

Summer 2010

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Signified Honkey: Stories In The Key of White

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A research project submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the degree of

Educational Specialist

Department of Graduate Psychology

August 2010

Abstract

The following project feels like a risk. From the opening line of my paper to the final section, the reader will notice that I have chosen to stray from the traditional counseling research project and instead opted for an approach both personal and interdisciplinary as a means of exploring the topic of White privilege. My approach can best be summed up as auto ethnographic and in using this approach have tried to discover and remain true to my own voice throughout the narrative. The reader may find this voice to be sharp at times, including profanity and a degree of mercilessness that Tony Hoagland refers to as poetic or metaphysical meanness (Hoagland, 2003). I have chosen this approach as a way to demonstrate my understanding of my personal journey through White privilege and to contribute my voice to the conversations around racial identity initiated and continued by previous academics and counselors both White and of color.

Introduction

“Meanness, the very thing which is unforgivable in human social life, in poetry is thrilling and valuable. Why? Because the willingness to be offensive sets free the ruthless observer in all of us, the spiteful perceptive angel who sees and tells, unimpeded by nicety or second thoughts. There is truth-telling, and more, in meanness. “

-Tