campus. Ryan grappled with this scenario, saying:

I think that... Since I'm in a leadership position in this situation, I would first suggest ways to integrate students interested in the Black LGBTQ group... Ways for them to become integrated into the existing group... I would suggest a change in leadership where more of those Black students would have a seat at the table to almost force that group to be welcoming to everybody who wanted to be a part of it. (Ryan, Vignettes)

Noticing his focus on integration rather than supporting the formation of a separate group, I gently probed, "What do you think might be the reasons Black students feel the need for a separate space?" This question prompted Ryan to reflect further on the limitations of existing structures and how his position of privilege might influence his perspective.

Similarly, in a vignette where a Black gay male chemistry major, Connor, announces he is leaving the LGBTQ student organization because it is not welcoming to Black students, Thomas responded:

Well, I think part of that is the political nature, so saving face, but also I think it's very valid to... ask for, again, specific reasons why he feels that way... How can you as a board work to create a space for, you know, a more inclusive space versus the status quo? (Thomas, Vignettes)

Sensing an opportunity to delve deeper, I asked, "How might your own experiences differ from Connor's, and how could that impact your approach to addressing his concerns?" Thomas (Vignettes) then acknowledged: "I realized that perhaps I've been viewing

inclusivity from my own lens, not fully considering how race plays a significant role in others feeling welcome."

In other vignettes, participants confronted scenarios that directly challenged their perceptions of themselves as solely marginalized due to their sexual orientation. When faced with a vignette where a friend points out that they never ask what he wants to do, Paul admitted: "I would probably say that first, I don't like... I would first apologize... I would probably try to take responsibility for that... I would want my friendships to work, and so I would try to find an equitable solution..." (Paul, Vignettes). I asked, "Do you think there might be underlying reasons related to race that contribute to this dynamic?" Paul reflected: "Honestly, I hadn't thought about how my actions could be influenced by my own background and how that might overshadow others' preferences, especially friends who are people of color" (Paul, Vignettes). This interaction highlighted how the vignette prompted Paul to consider how white privilege can manifest in personal relationships, often unnoticed by those who benefit from it.

In the vignette where a classmate's profile states, "no Blacks," Oliver expressed a strong reaction:

I'd like to believe that if I were friends with this person... I would bring it up... I think by associating me with that person, that I'm also associating myself with that sort of comment. I would be more uncomfortable not saying anything...(Oliver, Vignettes)

I encouraged him by asking, "What challenges might you face in addressing this with your classmate, and how does your position influence your decision?" Oliver contemplated: "Being white, I have the privilege to speak up without facing the same

repercussions a person of color might... It's important that I use that privilege to challenge racism when I see it" (Oliver, Vignettes).

Throughout these sessions, my role as the researcher was facilitating a safe and open environment where participants felt comfortable engaging under challenging topics. I did not disappear from the process; I actively guided conversations, asked probing questions, and provided support as participants navigated their reflections. When participants showed discomfort or struggled to articulate their thoughts, I offered prompts like, "Can you tell me more about what's coming up for you?" or "How does this scenario resonate with your own experiences?" These prompts often helped participants delve deeper into their feelings and uncover insights about their privilege. For instance, after reading a vignette where a Black male accuses a participant of being racist after declining a hookup, Thomas chose to disengage: "Frankly, I would just... I would delete the chat or block that person because that assumption... is probably not correct..." (Thomas, Vignettes). Sensing an opportunity for deeper reflection, I gently asked, "What might be underlying his reaction, and how does your response address or ignore those underlying issues?" Thomas hesitated before admitting: "I guess I hadn't considered how systemic racism affects his experiences... Maybe my immediate dismissal isn't helpful" (Thomas, Vignettes). The vignettes elicited a range of responses, highlighting how different artifacts and intersections triggered varied reactions based on participants' backgrounds and levels of racial awareness. Some participants, like Ryan, began to see the importance of collective action and systemic change. In contrast, others, like Paul, recognized personal areas for growth but felt uncertain about how to proceed. In all cases, the vignettes were powerful tools for illuminating the often-unseen influence of white

privilege within LGBTQ spaces. By confronting situations where race played a significant role, participants were compelled to reflect on their identities and the advantages they might unconsciously enjoy.

Through intentionally using vignettes and active engagement as a researcher, I created a relational dynamic that fostered deep reflection among participants. Participants moved from initial discomfort and cognitive dissonance to more nuanced understandings of how their whiteness intersects with their queer identities. This process was not always smooth or comfortable, but it was essential for fostering greater racial consciousness. By not disappearing from the research process, I guided participants through these complex reflections, highlighting the importance of the researcher's role in configuring relational spaces that enable critical self-examination. The varied responses to the vignettes underscored the need for thoughtful methodological choices, considering how different artifacts and intersections can evoke meaningful dialogue and personal growth.

In summary, the theme of reflecting on white privilege emerged prominently as participants engaged with the vignettes. The methodological choice to use these scenarios was instrumental in triggering self-reflection and discussions about race, privilege, and inclusivity within LGBTQ spaces. The relational configurations between the participants and me were crucial in navigating these sensitive topics. They ultimately contributed to a deeper understanding of the intersections of race and sexuality among white gay male college students.

Developing Empathy and Understanding

An outcome of the vignette discussions was the development of empathy among participants, with 11 out of 13 expressing a deeper understanding of the challenges faced

by LGBTQ individuals of color. One vignette presented participants with a scenario where Connor, a Black gay male chemistry major, announces during a meeting that he is leaving the LGBTQ student organization because it is not welcoming to Black students. The group turns to the participant, the organization's president, awaiting a response. Oliver responded with noticeable concern and empathy:

I would say something like, 'I'm very sorry that you feel like this place isn't a safe space.' You know, despite my efforts and our efforts to make this an organization where everybody can feel welcome, I definitely would love to have a conversation with you... so we can come up with ways that might benefit you or might improve the club for everybody. (Oliver, Vignettes)

This vignette evoked a strong, empathetic response from Oliver, who recognized the organization's shortcomings and sincerely desired to understand Connor's perspective. As the researcher, I acknowledged his response and encouraged him to consider specific actions he could take to make the organization more inclusive. Similarly, Ryan reflected deeply on the same vignette:

I would think Connor for sharing his experience and how the faults of the group have made him feel, and potentially other Black students as well. I would encourage the executive board and the group as a whole to take this as motivation to engage in anti-racism. Perhaps we can put together educational opportunities within the group. (Ryan, Vignettes).

Ryan's response demonstrated an emerging understanding of systemic issues and a commitment to actionable change. The vignette served as an artifact that triggered him to consider structural reforms and addressing racial inequities within the organization.

In another vignette, participants faced a situation where Ty, a close Black friend, expressed that the participant never asked what he wanted to do when they went out, always defaulting to the participant's preferences. Paul responded with introspection:

I would probably say that first, I don't like... I would first apologize and then I would probably try to take responsibility for that... I would value that relationship more than I would value doing things that only interested me. (Paul, Vignettes)

This scenario prompted Paul to recognize his behavior and its impact on his friend, showing empathy and a willingness to change. I facilitated this reflection by gently asking how he might approach the conversation with Ty and what steps he could take to ensure a more equitable friendship.

When presented with the vignette involving the student government deciding whether to recognize a new LGBTQ group specifically for Black students, Noah grappled with the complexities:

I would want to talk to Connor individually and understand where he's coming from and why he's feeling like he's sort of alienated from the group... I think when you have people of color who are in positions of representation and influence in these sorts of organizations, they can help to create a more inclusive environment.

(Noah, Vignettes).

This response indicated a growing empathy and understanding of the importance of representation and inclusivity. As the researcher, I probed further by asking how he might advocate for structural changes within the student government to support the new group.

Throughout these interactions, different vignettes and intersections triggered varied responses among participants. Some scenarios involving personal relationships

elicited emotional empathy, while others highlighting institutional challenges prompted participants to think about systemic solutions. For instance, Ryan, when discussing the student government vignette, emphasized collective action:

How can we collectively organize to go back to the administration? I think the biggest thing here would be like, how do we keep the collective group together to collectively organize against... the homophobia, transphobia, racism that might be within the administration or within the university as a whole in the student government? (Ryan, Vignettes)

His response showcased an understanding of the broader institutional barriers faced by LGBTQ students of color and a desire to work collaboratively to address them. As participants moved through discomfort and reflection prompted by the vignettes, many began to express a deeper connection with the challenges faced by queer people of color in post-secondary education settings. The artifacts facilitated a shift from an intellectual awareness of racial inequities to a more personal, emotional engagement with the lived experiences of LGBTQ students of color.

My role as the researcher was integral in this process. I carefully selected and presented the vignettes to evoke critical thinking and emotional responses. I remained attentive to participants' cues, offering support and prompting deeper exploration when appropriate. For example, when participants hesitated or seemed uncertain, I might ask, "What makes you feel that way?" or "Can you tell me more about your thoughts on this situation?" This approach helped participants to articulate their feelings and consider perspectives they might not have previously acknowledged. Moreover, the relational dynamics between the participants allowed for a safe environment where they felt

comfortable expressing vulnerability and admitting gaps in their understanding. The methodological choice to use vignettes was instrumental in facilitating these moments of empathy and self-awareness. By engaging with realistic and relatable scenarios, participants were able to see beyond their own experiences and recognize the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ students of color. The vignettes acted as catalysts, prompting them to consider their positions of privilege and how they could contribute to more inclusive and supportive environments.

In conclusion, using vignettes as methodological artifacts in this study was highly influential in evoking empathy and understanding among participants. Through carefully crafted scenarios and guided discussions, participants were able to connect emotionally with the experiences of LGBTQ students of color, leading to meaningful reflections on race, privilege, and inclusivity. My role as the researcher was pivotal in orchestrating this process as I navigated the relational configurations and facilitated the exploration of complex and sensitive topics. The different artifacts and intersections presented in the vignettes triggered varied responses, but collectively, they fostered a deeper understanding and commitment to positive change among the participants.

Commitment to Future Action

As the sessions unfolded, more than half of the participants indicated a willingness to take action to address racial inequities within their communities. The vignettes served as catalysts, transforming passive awareness into proactive intent. For instance, in the vignette where a Black gay student named Connor announces he is leaving the LGBTQ student organization because it is not welcoming to Black students,

Noah, who was cast as the organization's president, reflected deeply on his responsibilities. He stated:

I would just say that, you know, I would want to talk to Connor individually and understand like where he's coming from and, you know, why he's feeling like he's sort of alienated from the group... I would want to handle it on a more individual, like person-to-person, like heart-to-heart kind of thing. (Noah, Vignettes)

At this moment, I facilitated further exploration by asking, "How might you use your leadership position to initiate broader changes within the organization?" This prompted Noah to consider systemic adjustments, not just individual conversations. He began to think about creating more inclusive policies and involving other members in diversity training. Similarly, Oliver, when faced with the same vignette, demonstrated a willingness to take actionable steps:

I would absolutely take that question seriously and... apologize, of course, that I made that person feel that way and try to come up with ways to resolve the issue and start to do things that Ty would be more interested in, even if they don't interest me, because I would value that relationship more than I would value doing things that only interested me. (Oliver, Vignettes)

Noticing his focus on personal relationships, I asked, "What strategies could you implement to ensure that all members feel included, not just Ty?" This question guided him to consider broader inclusive measures within his social circles and organizations. Ryan, when discussing the vignette about recognizing a new LGBTQ group specifically for Black students, expressed a desire for collective action:

How can we collectively organize to go back to the administration and voice the need for multiple, if not even more, needs within the LGBTQ [community]... Rather than fighting between ourselves and an already oppressed identity, how can we, rather than dividing the community, collectively organize? (Ryan, Vignettes)

To encourage him to develop this idea, I inquired, "What steps could you take to build solidarity among different groups within the LGBTQ community?" This led Ryan to contemplate organizing joint meetings and collaborative events to bridge gaps between subgroups. In another vignette, where participants had to respond to a friend expressing discomfort about attending a hip-hop club because it's "too urban," Thomas recognized the underlying racial bias and considered addressing it directly:

I think I would explore why Ian feels uncomfortable around hip-hop music, and he states it's too urban. However, I don't buy that necessarily. And I find that to be kind of a guise of racism, so I would maybe explore further what he means by it's too urban. (Thomas, Vignettes)

Sensing an opportunity for deeper engagement, I asked, "How might you approach this conversation to help Ian reflect on his biases without causing defensiveness?" Thomas then discussed the importance of open dialogue and educating peers about the implications of their language. Paul, after realizing his shortcomings in considering his friend's preferences in social outings, committed to making changes:

I would first apologize and then... ask several different ways that my behavior could change or things we could do together that he would rather do... I would try to find an equitable solution that we could kind of move forward. (Paul, Vignettes)

Recognizing his proactive stance, I encouraged him by asking, "How can you apply this approach to other relationships and group settings to promote inclusivity?" This prompted him to consider being more attentive and inclusive in various aspects of his life.

The vignettes functioned as intersections where personal experiences, biases, and societal structures met, triggering different responses that leaned toward action. As a researcher, I was actively involved in configuring these relational dynamics. I provided the vignettes orally and in written form, allowed space for participants to process their thoughts, and posed open-ended questions that encouraged deeper reflection and planning. By carefully selecting vignettes that touched on individual and systemic issues, I aimed to evoke a range of responses highlighting the participants' capacities for empathy and action. The scenarios were intentionally diverse to cover various facets of racial inequity within LGBTQ contexts, from interpersonal relationships to institutional challenges. Throughout the sessions, I observed that the participants' initial discomfort evolved into a willingness to engage more actively with issues of race and inclusivity. The vignettes served as mirrors reflecting societal problems and windows through which participants could envision their roles in creating solutions.

In conclusion, the commitment to future action emerged as a significant theme, illustrating a shift from passive awareness to active engagement among the participants. The vignettes, as methodological artifacts, were instrumental in triggering this transformation. My role as the researcher was crucial in facilitating this process—I actively created a supportive environment, asked probing questions, and encouraged participants to think critically about their potential impact. Through this relational configuration, the study not only deepened the participants' understanding of racial

dynamics within LGBTQ spaces but also empowered them to take tangible steps toward fostering inclusivity and challenging racism in their communities.

Cross Theme Analysis: The Researcher's Role and Participants' Responses to Vignettes

In this study, I employed vignettes as a central methodological tool to explore the complex intersections of race and sexuality among white gay male college students. These vignettes served as artifacts to evoke emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses, prompting participants to confront and reflect upon racial dynamics within LGBTQ spaces. My role as the researcher was both facilitative and interactive. I carefully crafted the vignettes to trigger specific reactions and guided participants through their responses during our sessions.

The diversity of the vignettes was intentional, each designed to evoke different responses based on the participants' experiences and awareness levels. Scenarios involving personal relationships often led to more emotional and immediate reactions, while those depicting institutional challenges prompted participants to think strategically about solutions. For example, vignettes that involved coded language, such as Ian describing hip-hop music as "too urban," led participants like Thomas to identify underlying racism: "I find that to be kind of a guise of racism, so I would maybe explore further what he means by 'it's too urban'" (Thomas, Vignettes). In contrast, vignettes highlighting systemic issues, such as the lack of inclusivity in LGBTQ organizations, pushed participants toward collective thinking and advocacy. The cross-theme analysis demonstrates a clear progression in participants' consciousness, facilitated by the strategic use of vignettes and my active role as the researcher. The vignettes triggered emotional

reactions, leading to cognitive dissonance and reflections on privilege. This process was not incidental but a result of the methodological choices and the relational environment I fostered. Participants moved from initial surprise or discomfort to developing empathy and a commitment to action. The varied artifacts—the vignettes—intersected with participants' identities and experiences differently, evoking a range of responses that enriched the study's insights. By not disappearing as the researcher but instead thoughtfully engaging with participants, I captured the complexities of their journeys toward greater racial awareness and advocacy within LGBTQ spaces. The methodological choice of using vignettes was instrumental in this process as a powerful tool to challenge perceptions and inspire change.

Manifestations of White Rainbow Weaponization in Response to Racial Artifacts

A central theme in analyzing how white gay male students responded to researcher-introduced artifacts is the concept of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW). This phenomenon refers to how white gay males may consciously or unconsciously use their racial identity to maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces, even when confronted with evidence of racial inequities (Matias & Mackey, 2016; Robinson, 2021). The participants' reactions to the vignettes reveal how WRW operates through avoidance, defensiveness, and superficial engagement with issues of race.

Initial Reactions and Avoidance. When presented with vignettes highlighting racial tensions within LGBTQ contexts, several participants exhibited discomfort and a tendency to avoid direct engagement with the racial issues presented. For instance, when confronted with a vignette about a classmate's dating profile stating, "no Blacks," Paul expressed a desire to distance himself rather than address the issue:

We would not talk anymore. That would be kind of... For me, sometimes I have, I guess, what I feel like is a trigger point with people coming... They'll just do something and then that's kind of... And that would be one. (Paul, Vignettes)

Paul's reaction demonstrates a form of WRW where avoidance is used to sidestep uncomfortable conversations about race, thereby maintaining personal comfort and the existing racial dynamics (DiAngelo, 2018). By choosing not to confront the classmate's overt racism, Paul allows the discriminatory behavior to go unchallenged, perpetuating exclusionary practices within the LGBTQ community (Sue, 2010). Similarly, Thomas responded to a vignette where a Black gay male accuses him of racism after declining a hookup, "I would, you know, let them feel what they feel. But... you know, I wouldn't engage, but I would think that that comment was ill-founded" (Thomas, Vignettes). Thomas's decision to disengage reflects a reluctance to explore the underlying racial dynamics, a characteristic of WRW, where white individuals prioritize their comfort over addressing racial issues (Matias & Mackey, 2016). This avoidance prevents meaningful dialogue that could challenge personal biases and contribute to greater inclusivity.

Defensiveness and Minimization. Defensiveness emerged as another manifestation of WRW in participants' responses. When participants were faced with scenarios that implicated them in racial biases, some reacted by minimizing the significance of the racial issue or deflecting responsibility. For example, when Ethan was presented with a vignette where his friend questions why all his friends are white, he expressed concern about being unfairly labeled, "I feel like it's not fair to assume that just because my friend group is all white, that I am racist. I can't help who I'm friends with" (Ethan, Vignettes). Ethan's response illustrates a defensive stance that deflects from the

systemic nature of racial segregation and the role individuals play in perpetuating it (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). By focusing on his intentions rather than the impact of his social choices, Ethan minimizes the significance of the issue, a common aspect of WRW (DiAngelo, 2018). Thomas also exhibited defensiveness when addressing the same vignette:

I think I would ask a follow-up question to delineate. Is it circumstantial that all his friends are white, or is that purposeful? Because it's very honest... if your common circles are made up of white people... it's very realistic that he would not have friends... you know, be friends with people of color. (Thomas, Vignettes)

While Thomas considers the possibility of circumstantial social circles, he does not acknowledge how systemic factors contribute to racial homogeneity, nor does he reflect on his agency in challenging these patterns. This defensiveness serves to protect his self-image and maintain the status quo, reinforcing WRW (McIntosh, 1988; Sue, 2010).

Superficial Engagement and Lack of Action. Participants often expressed empathetic sentiments but fell short of committing to concrete actions that would address the racial issues highlighted in the vignettes. This superficial engagement is another way WRW manifests, allowing white individuals to appear concerned without disrupting existing power structures (Case, 2012). For instance, when Oliver was presented with the vignette about Connor leaving the LGBTQ organization due to a lack of inclusivity, he responded:

I would say something like, 'I'm very sorry that you feel like this place isn't a safe space.' You know, despite my efforts and our efforts to make this an organization where everybody can feel welcome, I definitely would love to have a conversation with

you... so we can come up with ways that might benefit you or might improve the club for everybody. (Oliver, Vignettes)

While Oliver expresses a willingness to listen, he frames the issue as an isolated feeling rather than acknowledging systemic exclusion within the organization. His response lacks commitment to specific actions or policy changes that would address the root causes of the problem, reflecting a superficial engagement characteristic of WRW (DiAngelo, 2018; Spanierman & Heppner, 2004).

Centering White Perspectives. Another aspect of WRW evident in the participants' responses is the centering of white perspectives, even when discussing issues affecting LGBTQ individuals of color. Participants often redirected the focus to their feelings or experiences, inadvertently marginalizing the voices of those directly impacted by racial discrimination. For example, when Noah discussed addressing Connor's concerns about the LGBTQ organization, he said:

I would want to talk to Connor individually and understand where he's coming from and why he's feeling like he's sort of alienated from the group... I would want to handle it on a more individual, like person-to-person, like heart-to-heart kind of thing. (Noah, Vignettes)

By emphasizing a personal approach, Noah centers his comfort and relational style rather than considering structural changes that might be necessary. This individualistic focus can undermine efforts to address systemic issues, a tendency associated with WRW (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Lewis, 2004).

Minimizing Racial Issues in Favor of LGBTQ Unity. Some participants emphasized unity within the LGBTQ community without acknowledging the specific

needs and challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals of color. This approach can erase the importance of addressing racial disparities and perpetuate WRW by promoting a colorblind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993). Ryan's response to the vignette about forming a new LGBTQ group for Black students illustrates this:

I would first suggest ways to integrate students interested in the Black LGBTQ group... Ways for them to become integrated into the existing group... I would suggest a change in leadership where more of those Black students would have a seat at the table to almost force that group to be welcoming to everybody who wanted to be a part of it. (Ryan, Vignettes)

While Ryan acknowledges the need for inclusivity, his focus on integration into existing structures overlooks the possibility that those structures may inherently disadvantage or alienate Black students. By resisting the formation of a separate group, he may unintentionally prioritize the preservation of white-dominated spaces, a manifestation of WRW (Misawa, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989).

Implications and the Need for Critical Self-Reflection. The participants' responses to the vignettes reveal how WRW can operate subtly within white gay male populations in UPSEs. Even when confronted with scenarios that highlight racial inequities, participants often defaulted to behaviors that maintain their comfort and the existing power dynamics. Addressing WRW requires critical self-reflection and a willingness to move beyond initial discomfort or defensiveness. Participants like Ethan began to recognize this need, "I worry that even when I'm trying to be inclusive, I might be overlooking or overshadowing the experiences of people of color in the community. It's something I need to actively work on" (Ethan, Interview III). By acknowledging the

limitations of his perspective, Ethan takes a step toward dismantling WRW. This shift involves embracing discomfort as part of the learning process and committing to actions that challenge systemic inequities (Tatum, 1997; Matias & DiAngelo, 2013).

In summary, the data reveal that White Rainbow Weaponization manifests in the ways white gay male students respond to racial artifacts designed to illuminate the experiences of LGBTQ students of color. Through avoidance, defensiveness, superficial engagement, and centering of white perspectives, participants often perpetuated racial hierarchies, even when expressing intentions toward inclusivity. Recognizing and addressing WRW is essential for promoting genuine equity within the LGBTQ community (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). The participants' journeys highlight the complexities of navigating intersecting identities and the importance of critical self-examination in challenging systemic oppression.

WRW's Thematic Centrality

In this study, I explored how white gay male students in urban post-secondary education (UPSE) settings articulate and perceive their racial identity and privilege within LGBTQ communities, centering on the concept of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW). WRW refers to how white gay men consciously or unconsciously use their racial identity to maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces, often marginalizing LGBTQ individuals of color and reinforcing systemic inequalities (Matias & Mackey, 2016; Robinson, 2021). By analyzing data collected from 13 participants through interviews, racial autobiographies, and exposure to researcher-introduced artifacts (vignettes), the research aimed to understand their experiences of racial invisibility, the leveraging of whiteness within LGBTQ spaces, challenges in engaging in

conversations about race, and responses to the experiences of LGBTQ students of color—all through the lens of WRW.

A prominent theme emerged: the invisibility of whiteness among participants, which serves as a foundation for WRW. Ten out of the thirteen participants reported that race was not a significant consideration during their upbringing, aligning with the concept of whiteness as an unmarked norm (Frankenberg, 1993). This invisibility allows WRW to operate subtly, as white individuals may not recognize how their racial identity affords them unearned advantages within LGBTQ spaces. Participants like Henry and Liam realized the impact of their whiteness—and how it contributes to WRW—only after entering more diverse environments, such as college or LGBTQ communities. Henry explained:

"Growing up, race wasn't something I had to think about because everyone around me looked like me. It wasn't until I got to college that I started to realize the impact my whiteness had on how I was treated differently from others."

(Henry, Racial Autobiography)

This delayed awareness reflects how white individuals often do not recognize their racial identity and its role in maintaining power structures—key aspects of WRW—until confronted with diversity (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; McIntosh, 1988).

An overwhelming majority—11 out of 13 participants—expressed an awareness of white privilege, particularly as they navigated LGBTQ spaces within UPSE settings. This newfound awareness often led participants to recognize how WRW operates in their own behaviors and within their communities. Interactions with peers of color and participation in diversity-related events led participants like Ryan and Ethan to

acknowledge that their racial identity granted them unearned advantages, contributing to WRW. Ryan noted: "I recognize now that being white has protected me in ways that it hasn't for others. I don't face the same challenges, and I know that gives me a level of privilege I didn't really think about before" (Ryan, Interview III). They grappled with the tension between being marginalized due to their sexual orientation and benefiting from racial privilege, leading to deeper reflections on systemic inequalities and their participation in WRW (Helms, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989).

Nine participants acknowledged that their whiteness provided advantages or leverage in LGBTQ spaces—a direct manifestation of WRW. Liam observed that being white allowed him to feel a sense of belonging without question: "In queer spaces, it often feels like white is the default, and I know I've benefited from that. I never felt out of place or like I had to prove myself" (Liam, Interview III). Paul noted that white voices often dominated leadership and activism within LGBTQ communities: "In queer spaces, especially in leadership or activism, white voices seem to dominate. It's like we're the ones people look to, even if there are others in the room who should be leading" (Paul, Vignettes). These observations highlight how WRW functions within marginalized groups, with whiteness being leveraged as social capital to maintain dominance and reinforce racial hierarchies (Han, 2007).

More than half of the participants—7 out of 13—expressed discomfort or uncertainty about engaging in conversations about race within LGBTQ spaces, which perpetuates WRW by maintaining silence around racial issues. They feared saying the wrong thing or being perceived as racist, leading to hesitation or avoidance—a key component of WRW that allows systemic inequalities to persist unchallenged. Isaac

shared: "When race comes up, I sometimes feel like I don't know what to say. I don't want to make it about me, but I also feel like I should acknowledge my privilege. It's a tricky balance" (Isaac, Racial Autobiography Interview).

This reflects a broader societal challenge in addressing racial issues openly, often hindered by fears that contribute to the maintenance of WRW (Sue, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018).

A cross-theme analysis revealed that participants progressed from the initial invisibility of whiteness to an awareness of racial privilege but faced challenges in translating this awareness into action, thereby perpetuating WRW. Recognizing their privilege often led to discomfort in discussing race, highlighting the complexities of navigating intersecting identities and the need to confront WRW directly to effect change (Matias & DiAngelo, 2013).

The study's methodology significantly impacted participants' reflections on race, privilege, and WRW. Initial interviews revealed limited awareness of racial identity, but the racial autobiographies and vignettes prompted deeper personal exploration and confrontation with WRW. Participants like Michael and Noah critically examined their experiences and family influences, uncovering internalized biases and feelings of guilt associated with their racial privilege and participation in WRW. Michael shared, "I needed to stop generalizing to an entire population of people" (Michael, Vignettes). This process underscored the importance of reflective engagement in understanding and addressing WRW within marginalized communities (Mills, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

Regarding how participants used their LGBTQ identity at UPSEs, visibility emerged as a double-edged sword influenced by WRW. Ten participants found that being

open about their LGBTQ identity provided access to supportive communities and resources. Noah mentioned:

"Being open about my sexuality allowed me to connect with the LGBTQ student groups on campus" (Noah, Interview II). However, visibility also exposed them to vulnerabilities, and through WRW, their whiteness often amplified their access to resources compared to LGBTQ individuals of color. Henry noted: "Being visible made me a target for subtle exclusion in some spaces" (Henry, Interview II). Institutional support was significant for nine participants, who benefited from scholarships, mentorships, and leadership roles designed for LGBTQ students—a benefit often enhanced by WRW. Kevin explained: "The LGBTQ scholarship I received was a huge financial relief" (Kevin, Interview II). However, some felt that institutional support was insufficient or unevenly distributed, often due to the effects of WRW that prioritize white experiences. Ethan remarked: "It felt like the institution wasn't fully invested in our community" (Ethan, Interview II).

Participants frequently navigated a dichotomy between social and academic spaces, with WRW influencing their experiences. While they felt empowered socially, eight participants reported challenges in academic environments dominated by heteronormativity and racial biases. Noah stated: "In social spaces, being openly gay was a strength... but in academic settings, it was different" (Noah, Interview II). This indicates a need to balance authenticity with acceptance in different settings, complicated by WRW, that may hinder LGBTQ individuals of color even more.

Intersectionality further complicated their experiences, with WRW exacerbating the marginalization of LGBTQ individuals of color. Seven participants discussed how

intersecting identities, such as race or socioeconomic status, influenced their ability to leverage their LGBTQ identity. Chris, who is Latino, felt out of place in predominantly white LGBTQ spaces dominated by WRW, "I still felt like an outsider in many LGBTQ spaces on campus because most of the leadership and resources were geared towards white students" (Chris, Interview II). From a lower socioeconomic background, Ben found financial barriers limiting his access to events, a situation intensified by WRW: "It felt like these opportunities were more accessible to students from wealthier backgrounds" (Ben, Interview I).

This underscores the importance of considering multiple layers of identity when examining how WRW operates within institutional life (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000).

When participants were exposed to researcher-introduced artifacts—specifically vignettes depicting the experiences of LGBTQ students of color—their reactions highlighted the centrality of WRW. Initial reactions ranged from surprise to discomfort, with nine participants expressing such reactions, indicating that the scenarios challenged their assumptions and exposed WRW within LGBTQ spaces. Noah hesitated before responding to a vignette involving racial tension, reflecting an internal struggle to process potential racial bias rooted in WRW. Many experienced cognitive dissonance, with eight participants realizing that their perceptions of inclusivity did not align with the realities faced by LGBTQ individuals of color due to WRW. Paul grappled with his internal biases: "I would be uncomfortable because I feel like Dan is just putting another label onto Tyrone" (Paul, Vignettes). The vignettes exposed underlying biases and prompted self-reflection on their roles in perpetuating WRW.

A significant number 10 out of 13—began reflecting critically on their white privilege and how it contributes to WRW. The vignettes allowed participants like Ryan and Oliver to see how their experiences differed from those of LGBTQ individuals of color and how WRW maintains these disparities. Ryan considered systemic changes: "Perhaps we can put together educational opportunities within the group" (Ryan, Vignettes). This reflection led to acknowledgments of unearned advantages and considerations of how their positions, influenced by WRW, impact others.

Engaging with the vignettes led 11 participants to develop more profound empathy and understanding for the challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals of color, recognizing the effects of WRW. Participants expressed a desire to make their communities more inclusive and to challenge WRW. Paul recognized the need for more equitable personal relationships:

"I would first apologize... and try to take responsibility for that" (Paul, Vignettes).

The artifacts facilitated a shift from intellectual awareness of racial inequities to personal, emotional engagement and recognition of WRW's role.

More than half of the participants indicated a commitment to future action to address racial inequities and to dismantle WRW. The vignettes transformed passive awareness into proactive intent to challenge WRW. Participants like Noah contemplated systemic adjustments:

"I would want to handle it on a more individual, like person-to-person... but also consider creating more inclusive policies" (Noah, Vignettes). As the researcher, actively engaging with participants and guiding discussions was crucial in fostering this evolution and in highlighting the centrality of WRW to their experiences.

In conclusion, the study reveals a complex journey for white gay male college students in articulating their racial identity and privilege within LGBTQ communities, with White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW) being a central theme. Initially unaware of their whiteness and its role in maintaining power structures through WRW, participants developed greater awareness through reflective engagement, interactions with diverse peers, and exposure to vignettes depicting racial dynamics. While they recognized their white privilege and its impact, challenges remained in engaging effectively in conversations about race and in dismantling WRW. The findings underscore the importance of intentional efforts to foster racial literacy, empathy, and proactive engagement to address systemic racism and to challenge WRW within marginalized communities (Tatum, 1997; DiAngelo, 2018; Sue, 2010).

Discussion

This study explored how white gay cisgender men comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBTQ identities within urban post-secondary education settings (UPSEs). Grounded in Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory (QT), the research examined the mechanisms of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW)—the strategic use of white racial identity by white gay cisgender men to maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces. The study used qualitative methods to address three primary research questions, including semi-structured interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignettes.

The findings from this study coalesce around four main themes:

1. Invisibility of Whiteness and Emergence of Racial Awareness
2. Leveraging Whiteness and Manifestations of White Rainbow Weaponization in LGBTQ Spaces
3. Challenges in Engaging with Race and Conversations on Race
4. Impact of Exposure to Racial Artifacts on Awareness and Advocacy

Interpretation of Findings

Invisibility of Whiteness and Emergence of Racial Awareness

A significant finding was the initial invisibility of whiteness among participants. Many described their racial identity as invisible or taken for granted until they encountered racially diverse environments in UPSEs. This phenomenon aligns with Frankenberg's (1993) assertion that whiteness is often constructed as a normative, unmarked identity. Upon entering more diverse settings, participants began to recognize the impact of their whiteness, reflecting the "contact" stage in Helms's (1990) White

Racial Identity Development Model, where individuals are unaware of racial differences and the privileges associated with whiteness.

This lack of racial awareness underscores how whiteness operates as an invisible norm, allowing white individuals to navigate social and institutional spaces without considering the impact of race on their experiences (Lewis, 2004). This finding reinforces the systemic nature of white privilege within educational settings (Cabrera, 2018) and aligns with prior research indicating that white students from predominantly suburban and rural communities often encounter significant racial diversity for the first time in UPSEs (Goldman, 2019; Morton et al., 2018).

As participants interacted with peers of color and participated in diversity-related events, they began to express an awareness of their white privilege, particularly in how it provided a protective layer against racial discrimination. This awareness aligns with McIntosh's (1988) concept of the "invisible knapsack" of unearned assets. Participants grappled with the tension between their marginalized status as gay men and their privilege as white individuals, leading to deeper reflections on systemic inequalities (Crenshaw, 1989). This dual consciousness resonates with the intersectionality framework, emphasizing how overlapping identities can compound privilege and marginalization (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). The findings extend existing literature by demonstrating that white LGBTQ individuals can develop an awareness of racial privilege—a crucial step toward addressing systemic inequities within LGBTQ communities (Logie & Rwigema, 2014; Robinson, 2021).

Leveraging Whiteness and Manifestations of White Rainbow Weaponization in LGBTQ Spaces

Participants acknowledged leveraging their whiteness to navigate and maintain power within LGBTQ spaces—a manifestation of White Rainbow Weaponization. Many recognized that being white afforded them advantages not equally accessible to LGBTQ individuals of color. This dynamic reflects how whiteness functions as social capital within LGBTQ communities (Bourdieu, 1986), where racial privilege intersects with sexual orientation to reinforce hierarchies (Duggan, 2002).

These findings echo literature highlighting how white gay cisgender men are often positioned as representing the "normative" LGBTQ experience, thereby marginalizing LGBTQ individuals of color (Han, 2007; Winer, 2020). The strategic use of racial identity to maintain privilege within marginalized communities exemplifies WRW, emphasizing the need to critically examine power dynamics (Matias & Mackey, 2016). This extends previous studies by illustrating nuanced ways in which white privilege operates within LGBTQ spaces, reinforcing systemic inequalities.

Within institutional settings, participants leveraged their LGBTQ identity, and their whiteness often amplified these advantages. While being open about their LGBTQ identity provided access to supportive communities and resources, visibility also exposed them to vulnerabilities, with some experiencing subtle exclusion or needing to downplay their identity in academic settings. However, their ability to navigate these challenges was often enhanced by their racial privilege, buffering them from additional obstacles faced by LGBTQ individuals of color.

This dynamic illustrates WRW within institutional contexts, where whiteness is weaponized to maintain power and influence. Literature supports this finding, indicating that white LGBTQ individuals may leverage their marginalized sexual identity to obscure their racial privilege, perpetuating systemic inequities (Bell, 2019; Najarro, 2021). By highlighting this mechanism, the study extends understanding of how intersecting identities can both empower and hinder individuals within institutional settings.

Challenges in Engaging with Race and Conversations on Race

Despite their awareness of privilege, more than half of the participants expressed discomfort in engaging in conversations about race within LGBTQ spaces. This hesitation indicates a need for educational initiatives that foster racial accountability and dialogue, as suggested by Critical Whiteness Theory (Applebaum, 2010). Their discomfort aligns with DiAngelo's (2018) concept of "white fragility," where minimal racial stress triggers defensive behaviors that maintain racial equilibrium. These findings are consistent with literature indicating that white individuals often struggle with discussions about race, hindering efforts to address systemic oppression within LGBTQ communities (Cabrera, 2018; Sue, 2010). By highlighting this challenge, the study contributes to understanding barriers to effective allyship and the perpetuation of systemic inequities.

Participants also faced challenges such as homophobia and institutional barriers when leveraging their LGBTQ identity. While these experiences sometimes served as catalysts for advocacy, their racial privilege often buffered them from additional obstacles faced by LGBTQ individuals of color. Recognizing this, it is crucial to address

how intersecting identities can both empower and hinder individuals within institutional settings.

Impact of Exposure to Racial Artifacts on Awareness and Advocacy

Exposure to artifacts documenting the experiences of LGBTQ students of color heightened participants' awareness of systemic challenges faced by these individuals. Many reported increased sensitivity to issues of race and privilege, aligning with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, where critical reflection leads to a change in perspective. Participants developed empathy and expressed solidarity with LGBTQ students of color. However, within the context of WRW, it is essential to critically examine such expressions to ensure they are not performative acts that maintain existing power structures (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Literature cautions against superficial allyship that does not address underlying systemic issues (Harris & Leonardo, 2018; Terrance, 2021).

The artifacts catalyzed increased advocacy among participants, with many committing to promoting inclusivity. This shift from awareness to action underscores the potential for educational interventions to foster racial accountability (Applebaum, 2010). However, it's crucial to examine the motivation for advocacy to avoid reinforcing WRW dynamics, where advocacy becomes a means to consolidate a progressive image without addressing systemic inequities (DiAngelo, 2018). Engagement with the artifacts prompted reflective and transformative experiences, aligning with Queer Theory's call for challenging and subverting normative structures (Butler, 1990; McCann & Monaghan, 2019). However, there is a risk that such reflection may not translate into meaningful action to dismantle racial hierarchies, perpetuating WRW. Literature emphasizes the

importance of moving beyond personal reflection to engage in systemic change (Cabrera et al., 2016; Harris & Leonardo, 2018). Highlighting this potential gap contributes to understanding challenges in transforming awareness into action.

The findings illustrate a complex journey for white gay male college students in articulating their racial identity and privilege within LGBTQ communities. Initially unaware of their whiteness, participants developed greater awareness through reflective engagement, interactions with diverse peers, and exposure to vignettes depicting racial dynamics. Participants progressed from the invisibility of whiteness to an understanding of racial privilege but faced challenges in translating this awareness into action. Recognizing their privilege often led to discomfort in discussing race, highlighting the complexities of navigating intersecting identities.

The concept of White Rainbow Weaponization emerged prominently, offering a nuanced understanding of how racial privilege operates within marginalized communities. Identifying WRW has significant implications for LGBTQ communities, as it contributes to marginalizing LGBTQ individuals of color, reinforces systemic inequalities, and poses challenges to solidarity and inclusivity. Addressing WRW requires intentional strategies at individual and institutional levels. Critical self-reflection, centering the voices of LGBTQ individuals of color, implementing educational initiatives on race and privilege, and enacting policy reforms are imperative steps. These strategies collectively contribute to dismantling racial hierarchies and fostering an LGBTQ community that is truly inclusive and equitable for all members.

Participant's Identity Evolution

Racial Identity. In the early stages of the study, participants describe their racial identity in terms that suggest it is essentially background noise in their lives. Many express that, while they see themselves as “white,” they attach little significance to this label in their daily experiences. Alex notes, “I grew up in a predominantly white area, and it was just the norm. I didn’t think much about my race until later.” This lack of engagement with their racial identity reveals a broader theme in identity formation, where aspects of the self that are socially dominant or “invisible” often remain unexamined (Tatum, 1997). Because whiteness is so prevalent and normative in their environments, it is, for some participants, perceived as neutral or universal, much like the findings in Dyer’s work on the invisibility of whiteness in dominant social groups (Dyer, 1997). The participants focus more heavily on their LGBTQ identity, which appears as a more pressing aspect of who they are, often because it carries more immediate social implications and requires active navigation. As Ben explains, “Being gay was a bigger part of what I thought about in college; my race was just there, not something I really thought about.”

Participants show a noticeable shift as the study progresses and incorporate reflective prompts like vignettes and racial autobiographies. Engaging with these scenarios seems to catalyze a more complex understanding of their racial identity, prompting some to view it as an active force in their interactions, especially within LGBTQ settings. For example, Alex revisits their earlier stance, stating, “Being white in LGBTQ spaces makes it easier for me in ways I didn’t recognize at first. I’m realizing that I can be accepted without much questioning, which isn’t the same for others.” This

marks a transition toward greater criticality and self-awareness, aligning with Cross's model of identity development, which describes a shift from unexamined to more critically conscious racial identity stages as individuals recognize the impact of their race on their experiences (Cross, 1991). Chris echoes this shift, reflecting that "I can see how my presence as a white person in these spaces could make it harder for LGBTQ people of color to feel fully included. I used to think my race didn't matter much, but I'm seeing that it does." The structured nature of these reflections and prompts appears to have enabled participants to engage with the privileges associated with whiteness, leading them to a more active awareness of their racial identity, something noted in Helms' work on White racial identity development, which argues that awareness often requires deliberate reflection and exposure to counter-narratives (Helms, 1990). This change reflects a heightened awareness and an integration of racial and LGBTQ identities. Many participants come to see how their white identity interplays with their LGBTQ identity, resulting in a more intersectional view of themselves. In later interviews, participants more frequently mention their race as an active part of how they experience LGBTQ spaces. For instance, Chris observes, "There's a sense that white culture kind of dominates these spaces, which I hadn't thought about before. But now I see it's there, and it affects who feels welcome." The evolution in their responses suggests that race and sexuality, previously compartmentalized, are being integrated into a more cohesive identity. This dynamic aligns with theories of intersectionality, such as Crenshaw's (1989), which emphasizes that multiple identities intersect to create unique social dynamics and experiences. Through the process of reflection, participants become more aware of how their racial identity affects their LGBTQ identity, revealing a

transformation in their self-concept where they view these identities as interconnected rather than isolated.

Another significant shift in participants' identity development is the sense of responsibility that emerges as their awareness of racial privilege deepens. By the later stages, many express a recognition of their racial privilege and a desire to use this awareness to foster inclusiveness. Alex, who initially saw race as a non-factor, later shares, “I think more now about how I might contribute to making LGBTQ spaces more welcoming for everyone, especially since I have privileges others don’t.” This shift toward empathy and responsibility reflects a move beyond self-awareness to action-oriented allyship, where participants consider how they can leverage their privileges to support marginalized groups, a process Helms describes as part of the autonomy stage in white identity development (Helms, 1990). Similarly, David notes, “I’ve started thinking about what I can do to make spaces more inclusive. I didn’t used to think it was my place, but now I see it’s part of the privilege I have.” This evolution from passive recognition to active engagement signals that participants internalize their newfound awareness and integrate it into their sense of self and purpose.

Participants’ language and reflections on racial identity shift markedly from initial interviews to later data collection. Initially, racial identity is perceived as neutral or background noise, with most participants focusing on their LGBTQ identity as more salient and central. However, as they navigate structured reflections and scenarios that challenge them to consider the broader implications of their whiteness, they begin to develop a more intersectional and complex view of themselves. This development aligns with established theories on racial identity formation, including the models proposed by

Cross and Helms, which suggest that reflective practices can prompt individuals to recognize and critically engage with the social implications of their racial identity. By the end of the study, participants have moved from passive acknowledgment of their race to an active understanding of how it shapes their social experiences, demonstrating a progression in their identity formation from surface-level to integrated, socially aware identities that consider both race and sexuality.

Sexuality Identity. In examining the participants' reflections throughout the study, it becomes evident that the structured prompts and discussions facilitated a deeper exploration of their LGBTQ identity, often catalyzing shifts in how they perceive themselves within personal and community contexts. Initially, many participants frame their LGBTQ identity in terms of personal experience or struggle, noting moments of isolation or exclusion. Ben, for example, describes that “coming out was one of the hardest things I had to do; it felt like stepping out alone without knowing who would be there.” This sentiment of initial vulnerability and tentative self-acceptance is expected in the early stages of LGBTQ identity development, reflecting Cass's model of identity formation, where individuals often move from confusion and comparison toward acceptance and pride (Cass, 1979). Participation in the study seems to support many participants in moving along this spectrum, prompting them to articulate and reflect on their LGBTQ identity in more complex and socially integrated ways.

Through the interviews and reflective exercises, participants demonstrate a shift from viewing their LGBTQ identity as primarily personal or isolated to understanding it as part of a broader community identity, complete with shared values, challenges, and social dynamics. David initially expressed a sense of division between their private and

public identities, noting, “I never really talked about my sexuality outside of my close friends; it just didn’t feel relevant to bring up.” However, as the study progresses, they report a stronger sense of LGBTQ community belonging, stating, “I realized through these conversations that my experience isn’t unique, and it’s been validating to see how other LGBTQ people face similar issues.” This development aligns with Savin-Williams’ work on LGBTQ identity formation, highlighting the importance of community and social validation in developing a positive sense of self (Savin-Williams, 2005). For many, engaging in structured discussions with prompts that explicitly address LGBTQ identity fosters a broader understanding of shared experiences, contributing to a shift from personal to collective identity.

Furthermore, the study’s prompts that specifically addressed intersectional identities prompted participants to consider their LGBTQ identity in conjunction with their racial identity, leading to an evolving understanding of how these aspects of self-intersect within social settings. Alex, who initially described their LGBTQ identity as “something I just keep to myself in certain situations,” later reflects, “Being LGBTQ and white makes it easier for me in some spaces, but I also see that my experiences might make it harder for others to feel included.” This shift reveals a growing intersectional awareness, where participants recognize that the interplay between sexuality and other social factors, such as race shapes their identity. Crenshaw’s intersectionality framework, which underscores how interconnected identities influence one’s social experiences and challenges, supports this analysis (Crenshaw, 1989). By reflecting on these intersections, participants seem to reach a more comprehensive understanding of how their LGBTQ identity operates with their sense of self and within diverse social structures.

Participation in the study thus fosters significant self-reflection and identity development among participants. By the later stages, many participants express a heightened sense of responsibility and awareness of LGBTQ community dynamics, recognizing that they play a role in shaping these spaces. Chris, who initially expresses feeling “out of place in LGBTQ groups,” later notes, “I’m starting to see how I can contribute to making these spaces more inclusive, not just for people like me but for everyone.” This awareness aligns with the concept of identity synthesis, as Cass (1979) described in which individuals move beyond personal self-acceptance to an integrated identity that actively considers and supports community dynamics. Through structured reflection and explicit questioning about inclusivity and privilege, participants are encouraged to think more deeply about their own identities and consider how they contribute to the LGBTQ community’s inclusivity and diversity.

Overall, participation in the study seems to positively impact LGBTQ identity development, supporting participants as they move from an individual-centered to a community-oriented perspective. The study's reflective structure encourages participants to explore how personal experiences intersect with broader social dynamics, fostering a richer, more integrated sense of self. Literature on identity formation suggests that such reflective and structured opportunities for self-exploration are critical in identity development, particularly for LGBTQ individuals who may benefit from community connection and shared validation (Cass, 1979; Savin-Williams, 2005). By moving beyond isolated self-perception and engaging with both personal and community aspects of identity, participants develop a more comprehensive and socially aware LGBTQ identity, recognizing both their place in and contribution to the larger community.

Refinement of White Rainbow Weaponization Framework

In developing the theoretical framework for this study, I introduced the concept of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW) to explore how white gay cisgender men comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBTQ identities within urban post-secondary education (UPSE) settings. Drawing from Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory (QT), I aimed to examine the intersectionality of race and sexuality and how it influences power dynamics within LGBTQ communities. Throughout the research process, the findings from my study allowed me to refine and deepen my understanding of WRW, highlighting its manifestations and implications more precisely.

Refinement of WRW Definition and Manifestations

Initially, I defined WRW as the strategic use of white racial identity by white gay cisgender males to maintain and enhance their power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces. Through the study, I observed that this phenomenon is multifaceted and often operates unconsciously. Participants frequently leveraged their whiteness as a form of social capital to assert dominance, shape narratives, and influence decision-making processes in ways that marginalize LGBTQ individuals of color. One of the key refinements to the understanding of WRW was recognizing the role of the invisibility of whiteness in perpetuating racial hierarchies. The study revealed that participants often perceived their racial identity as the normative standard, rendering it unexamined and unacknowledged. This invisibility allowed for the perpetuation of white-centric perspectives, diminishing the experiences of LGBTQ individuals of color. For instance, participants would describe LGBTQ issues primarily from their own experiences, assuming universality, which inadvertently dismissed the unique challenges faced by

their peers of color. This finding aligns with Frankenberg's (1993) assertion that whiteness operates as an unmarked norm, making its influence pervasive yet unseen.

Furthermore, the study refined the understanding of WRW by highlighting how domination in leadership roles contributes to systemic inequalities within LGBTQ spaces. Participants often occupied prominent positions within LGBTQ organizations and campus groups, enabling them to set agendas, prioritize issues that primarily affect them, and control resources. This concentration of power marginalized the voices and needs of LGBTQ people of color, perpetuating a hierarchy within the community. The data underscored Han's (2007) findings on racial hierarchies persisting within gay communities, leading to exclusionary practices that favor whiteness. Another significant refinement was recognizing WRW's manifestation through resistance to engaging in conversations about race. The study participants frequently expressed discomfort or avoidance when racial topics arose, often due to fear of being perceived as racist or inadequate in their understanding. This avoidance maintained the status quo and hindered efforts to address racial inequalities within LGBTQ spaces. By not confronting their own racial biases, participants inadvertently perpetuated microaggressions and created environments where LGBTQ people of color felt unsafe or unwelcome. This behavior reflects DiAngelo's (2018) concept of white fragility, where minimal racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering defensive moves.

Integration of Participants' Experiences with Existing Literature

The participants' narratives provided rich insights, allowing me to refine the WRW framework further. For example, many described instances where they engaged in advocacy and activism but centered on issues that primarily affected white LGBTQ

individuals. This centering diverted attention and resources away from intersectional concerns impacting LGBTQ people of color. Ahmed's (2007) critique of diversity work reinforcing whiteness when it fails to examine underlying power structures was evident in these practices. Moreover, the study highlighted how some participants engaged in cultural appropriation without acknowledging the origins or systemic oppression faced by the communities from which they borrowed. By adopting elements of Black or Latinx queer culture, they unintentionally contributed to the erasure of the identities of LGBTQ individuals of color. This finding expanded upon previous literature by providing concrete examples of how appropriation functions as a mechanism of WRW within contemporary LGBTQ settings. Through the study, I also observed that participants often experienced cognitive dissonance when reconciling their marginalized status as LGBTQ individuals with their privileged position as white people. This dissonance is sometimes manifested in defensive behaviors or reluctance to acknowledge racial privilege. Participants grappled with understanding how they could both experience oppression and perpetuate it. This complexity deepened the WRW framework by emphasizing the psychological processes that underlie resistance to engaging with racial issues. By integrating Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, the study illuminated how participants might avoid or rationalize behaviors that contribute to systemic inequalities to maintain a cohesive self-concept. Recognizing this internal conflict is crucial for developing strategies to encourage critical self-reflection and foster inclusive practices within LGBTQ communities.

The study's findings also reinforced the importance of intersectionality in understanding WRW. By observing how overlapping social identities contribute to

unique experiences of marginalization, I refined the framework to account for the synergistic challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals of color. Participants often overlooked how their racial privilege intersected with their sexual minority status, leading to a lack of awareness about the compounded oppression experienced by others. Integrating Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory with Intersectionality Theory allowed for a more nuanced analysis of participants' behaviors and attitudes. The data demonstrated that while participants were attuned to issues of sexual orientation discrimination, they frequently lacked a critical understanding of how race shaped their experiences and those of others within the LGBTQ community. This refinement emphasizes the need for a holistic approach that considers multiple dimensions of identity and power.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The refinements to the WRW framework have significant implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, the study contributes to expanding discourse on intra-community dynamics by providing empirical evidence of how white gay cisgender males may unconsciously perpetuate racial hierarchies within LGBTQ spaces. It challenges existing literature to consider the subtle and often unacknowledged ways privilege operates among marginalized groups. Practically, the refined understanding of WRW underscores the necessity of developing targeted interventions to address racial biases within LGBTQ communities. The study suggests that fostering racial literacy and encouraging open dialogue about race and privilege are essential steps toward mitigating the effects of WRW. By highlighting specific manifestations of WRW, such as

the invisibility of whiteness and resistance to racial discussions, the research provides actionable insights for educators, activists, and community leaders.

This research deepened my understanding of how WRW functions and the importance of critical self-reflection. Recognizing my position as a white gay male, I am aware of how I may unconsciously contribute to the dynamics described. The study has reinforced the need for intentional efforts toward inclusivity and equity, personally and within the broader LGBTQ community.

In conclusion, the study allowed me to refine the theoretical framework of White Rainbow Weaponization by providing empirical evidence of its manifestations and impacts within UPSE settings. By integrating participants' experiences with existing literature, I developed a more nuanced understanding of how WRW operates and how it can be addressed. This refined framework is a foundation for ongoing research and practice to foster more inclusive and equitable LGBTQ spaces. It highlights the critical need for white gay cisgender men to engage in self-reflection, acknowledge their privileges, and actively work toward dismantling systemic inequalities within their communities.

Contribution to Literature

The exploration of White Rainbow Weaponization extends existing literature in several significant ways. Firstly, it highlights intra-community dynamics by shedding light on internal power dynamics related to race within LGBTQ communities. While much research focuses on external discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, this study emphasizes how racial privilege operates internally, affecting relationships and hierarchies among community members (Han, 2007; Robinson, 2021).

Secondly, by integrating Critical Whiteness Theory and Queer Theory, WRW provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how race and sexuality intersect to produce unique forms of privilege and oppression. This interdisciplinary approach allows a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity formation and power structures within marginalized groups (Cabrera, 2018; Matias & Mackey, 2016).

Lastly, introducing WRW offers a novel conceptualization by contributing a new term and analytical tool for scholars and practitioners. This concept enables a more nuanced examination of racial dynamics within marginalized communities, facilitating strategies to address and mitigate internal inequities. Advancing these areas enriches theoretical discussions and provides practical insights for addressing racial privilege within LGBTQ spaces.

White Rainbow Weaponization represents a critical area of inquiry for understanding the complexities of identity, privilege, and power within LGBTQ communities. Unveiling how whiteness can be strategically employed to maintain dominance calls for re-examining inclusivity efforts and adopting intersectional approaches that address both racial and sexual identities. Addressing WRW is imperative for fostering genuinely inclusive environments where all LGBTQ community members thrive. This requires commitment from individuals, communities, and institutions to challenge ingrained biases, dismantle systemic inequalities, and promote equitable practices honoring diversity within marginalized groups.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Education

The findings of this study illuminate the complex ways in which white gay cisgender males navigate their racial and LGBTQ identities within urban post-secondary

education (UPSE) settings. The emergence of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW) underscores the strategic use of white racial identity to maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces, often at the expense of LGBTQ individuals of color. These insights significantly affect policy, practice, and education at multiple levels. This chapter explores these implications and is organized around the individual, group, institutional, and national levels. By addressing the issues at each level, stakeholders can develop comprehensive strategies to foster inclusivity, equity, and social justice within UPSEs and the broader LGBTQ community.

Individual Implications

At the individual level, white gay cisgender men must engage in continuous self-reflection to recognize and understand their racial biases and privileges. The study highlights the invisibility of whiteness, indicating that many individuals are unaware of how their racial identity grants them unearned advantages. Personal accountability involves acknowledging one's role in perpetuating systemic inequalities and committing to meaningful change. To achieve this, individuals should proactively seek education on intersectionality, which consists of understanding how race, sexuality, and gender intersect to compound marginalization. This education can be pursued through reading, attending workshops, and engaging in conversations that challenge preconceived notions, thereby fostering a deeper awareness of the complexities of overlapping identities.

Furthermore, individuals must confront and challenge their internalized biases and stereotypes to prevent the marginalization of others. This process involves critically examining one's thoughts, language, and actions that may contribute to systemic injustices. Developing racial literacy is essential for navigating conversations about race

more effectively, reducing discomfort, and fostering meaningful dialogue. By enhancing their understanding and awareness, individuals can better address their prejudices and contribute to creating a more inclusive environment within LGBTQ spaces.

Active allyship and advocacy are crucial components of individual-level implications. Moving beyond passive support, individuals must take deliberate actions to uplift and empower LGBTQ individuals of color. This includes listening to their experiences, validating their feelings, and standing in solidarity against discrimination and exclusion. Additionally, individuals should be prepared to confront and challenge racist remarks or behaviors within LGBTQ communities, even when it is uncomfortable. Committing to inclusivity means intentionally diversifying one's social circles, consuming media created by people of color, and supporting businesses and organizations led by marginalized individuals. These actions help dismantle homogeneous networks that reinforce privilege and exclusion, thereby fostering safer and more inclusive environments for all members of the LGBTQ community.

Community Implications

LGBTQ groups and organizations must critically evaluate their membership policies to ensure they are inclusive of individuals from all racial backgrounds. By actively recruiting and retaining members of color, these groups can enrich their dynamics and perspectives, fostering a more diverse and representative community. But it doesn't stop there. It is essential to encourage and support LGBTQ individuals of color to assume leadership roles. Diverse leadership not only challenges existing power structures but also ensures that decision-making processes reflect the needs and

experiences of all group members, promoting equity and inclusivity within the organization. This is a powerful tool for change and a reason for hope.

Education and training at the group level play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive environment. Facilitating regular workshops and discussions on topics such as white privilege, systemic racism, and intersectionality can enhance collective awareness and provide members with the tools needed to address internal biases. Implementing peer-led education programs further supports this goal by allowing group members to share their personal experiences and narratives. This peer education approach humanizes abstract concepts, promoting empathy and understanding among members and strengthening the group's commitment to inclusivity and equity.

Cultivating inclusive group cultures involves deliberately challenging and revising existing norms, traditions, and practices that may inadvertently exclude or alienate certain members. Groups must reassess event themes, meeting structures, and communication styles to identify and eliminate exclusionary elements. Moreover, establishing safe and brave spaces is vital for creating an environment where members feel comfortable expressing themselves and engaging in challenging conversations. By setting ground rules for respectful dialogue and supporting those sharing vulnerable experiences, groups can ensure that all members feel valued and heard, fostering a truly inclusive and supportive community.

Institutional Implications

The study underscores the need for curriculum development and integration, incorporating intersectional perspectives across academic programs. Institutions should design courses that explore the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and other

identities to deepen students' understanding of systemic inequalities. Additionally, implementing mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion education for all students can foster a campus-wide culture of awareness and respect. These educational initiatives should be thoughtfully crafted to challenge existing biases and promote critical thinking, aligning with calls in the literature for programs that address normative assumptions and enhance critical consciousness.

At the institutional level, comprehensive policies and practices are essential to create an inclusive and equitable environment for LGBTQ students of color. Establishing and enforcing anti-discrimination policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other protected characteristics is crucial. Furthermore, creating dedicated offices or committees focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion can provide the necessary leadership and accountability to implement systemic changes. Faculty and staff training programs on implicit bias, white privilege, and inclusive pedagogy are vital to equip educators with the skills to support a diverse student body effectively. Inclusive teaching practices, such as selecting diverse course materials and facilitating respectful discussions, should be adopted to recognize and value the varied experiences of all students.

To foster inclusive campus communities, institutions must enhance support services tailored to the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ students of color. Providing culturally competent counseling and advising, along with mentorship and networking opportunities, can mitigate feelings of isolation and empower these students. Organizing inclusive events and programming that celebrate diversity and encourage cross-cultural engagement can strengthen the campus community by highlighting the contributions of

marginalized groups. Additionally, involving students from underrepresented backgrounds in decision-making ensures that policies and programs reflect the needs of the entire student body. Regular campus climate surveys and transparent reporting of inclusivity initiatives are essential for monitoring progress and maintaining accountability. By addressing these implications at the individual, group, institutional, and national levels, stakeholders can develop comprehensive strategies to dismantle systemic inequalities and promote a truly inclusive and equitable educational environment.

National Implications

At the national level, policy advocacy and legislative action are crucial in promoting inclusivity and equity for LGBTQ individuals of color. National educational organizations and policymakers should advocate for inclusive policies that mandate diversity and inclusion initiatives within higher education institutions. This includes securing funding for programs that address intersectionality and systemic inequities. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen federal and state anti-discrimination laws to provide comprehensive protections for LGBTQ individuals of color across various sectors, including education, employment, and housing. These legislative efforts are essential to create a supportive and equitable environment for marginalized communities on a broader scale.

Funding for research and programs is another critical area of focus. Government agencies and foundations should allocate resources to support intersectional research that explores the overlapping identities of race, sexuality, and gender. This investment can advance knowledge and inform evidence-based interventions to reduce systemic

inequities. Furthermore, establishing grant programs and scholarships specifically for LGBTQ students of color can help mitigate financial barriers to education, encouraging diverse participation in higher education. By providing this financial support, national entities can foster a more inclusive and representative academic landscape.

Lastly, national educational standards and accreditation must incorporate diversity criteria to ensure institutions prioritize inclusivity in their strategic planning and resource allocation. Accreditation bodies should include specific requirements related to diversity and inclusion in their standards, encouraging higher education institutions to adopt best practices for fostering inclusive environments. Developing comprehensive best practice guidelines through national organizations can assist institutions in implementing effective policies and programs. Additionally, promoting diversity in leadership through national leadership development programs and ensuring representation in leadership positions within national educational and LGBTQ organizations can influence policy decisions and promote inclusive agendas. Public awareness and education campaigns, including national campaigns on intersectionality and educational initiatives in K-12 schools, are also essential. These campaigns can raise public awareness about the challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals of color, fostering empathy and support through media, social platforms, and partnerships. Introducing discussions on race, sexuality, and intersectionality in early education can lay the groundwork for more inclusive attitudes and reduce prejudice from an early age.

My Reflexivity: Interacting with My Own Racial Identity through Critical Whiteness Theory

Throughout the research process, I actively engaged with my own racial identity using Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) to examine how my positionality as a white researcher influenced the study. Recognizing that whiteness often operates invisibly, maintaining power structures through claims of neutrality and objectivity (Frankenberg, 1993; Matias & Mackey, 2016), I sought to make my whiteness visible and critically assess how it impacted my interactions with participants and the interpretation of data.

At the outset, I was aware that my racial identity could both facilitate and hinder my engagement with the participants. In an early memo, I reflected:

"As I prepare to conduct interviews with participants who share my sexual orientation but not necessarily my racial consciousness, I realize that my whiteness may create an unspoken rapport yet also perpetuate the very dynamics of privilege I'm studying. I must remain vigilant about how my racial identity influences the research." (Researcher Memo)

This acknowledgment prompted me to consider how my experiences and perspectives as a white gay male might shape the research trajectory, potentially reinforcing the invisibility of whiteness unless consciously addressed. Additionally, during the writing phase of the dissertation, I noticed a reluctance to use active "I" statements, often defaulting to passive constructions. This stylistic choice, I realized, was more than a matter of academic convention—it was a way to distance myself from the research and maintain a veneer of objectivity. In a reflective memo, I wrote:

"Today, I caught myself repeatedly avoiding 'I' in my writing, opting instead for passive language like 'the data were analyzed' instead of 'I analyzed the data.' I wonder if this is an unconscious attempt to present the research as neutral and detached. But isn't this a manifestation of whiteness—claiming objectivity while hiding the researcher's influence?" (Researcher Memo)

By obscuring my presence in the research, I was inadvertently upholding the notion that knowledge production is neutral and that the researcher's positionality does not impact the findings—a concept critiqued by CWT for perpetuating white norms and maintaining systemic power imbalances (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Recognizing this tendency, I consciously tried to write in the active voice, explicitly acknowledging my role in the research process. This shift was sometimes uncomfortable, as it required confronting my biases and the privilege inherent in my position. In another memo, I noted:

"Switching to active voice feels exposing. Writing 'I observed' or 'I interpreted' places me directly within the narrative, making it clear that my perspective shapes the analysis. This transparency is necessary, but it also makes me confront aspects of my whiteness that I might prefer to leave unexamined." (Researcher Memo)

Embracing reflexivity allowed me to critically engage with my positionality, challenging the implicit biases that could influence the study and ensuring that the research did not inadvertently reinforce White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW).

Additionally, by attempting to claim objectivity, I realized I was reinforcing the illusion of neutrality often associated with whiteness in academic research. CWT argues that such claims serve to uphold white supremacy by presenting white perspectives as universal and unbiased (Leonardo, 2002). In reflecting on this, I wrote:

"My reluctance to use 'I' stems from a deeper issue—the desire to present the findings as universally valid, without acknowledging the subjective lens through which I view the world. This is a function of whiteness, asserting that my interpretations are the default rather than situated within a specific racial and cultural context." (Researcher Memo)

Acknowledging this helped me understand that true objectivity is unattainable and that transparency about the researcher's identity and perspective is crucial for ethical and accurate scholarship. To counteract the maintenance of whiteness through claims of objectivity, I intentionally began to center my positionality within the dissertation. I incorporated reflexive passages that detailed how my racial identity influenced various aspects of the research, from participant interactions to data interpretation. For example:

"In analyzing the participants' reluctance to engage in conversations about race, I recognize parallels with my own experiences. As a white individual, I have felt similar discomfort, which may lead to empathy but also necessitates caution to avoid normalizing avoidance behaviors that contribute to WRW." (Dissertation, Chapter 4)

By making these connections explicit, I aimed to demonstrate how personal experiences and biases inform research outcomes, aligning with CWT's emphasis on the importance of self-examination in dismantling white supremacy (Matias & DiAngelo, 2013).

Understanding that my racial identity could influence participant responses, I took steps to mitigate power imbalances and encourage openness. I reflected:

"During interviews, I noticed some participants hesitated when discussing race. I addressed this by sharing my own struggles with understanding whiteness, hoping to create a space where they felt comfortable expressing uncertainty or discomfort without fear of judgment." (Researcher Memo)

This approach aimed at reducing the hierarchical dynamic often present in research settings, fostering a collaborative environment that acknowledged the shared journey toward greater racial awareness. In analyzing the data, I remained conscious of the potential for my white perspective to influence interpretations. I questioned initial assumptions and sought alternative explanations for systemic factors. A memo captured this process:

"When reviewing participants' avoidance of racial topics, my first thought was to attribute it to personal discomfort. However, CWT reminds me to consider how societal norms encourage such avoidance among white individuals, reinforcing WRW. I must look beyond individual behavior to the broader context."

(Researcher Memo)

This critical stance ensured that the analysis remained rooted in understanding how whiteness operates collectively rather than solely at the individual level. By shifting to an active voice and incorporating personal reflections, I recognized how writing style influences the presentation of knowledge. In a later memo, I observed:

"Using 'I' statements not only makes my role transparent but also challenges the traditional academic writing norms that favor passive constructions. This small change is a step toward deconstructing the dominance of whiteness in scholarly discourse." (Researcher Memo)

This practice aligns with CWT's call to disrupt conventional methodologies that perpetuate systemic biases, promoting instead approaches that highlight the situated nature of knowledge (Applebaum, 2010).

Engaging with my racial identity through CWT has been an ongoing, evolving process. As the study concluded, I reflected on the personal and professional growth that occurred:

"This journey has illuminated the subtle ways whiteness permeates research, from methodology to writing conventions. Acknowledging and challenging these influences is essential not only for this study but for all future work I undertake. I am committed to continual self-examination and to contributing to scholarship that actively resists the maintenance of white supremacy." (Researcher Memo)

By incorporating these reflections into the dissertation, I aimed to model the critical self-awareness necessary for ethical research within the framework of CWT. This approach enhances the validity of the study by:

- **Demonstrating Transparency:** Acknowledging my positionality allows readers to understand the lens through which the research was conducted, promoting transparency.
- **Challenging Norms:** By deviating from traditional claims of objectivity, the dissertation contributes to a broader effort to decolonize academic research practices.
- **Encouraging Dialogue:** Sharing my reflexive process invites readers and other researchers to consider their positionalities and the impact on their work.

Interacting with my racial identity using Critical Whiteness Theory was integral to conducting this research ethically and effectively. By confronting how I might inadvertently maintain whiteness—through stylistic choices like avoiding active "I" statements or claiming objectivity—I was able to produce a more honest and critical analysis of White Rainbow Weaponization among white gay male students. This reflexive practice not only enriched the study but also underscored the importance of continual self-examination in efforts to dismantle systemic racism within academia and the LGBTQ community.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The small, self-selected sample size (N = 13) of white gay cisgender men may limit generalizability. The findings may not represent the experiences of all white gay cisgender men or other LGBTQ individuals. The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may portray themselves more favorably. Additionally, my shared identities with participants may have influenced data interpretation despite efforts to maintain reflexivity. Researcher positionality can impact findings and should be considered when interpreting results (LaSala, 2009; Milner, 2007).

Recommendations for Future Research

Building on the findings of this study and acknowledging its limitations, future research should prioritize expanding participant diversity to enhance the understanding of intersectionality within urban post-secondary education (UPSE) settings. Including a broader range of participants encompassing different races, genders, sexual orientations,

and socioeconomic backgrounds will allow for a more comprehensive exploration of how multiple identities intersect and influence individuals' experiences. This diverse inclusion is crucial for illuminating the varied narratives within the LGBTQ community, thereby providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of the challenges and advantages faced by different subgroups. Future studies should employ purposive sampling techniques to ensure representation from underrepresented groups, thereby capturing the full spectrum of intersectional identities and their impact on navigating both racial and LGBTQ spaces.

Secondly, it is imperative to investigate the mechanisms of White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW) in greater depth across various contexts. Understanding how WRW operates in different settings—such as other types of educational institutions, geographic locations, and cultural environments—will provide valuable insights into the situational nuances that sustain racial privilege within LGBTQ communities. Comparative studies that examine WRW in diverse institutional and cultural contexts can identify common patterns and unique variations, facilitating the development of targeted strategies to mitigate its effects. Additionally, qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth case studies and ethnographic research, can uncover the subtle dynamics and practices through which WRW is maintained, offering a deeper understanding of the power structures at play.

Thirdly, longitudinal studies are essential to assess the long-term effects of educational interventions that foster racial accountability among white LGBTQ individuals. Such studies can track changes in attitudes, behaviors, and self-perceptions over time, providing empirical evidence on the sustainability and effectiveness of these

interventions. Longitudinal research can reveal whether initial racial awareness and allyship increases translate into enduring commitments to equity and inclusivity. By following participants through different stages of their educational journeys and into their professional lives, researchers can identify factors that support or hinder the persistence of positive changes, thereby informing the design of more robust and impactful programs that promote racial equity in the long term.

Lastly, it is crucial to explore the impact of recent legislative actions on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives within UPSEs. Investigating how new policies and laws influence the experiences of marginalized students, particularly LGBTQ individuals of color, will shed light on the effectiveness of these measures in addressing systemic barriers. Research should examine legislation's intended and unintended consequences, assessing whether it successfully fosters inclusive environments or inadvertently reinforces existing inequities. Combining quantitative analyses of policy outcomes with qualitative interviews of affected students and administrators, mixed-methods approaches can provide a comprehensive understanding of the legislative landscape. Insights gained from such studies will guide institutions in advocating for supportive measures and developing responsive strategies that protect and empower vulnerable communities in the face of evolving legal frameworks.

Addressing these areas will fill critical gaps in the literature and inform policies and practices that promote equity and inclusion within UPSEs. By pursuing this research agenda, scholars and educators can contribute to creating more inclusive academic environments that recognize and value the diversity of all students. These efforts are essential for dismantling systemic inequalities and ensuring that educational institutions

serve as supportive and empowering spaces for every individual, regardless of their intersecting identities.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how white gay cisgender men comprehend, utilize, and challenge their racial and LGBTQ identities within urban post-secondary education (UPSE) settings. Grounded in Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) and Queer Theory (QT), the research aimed to uncover the mechanisms through which White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW)—the strategic use of white racial identity—operates to maintain power and privilege within LGBTQ spaces. Utilizing a multi-pronged qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews, racial autobiographies, and vignettes, the study addressed three primary research questions: the articulation and perception of racial identity and privilege, the leveraging of LGBTQ identity within institutional settings, and the impact of exposure to racial artifacts on participants' awareness and advocacy.

The findings revealed the pervasive invisibility of whiteness among participants, who often took their racial identity for granted until exposed to racially diverse environments in UPSEs. This initial lack of racial awareness aligns with Frankenberg's (1993) notion of whiteness as a normative, unmarked identity and Helms's (1990) "contact" stage in White Racial Identity Development. As participants interacted with peers of color and engaged in diversity-related events, they developed an awareness of their white privilege, grappling with the tension between their marginalized status as gay men and their inherent racial advantages. The study introduced the concept of White Rainbow Weaponization, illustrating how white gay cisgender men leverage their racial

privilege to maintain dominance within LGBTQ spaces, often marginalizing individuals of color and perpetuating systemic inequalities. Additionally, the research highlighted the discomfort participants felt in engaging in conversations about race, underscoring the need for educational initiatives that promote racial accountability and effective allyship.

Through this comprehensive analysis, I have significantly contributed to the understanding of how white gay cisgender men navigate their intersecting identities within UPSEs. The introduction of WRW offers a novel framework for examining the subtle yet impactful ways racial privilege operates within marginalized communities. By integrating CWT and QT, this study provides a nuanced perspective on identity, power, and privilege, aligning with and extending existing literature that emphasizes the importance of addressing systemic inequities in educational environments (Cabrera et al., 2017; Harris & Leonardo, 2018). The empirical evidence presented deepens scholarly comprehension of identity formation, highlighting the complexities individuals face in recognizing and addressing their privileges. Methodologically, the use of vignettes proved effective in eliciting cognitive dissonance and fostering critical reflection, demonstrating the value of this approach in qualitative research on sensitive topics.

Moreover, this dissertation offers practical implications for policy, practice, and education at multiple levels—individual, group, institutional, and national. At the individual level, it emphasizes the importance of critical self-reflection, education on intersectionality, and active allyship. Group-level implications focus on forming inclusive organizations, facilitating education and training on race and privilege, and cultivating inclusive group cultures. Institutional implications advocate for curriculum development that integrates intersectionality, comprehensive anti-discrimination policies, faculty and

staff training, enhanced support services for LGBTQ students of color, and fostering inclusive campus communities. On a national scale, the study calls for policy advocacy, increased funding for intersectional research and programs, the incorporation of diversity criteria in accreditation, the promotion of diversity in leadership, and public awareness campaigns on intersectionality.

As the researcher, this study has profoundly impacted my understanding of the intricate dynamics between race and sexuality within educational settings. Engaging deeply with participants and analyzing their narratives has heightened my awareness of my own positionality and the subtle ways privilege operates. This introspective journey has reinforced my commitment to advocating for social justice and equity, both academically and personally. The challenges encountered during this research have strengthened my resolve to continue exploring and addressing systemic inequalities. Ultimately, this dissertation not only advances theoretical and empirical knowledge but also serves as a catalyst for practical change. By promoting education, policy reform, and critical engagement, institutions can work towards creating environments where all individuals—regardless of race or sexual orientation—feel valued, supported, and empowered to challenge oppressive structures.

In conclusion, this study underscores the urgent need for intentional efforts to dismantle systemic inequalities and promote inclusivity within educational institutions. The concept of White Rainbow Weaponization provides a critical lens through which to examine and address the internal dynamics of privilege and power within marginalized communities. By fostering a comprehensive understanding of how white gay cisgender men navigate their intersecting identities, this research contributes to broader

conversations about race, identity, and power in higher education. Moving forward, the insights gained from this study can inform policies and practices that advance equity and inclusivity, ensuring that UPSEs become truly supportive environments for all students.

Appendix

Definitions

For this study, I will use the following definitions from the American Psychological Association:

Sex refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex.

Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity

Gender identity: A person's deeply felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male; a girl, a woman, or female; or an alternative gender (e.g., genderqueer, gender non-conforming, boy, girl, ladyboi) which may or may not correspond to a person's sex assigned at birth or to a person's primary or secondary sex characteristics. Since gender identity is internal, a person's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. 'Affirmed gender identity' refers to a person's gender identity after coming out as transgender or gender non-conforming or undergoing a social and/or medical transition process.

Gender Expression: An individual's presentation, including physical appearance, clothing choice and accessories, and behavior that communicates aspects of gender or gender role. Gender expression may or may not conform to a person's gender identity.

Sexual Orientation: A component of identity that includes a person's sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior that may result from this attraction. An individual's sexual orientation may be lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, queer, pansexual, or asexual. A person may be attracted to men, women, neither, genderqueer, androgynous, or have other gender identities. Sexual orientation is distinct from sex, gender identity, gender role, and gender expression.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation are Different Constructs Transgender people, like cisgender people, may be sexually oriented toward men, women, both sexes, or neither sex and, like most people, usually experience their gender identity (whom they feel themselves to be) and their sexual orientation (whom they are attracted to) as separate phenomena. (2015, pp. 20-21)

Vignettes

Dynamics of White Privilege in an Academic Setting

Context: This vignette unfolds in a university classroom setting, where a group assignment is about to shape the interactions and reveal underlying biases within a diverse student group. The scene is intended to explore themes of white privilege and racial and sexual identity dynamics within an academic context.

Characters:

1. Dan: A White gay male who struggles academically in some of his courses. He is known to be sociable within his familiar circles but exhibits discomfort when interacting outside these circles.

2. Tyrone: A 6'3 Black male known for his athletic prowess as a football player. He is also in the same major but isn't very vocal in class discussions and is often observed studying alone.
3. Susie: A White straight female, often recognized by her sorority attire. She is perceived as outgoing and academically diligent, actively participating in class and sorority activities.
4. You: A student in the same major as Dan, Tyrone, and Susie, with a perspective that serves as a lens to explore the social dynamics within the group.

Setting: A mid-size lecture hall in the humanities department. The atmosphere is a mix of anticipation and anxiety as students await their group assignment announcements for the end-of-semester project.

Plot:

- The professor begins the class by announcing the group assignments for a significant class project that will account for a large portion of the final grade. The room fills with a low murmur as students anxiously wait to hear with whom they will collaborate.
- Your name is called, and the professor lists your group members: Dan, Tyrone, and Susie. You notice Tyrone and Susie making brief eye contact, acknowledging each other with a nod. Tyrone then looks at Dan, who avoids eye contact and shifts uncomfortably in his seat.
- As the professor continued with other groups, Dan leaned over and quietly expressed his frustration to you, "Great, as if I wasn't uncomfortable enough, now I have to depend on him to pass the class." His tone is a mix of resignation and

irritation, implying a prejudgment of Tyrone's contribution to the group based on his identity and perhaps his visibility as an athlete.

- The comment hangs in the air, leaving you to ponder its implications. It reflects an underlying tension not just around academic reliance but also intersecting identities of race and sexuality within the group dynamic. Dan's discomfort hints at stereotypical biases and a possible lack of awareness or acknowledgment of his privileged position as a white male despite being a minority in terms of sexual orientation.

Discussion Points:

1. **Intersection of Privileges and Biases:** Explore how Dan's identity as a White gay male affords him certain privileges and how these intersect with his biases against Tyrone, a Black athlete.
2. **Stereotypes and Performance Anxiety:** Discuss the stereotypes associated with athletes and their academic capabilities and how these perceptions impact group dynamics and individual expectations.
3. **Role of Allyship and Awareness:** Reflect on your role and potential as an ally within the group to foster a more inclusive and understanding environment that challenges biases and encourages equity.
4. **Impact on Group Collaboration and Outcome:** Consider how these dynamics might affect collaboration, communication, and overall project success.

Objective: Use this vignette for research or discussions focused on identifying and addressing issues of white privilege, racial stereotypes, and the intersectionality of identities within academic settings. This scenario aims to prompt deeper understanding

and critical thinking about the subtle and overt dynamics that influence group interactions in educational contexts.

Navigating Cultural Preferences and Racial Undertones in Social Settings

Context: This vignette is set in a social outing among friends, highlighting the subtle dynamics of racial and cultural preferences within a diverse group. It aims to explore underlying racial biases and the intersections of white privilege within the LGBTQ community in a seemingly casual setting.

Characters:

1. Mike: A White gay male enthusiastic about exploring new places and experiences, suggesting a visit to a new hip-hop club in town.
2. Ian: Another White gay male who expresses discomfort with hip-hop music, describing it as "too urban," revealing his biases and discomfort with culturally different settings.
3. You: You are a group member, observant and sensitive to the dynamics and feelings within the group. You initiated a conversation with Ian about his reluctance.
4. The Group: Mike and Ian are accompanied by diverse individuals from various backgrounds, each with their own preferences and perceptions.

Setting: A lively urban environment where friends decide how to spend their evenings.

The scene starts on a busy street lined with various clubs and restaurants, bustling with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Plot:

- The evening begins in high spirits as you and your friends enjoy a night out. The group consists of individuals from various racial and sexual identities, reflecting a microcosm of the broader LGBTQ community.
- Mike, always keen on new experiences, suggests a newly opened hip-hop club. The suggestion receives a generally positive response, but you notice Ian seems less enthusiastic.
- Concerned, you approach Ian to check on him. In a low voice, Ian says he's "not into hip-hop music because it is too urban." His choice of words and the underlying tone suggest a discomfort rooted in racial and cultural biases, though he appears unaware of the implications of his statement.
- Ian adds that he didn't want to disrupt the group's plans and is willing to be uncomfortable for the night so that others can enjoy themselves. This statement opens a complex mix of self-sacrifice for group harmony and an unchallenged personal bias.
- The group continues to the club, but the conversation with Ian lingers in your mind, highlighting a need to address subtle prejudices and the dynamics of privilege and cultural engagement within your circle.

Discussion Points:

1. Cultural Discomfort and Racial Undertones: Discuss Ian's discomfort with hip-hop as "too urban" and what this reveals about societal perceptions of race and culture.

2. **Compromise and Group Dynamics:** Reflect on the implications of Ian's willingness to compromise his comfort for the group's enjoyment and the balance between individual preferences and group cohesion.
3. **White Privilege and Bias Recognition:** Explore how Ian's biases and expressions of discomfort might be reflective of broader issues of white privilege and unrecognized racial biases within the LGBTQ community.
4. **Opportunities for Education and Dialogue:** Consider how this scenario could serve as a starting point for deeper conversations within the group about cultural appreciation versus appropriation and the importance of confronting personal biases.

Objective: This vignette serves as a tool for examining the nuances of cultural preferences, the expression of subtle racial biases, and their intersection with white privilege within the LGBTQ community. It aims to encourage discussions and reflections on how individuals navigate their cultural biases in social settings and the impact of these biases on group interactions and personal growth.

Unmasking Racial Preferences in Social Media and Their Implications

Context: This vignette explores the complex interplay of online identity expression and real-life interactions within the LGBTQ community, highlighting how digital platforms can reveal underlying racial biases and preferences that might not be as apparent in face-to-face settings.

Characters:

1. **Classmate:** A White gay male who explicitly states racial preferences in his dating app profile, specifically excluding Black individuals.

2. You: An observer and a classmate, aware of his online profile and now faced with the cognitive dissonance of his public persona versus his online expressions.
3. Other Students: Various class members are unaware of their classmate's online dating preferences.

Setting: A university classroom where you and your classmate are students. The scene captures a regular day with students arriving, settling in, and preparing for the lecture.

Plot:

- You casually browse a popular dating app one evening and stumble upon a familiar face: your classmate's profile. To your surprise and discomfort, his profile explicitly states, "no Blacks," a clear expression of racial preference.
- This discovery unsettles you, contrasting with the classmate's public demeanor. You know him as friendly and cooperative in group projects and class discussions, and he never openly expresses any racial bias.
- The next day, you go to class and see him there. He greets you with his usual friendly smile and even initiates a conversation about an upcoming group assignment. His casual, unaffected demeanor makes you ponder the dissonance between his public persona and private social media expressions.
- Throughout the class, you grapple with the implications of what you saw. You question whether to confront him about his profile, discuss it with other classmates, or address it in a more public forum like a class discussion on ethics and social media.

- The class ends, and as students file out, the internal debate continues. You are conflicted about the appropriate action to take, considering the potential impacts on your relationship with him, the class dynamics, and his personal growth.

Discussion Points:

1. **Online Anonymity and Real-World Identity:** Examine how online platforms can serve as a veil for expressing views that might be socially sanctioned in face-to-face interactions. Discuss the psychological and social factors that might encourage such behavior.
2. **Ethical Dilemmas in social media:** Debate the ethical implications of confronting someone about their online behaviors. Consider the balance between privacy and the need to challenge discriminatory attitudes.
3. **Racial Preferences as Racial Bias:** Explore the fine line between personal preferences and explicit racial bias in dating. Discuss how such statements can perpetuate stereotypes and systemic racism within the LGBTQ community.
4. **Impact on Community and Personal Relationships:** Reflect on how discovering such biases can affect interpersonal relationships and community dynamics. Discuss strategies for addressing these issues constructively.

Objective: This vignette aims to provoke thought and discussion on expressing racial preferences on online platforms within the LGBTQ community. It challenges readers to consider the consequences of these preferences not just for individual relationships but for the broader social fabric of the community. It also serves as a basis for examining personal and collective responsibilities in confronting and addressing racial biases in digital and real-life contexts.

Confrontation and Reflection on Racial Homogeneity in Social Circles

Context: This vignette delves into the challenges of perceived racial exclusivity within social networks, particularly among individuals in the LGBTQ community. It explores the discomfort and introspection that arise when confronted with the lack of diversity in their social circle.

Characters:

1. Ethan: A White gay male who is confronted about the racial homogeneity of his friends.
2. Myron: A classmate who challenges Ethan on his apparent lack of diversity in friendships.
3. Sara: Another friend present during the confrontation, also part of Ethan's predominantly White social circle.
4. You: Ethan's longtime friend, whom he turns to for advice and reflection after the confrontation.

Setting: The conversation initially occurs in a university classroom and continues through text messages. The setting transitions to a more private environment where you and Ethan can discuss the situation in depth.

Plot:

- During a small group discussion in a college course on social diversity, Myron, a Black classmate, directly asks Ethan why all his friends, whom he often mentions or brings to class-related events, are White. The question is posed quietly but pointedly, causing Ethan to feel unexpectedly spotlighted and uncomfortable.

- Taken aback, Ethan mumbles a response but is visibly shaken. While witnessing the exchange, Sara tries to change the subject to ease the tension but also feels the weight of the question.
- After class, Ethan hastily texts you, expressing his anxiety over being perceived as racist and the fear of social repercussions like being "canceled." His message conveys a mix of defensiveness and genuine concern for how he is perceived by others, particularly regarding his racial awareness.
- You invite Ethan to talk in person, providing a safe space for him to express his feelings and fears. During the conversation, you gently encourage Ethan to reflect on Myron's question rather than focus solely on his fear of being labeled.
- The discussion evolves into a deeper exploration of why Ethan's social circle looks the way it does, including an honest assessment of his choices and the social contexts he navigates. You discuss the concept of unconscious biases and the importance of active inclusion.
- You suggest ways Ethan might broaden his social interactions to include more diverse individuals and discuss how this could enrich his understanding and relationships. The conversation also touches on the broader societal implications of racial segregation in social circles and the extraordinary responsibilities that might fall on individuals in marginalized communities, like those within the LGBTQ spectrum, to challenge these norms.

Discussion Points:

1. **Racial Homogeneity in Personal Networks:** Analyze the factors contributing to racial homogeneity in social circles within the LGBTQ community and the broader society.
2. **Impact of Perceived Racism:** Discuss the personal and social implications of being labeled as racist, particularly in the context of cancel culture, and how this affects individuals' willingness to engage in conversations about race.
3. **Strategies for Broader Inclusion:** Explore practical steps individuals can take to diversify their social environments and the challenges they might face.
4. **Role of Self-Reflection:** Consider the importance of self-awareness and the willingness to address uncomfortable questions about one's own behaviors and choices.

Objective: This vignette aims to provoke discussion on the subtle dynamics of race and friendship within the LGBTQ community, encouraging a critical examination of personal choices and societal influences on social circles. It also seeks to provide a framework for understanding and navigating the sensitive terrain of race-related confrontations in personal relationships, emphasizing growth and inclusivity.

Debating Diversity and Inclusion within LGBTQ Student Groups

Context: This vignette explores the tensions and challenges of recognizing diverse identities within the LGBTQ community on a university campus, focusing on the debate over establishing a separate group specifically for Black LGBTQ students.

Characters:

1. **You:** A student government class representative responsible for casting a potentially decisive vote.

2. LGBTQ Group Representative: Advocates for maintaining a single inclusive LGBTQ group to avoid division.
3. Representative for the New Black LGBTQ Group: Argues the need for a separate group to provide a safe space for Black LGBTQ students.
4. Student Government Members: Other representatives involved in the debate and vote.
5. University Administration: Although not directly involved in the discussions, their preference for a single group adds pressure to the decision-making process.

Setting: The discussion occurs during a student government Senate meeting in a conference room within the university's student union building. The atmosphere is formal yet charged with underlying tensions as the debate unfolds.

Plot:

- The meeting begins with a routine agenda, but tensions rise when the proposal to recognize a new LGBTQ group specifically for Black students is brought to the floor. The administration's preference for only one LGBTQ group is mentioned, underscoring the significance of the student government's decision.
- The representative of the existing LGBTQ group argues that creating a separate group for Black students could further divide the LGBTQ community on campus. They stress the importance of unity and the potential for fragmentation, suggesting that efforts should instead focus on making the current group more inclusive and welcoming for all.
- In response, the representative for the new Black LGBTQ group passionately explains that the current group does not adequately address or even fully

recognize the specific issues faced by Black LGBTQ students. They argue that these students feel marginalized and invisible within the larger group, which is predominantly non-Black. The representative emphasizes the urgent need for a space where Black LGBTQ students can explore their identities without feeling overshadowed or misunderstood.

- You listen carefully to both sides, aware of the implications of your vote. Other student government members express their opinions, some echoing concerns about division, while others highlight the importance of acknowledging and supporting minority voices within the LGBTQ community.
- As the debate continues, you weigh the arguments: the need for specialized spaces to address experiences of marginalization versus the ideal of a unified, inclusive community group. Consider the decision's broader implications, including how it might affect campus dynamics and the message it sends about the student government's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Discussion Points:

1. **Need for Specialized Groups:** Discuss how separate groups are necessary to address specific needs within diverse communities, such as those of Black LGBTQ students.
2. **Impact on Community Cohesion:** Explore the potential impacts of recognizing multiple specialized groups on the overall cohesion and unity of the broader LGBTQ community on campus.

3. **Representation and Visibility:** Consider the importance of representation and visibility for minority groups within larger communities and how specialized groups might enhance or hinder this.
4. **Administrative Influence:** Analyze the role of university administration in influencing student-led initiatives and how this can affect the autonomy and decision-making of student governments.

Objective: This vignette is designed to provoke thoughtful discussion on the complexities of diversity within unity in university settings, particularly within the LGBTQ community. It aims to engage students in critical thinking about the balance between creating inclusive spaces that cater to all and recognizing the unique needs of specific groups within a diverse student body.

Navigating Race and Rejection in LGBTQ Online Spaces

Context: This vignette explores the challenges of racial dynamics within LGBTQ online dating apps, focusing on an interaction between two users and its implications for discussions about race and inclusion.

Characters:

1. **You:** A White male college student and user of an LGBTQ dating app.
2. **Marcus:** A 22-year-old athletic Black male, also a college student, who expresses interest in meeting up.
3. **App Users:** Although not directly involved, their presence and potential reactions represent the broader user community's norms and attitudes.

Setting: The interaction occurs late in the evening on a popular LGBTQ dating app, which both characters use to connect with others in their local area. The app's interface

facilitates immediate and direct communication, highlighting the often-personal nature of exchanges.

Plot:

- You are browsing the app late one evening when you receive a notification—a "tap" from Marcus, who is described in his profile as a 22-year-old athletic Black male less than one mile from you.
- Marcus follows up the tap with a direct message expressing his interest and suggesting a casual meetup for some fun. Considering his profile and message, you politely decline his offer, stating that you are not interested in meeting now.
- Marcus responds somewhat defensively, indicating his frustration by remarking that he figures "most White boys at this college are racist AF." This comment stings and prompts you to reflect on the implications of race in online LGBTQ spaces, particularly regarding assumptions and generalizations based on past experiences or societal stereotypes.
- The exchange makes you ponder the broader context of how race affects interactions within the LGBTQ community, especially in online environments where such dynamics can be amplified by anonymity and lack of personal connection.
- You consider responding to Marcus to address his comment and possibly discuss the complexities of race and perception in dating apps, but you also weigh the potential for misunderstanding or escalating the conversation negatively.

Discussion Points:

1. **Race and Perception in LGBTQ Spaces:** Discuss how race influences perceptions and interactions within online communities and how personal experiences can shape one's views of others.
2. **Impact of Stereotypes on Individual Behavior:** Explore the role of stereotypes in shaping expectations and reactions on dating apps and how these can lead to misunderstandings or conflict.
3. **Communication in Digital Environments:** Analyze how communication in digital spaces differs from face-to-face interactions, particularly in handling sensitive topics like race and rejection.
4. **Responsibility and Response:** Consider individuals' responsibility in addressing or challenging racial assumptions in online spaces. Discuss appropriate ways to respond to accusations of racism in personal interactions.

Objective: This vignette aims to provoke thoughtful discussion on the intersection of race and sexuality in digital dating environments within the LGBTQ community. It encourages critical thinking about how race-related assumptions and experiences influence personal interactions and the potential for conflict and understanding in online spaces.

Exploring Power Dynamics in Friendship

Context: This vignette delves into friendship dynamics between individuals of different racial backgrounds, highlighting the nuances of influence and decision-making.

Characters:

1. **You:** A White male college student who has been friends with Tye since the start of university.

2. Tye: A Black male and a close friend from your university. He's usually easygoing but feels something needs to be addressed regarding the dynamics of your outings.

Setting: You and Tye are enjoying dinner at a local casual restaurant. The atmosphere is relaxed and familiar, which encourages open conversations.

Plot:

- After discussing routine matters about your week and recent classes, the tone shifts when Tye brings up a concern on his mind regarding the dynamics of your friendship.
- Tye mentions that he feels like the activities and outings you both partake in are predominantly chosen by you without considering his preferences. He questions why the decision-making seems skewed in your favor and expresses a desire for more inclusivity in planning.
- This observation takes you aback. It prompts you to reflect on past instances and whether you might have inadvertently overlooked his preferences due to underlying biases or assumptions rooted in societal norms about race and power dynamics.
- The following conversation explores themes of mutual respect, equality in friendships, and how societal structures, like white privilege, can subtly influence personal relationships and social interactions.
- Tye discusses his feelings of marginalization in decision-making, not just in your friendship but as a pattern he notices in other areas of his life. He expresses a need for his voice to be heard and respected equally.

- You actively listen, acknowledging his feelings and recognizing this as an opportunity to address and alter the dynamics of your friendship. You propose more inclusive planning processes for your outings and activities moving forward.

Discussion Points:

1. **Influence of Societal Norms on Personal Relationships:** Explore how societal norms and structures, such as white privilege, might influence interpersonal dynamics, even among close friends.
2. **Communication and Inclusivity in Friendships:** Discuss the importance of open communication in understanding and addressing each friend's needs and desires, ensuring that no one feels overshadowed or marginalized.
3. **Self-Reflection and Awareness:** Reflect on how individuals can become more self-aware of their actions and biases, particularly regarding power dynamics in diverse friendships.
4. **Steps Toward Equality in Social Settings:** Consider practical steps that friends can take to ensure equitable decision-making in their interactions.

Objective: This vignette is designed to prompt reflection and discussion about how power dynamics, influenced by race and privilege, can impact personal relationships. It encourages a deeper understanding of equality and respect in friendships, providing a foundation for more thoughtful and inclusive interactions.

Confronting Diversity and Inclusion Challenges in an LGBTQ Student Organization

Context: This vignette explores the complexities of leading a diverse student organization and the challenges of ensuring that inclusivity extends beyond intentions into actual experience.

Characters:

1. You: President of the college LGBTQ student organization, committed to inclusivity.
2. John: White gay male, soccer player, and executive board member.
3. Sherri: White lesbian, science major, and executive board member.
4. Jose: Biracial (Black/White) gay male, political science major, and executive board member.
5. Connor: Black gay male, chemistry major, who feels marginalized within the group.

Setting: The meeting will occur in a usual campus classroom, where the organization holds weekly executive meetings. The atmosphere is generally professional and open for discussion.

Plot:

- During one of the routine weekly meetings, Connor unexpectedly voices his decision to leave the group as you discuss upcoming events and community outreach.
- Connor explains his feelings of alienation, stating that despite the group's mission of inclusivity, he feels that the experiences and specific concerns of Black students like himself are not genuinely addressed or integrated into the group's activities.
- The room falls silent as the group turns to you, the president, for a response. This moment highlights the gap between the organization's inclusive policy and its members' living reality.

- John and Sherri look uncomfortable but attentive, while Jose appears empathetic, nodding in an understanding of Connor’s feelings.
- You acknowledge Connor’s feelings and express genuine concern. You ask him to elaborate on his experiences and suggest ways the group might better serve its Black members.
- The conversation opens a broader discussion about inclusivity, not just in terms of membership but leadership, program planning, and the group's culture.
- You propose creating a subcommittee to address diversity and inclusion directly, suggesting that Connor help lead this effort to ensure his and others' concerns are discussed systematically.
- Connor agrees to consider staying, provided that his concerns lead to genuine efforts to reform. The group commits to regular check-ins on the progress of inclusion initiatives, and you promise to prioritize this issue in future agendas.

Discussion Points:

1. Gaps in Perceived vs. Experienced Inclusion: Explore the difference between the intention of inclusivity and the actual experience of members from diverse backgrounds.
2. Leadership in Diverse Groups: Discuss the role of leadership in fostering an inclusive environment and the importance of representation within leadership roles.
3. Systemic Changes vs. Surface-Level Efforts: Debate the effectiveness of systemic changes versus superficial efforts in addressing inclusion issues.

4. Feedback and Continuous Improvement: Consider mechanisms for ongoing feedback from group members about the organization's inclusivity, ensuring that all voices are heard and acted upon.

Objective: This vignette highlights the challenges in managing a diverse organization and the importance of listening to and actively responding to marginalized group members' concerns. It serves as a basis for discussions on effective leadership strategies and implementing genuine inclusivity practices within student organizations.

Interview Protocol

Duration: Each interview is expected to last between 60-120 minutes. Breaks are available upon request.

Introduction and Personal Journey to Urban Post-Secondary Education (UPSE)

Introduction:

- Greeting and rapport building: Thank the participants for their time and express enthusiasm for learning about their experiences.
- Confidentiality reminder: Reiterate the confidentiality measures and confirm their comfort with proceeding under these terms.
- Recording start: Inform the participant that the recording will now begin.

Questions:

1. Background and Interest:
 - How did you come across this study, and what motivated you to participate?
 - Could you describe your upbringing and the environment you grew up in before attending UPSE?
2. Choosing an Institution:

- What factors influenced your decision to attend a post-secondary institution?
 - Why did you choose UPSE specifically?
 - How did the demographics and location of UPSE influence your choice?
3. Experience at UPSE:
- Has UPSE met or differed from your expectations? How?
 - Describe the campus culture and how you relate to it?
 - What has been your experience with making connections and building a community at UPSE?

Gay Male Identity Experiences

Confidentiality reminder: Briefly remind them of the confidentiality of their responses.

Questions:

1. Personal Identity and Coming Out:
 - Can you walk me through your coming out process? What was that experience like for you?
 - How has being a gay male influenced your choice of post-secondary education?
2. Community Engagement:
 - Have you found a community within UPSE that supports your identity as a gay male? How do you engage with this community?
 - Describe the activity level and your role in the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar groups.
 - What changes would you advocate for within UPSE to better support the LGBT community?
3. Impact on Education and Campus Life:

- How has your identity as a gay male impacted your experiences at UPSE?
- Do you see your identity reflected in the faculty or leadership?
- What advice would you give new UPSE students on navigating LGBT issues?

Navigating Racial and Gay Male Identity

Introduction:

Focus on racial identity: Explain the shift to discussing racial identity and its interplay with their gay identity.

Importance of the topic: Emphasize the significance of understanding these intersections for broader community insights.

Questions:

1. Racial Identity:

- How do you identify racially, and how has this impacted your experience at UPSE?
- Describe any racial-specific communities you are part of at UPSE. How does the institution support these communities?

2. Experiences of Intersectionality:

- Have there been moments at UPSE where your racial identity distinctly intersected with your gay identity? Please describe these instances.
- How do you perceive race influences the broader LGBT community and the dynamics at UPSE?

3. Privilege and Perception:

- How do you understand the concept of privilege, especially in relation to being a white gay male?

- Have you consciously recognized moments where you have benefited from your privilege within the LGBT community or at UPSE?

Closing:

Wrap-up and appreciation: Thank the participants for their openness and insights and offer a final opportunity for any additional comments or thoughts they wish to share.

Next steps: Inform them about the follow-up process and how the findings from this research might be used.

End of recording: Confirm the end of the recording and provide post-interview follow-up contact information.

Racial Autobiography

Instructions for Participants: Crafting Your Racial Autobiography

As you begin to craft your racial autobiography, it's beneficial to start by identifying the significant moments at the beginning and the end of your racial awareness journey—termed here as "racial bookends."

1. **Earliest Memory:** Reflect on and describe the earliest memory you have that involves race, racial interactions, or racism. Try to recall and explain this incident in as much detail as possible.
2. **Most Recent Experience:** Consider and document your most recent experience or conversation that involved race, racial relations, or racism. Provide a detailed account of this event.

After outlining these bookend experiences, you will fill in the narrative with essential racial experiences that have shaped you. Use the following prompts to jog your memory

and deepen your narrative. These prompts are meant to serve as a starting point rather than a limitation:

Family Background:

- Describe your family and extended family's racial composition.
- Discuss where your parents and their families originated and their racial backgrounds. Have you had conversations about race with them?
- What are your family's perspectives on race? How do you personally identify racially, and why is this significant?

Neighborhood Influences:

- What is the racial makeup of your neighborhood? Has it changed over time?
- When did you first become aware of racial dynamics?
- Recall your first interaction with someone from a different race. What was the experience like?
- When and how did you first learn about racial terms, possibly derogatory ones?
- What racial messages did you receive growing up, both from family and others?

Pre-High School Education:

- What was the racial composition of your classmates and teachers?
- Discuss the race-related curriculum you were taught. What did you learn about different racial or ethnic groups?
- Reflect on the racial representation in media and cultural figures during childhood.

High School Experience:

- Detail the racial demographics of your high school and any noteworthy racial interactions, including friendships or conflicts.
- Were racial issues openly discussed or ignored? How did these experiences impact on you?

College Experience:

- Describe the racial makeup of your college classes, faculty, and campus organizations.
- Are there academic courses focused on racial issues? How does race influence your academic and social life in college?

General Reflections:

- Reflect on a pivotal racial encounter or image that profoundly affected you.
- Discuss any realizations about racial privilege or discrimination you've observed or experienced.

This autobiography is an evolving document meant to capture your ongoing reflections and understanding of race as it relates to your personal journey. There are no right or wrong responses here; the goal is to foster a deeper personal understanding and dialogue about race.

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Curriculum Vitae

Matthew William McKay

Research Agenda

My research agenda is centered on exploring the complex intersections of identity, privilege, and organizational dynamics within LGBTQ communities and educational settings. Building upon my current work on White Rainbow Weaponization (WRW), I aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of how race, sexuality, and other social identities interact to shape individual experiences and organizational practices. My interdisciplinary approach integrates theories from critical race studies, queer studies, organizational development, data analytics, and technology to inform strategies that promote inclusivity, equity, and social justice.

Education

Ph.D. in Urban Education, 2024

Indiana University

Dissertation: “White Rainbow Weaponization: White Gay Males Understanding and Use of Racial Identity Privilege in Urban Post-Secondary Education”

Advisor: Dr. Kathleen King Thorius

M.S. in Higher Education Administration, 2009

Canisius University

Thesis: “Rainbow Weights or Wings – The Impacts of Outing on Lesbian & Gay Identity Development”

Advisor: Dr. Sandy Estanek

B.A. in Chemistry, 2007

Buffalo State University

Graduate Certificate – Nonprofit Management, 2017

Indiana University

Professional Experience

Data and Business Intelligence Manager, Key Technology and Operations,

KeyBank, 2022- Present

Principle, Aequitas Network, 2017 - Present

Learning Architect, Human Resources, KeyBank, 2021-2022

Associate Director, Campus Life, Rochester Institute of Technology, 2019 – 2021

Director, Student Life & Diversity, Adirondack Community College, 2016 – 2019

Assistant Director, Campus Life, Indiana University Indianapolis, 2012 – 2016

Academic Advisor, First Year Experience, St. John Fisher University, 2010 –
2012

Americorps VISTA, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, 2009 – 2010

Leadership Coordinator, Leadership Development, Canisius University, 2007-
2009

Teaching Experience

Assistant Professor, Business Administration, Erie Community College, 2024 –
Present

Lecturer, RIT Connections, Rochester Institute of Technology, 2020 – 2021

Assistant Professor, Counseling, Adirondack Community College, 2017 – 2019

Lecturer, Technology Leadership and Innovation, Purdue University, 2013 - 2016

Teaching Assistant, Critical Race Theory, Indiana University, 2015

Teaching Assistant, Leadership Theories, Canisius University, 2008

Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Leadership, Buffalo State University, 2006

Conferences

2020, Conference Session, Assessment Network of New York

2019, Conference Session, SUNY Spectrum

2013, Conference Session, SUNY Cortland

2012, Invited Talk, Rochester Institute of Technology

Publications

Developmental Pathways to Trans Inclusion on College Campuses (2016), ACPA
College Educators International
Organizational Change for Student Organizations (2014), *Campus Activities
Programming*, 47(3)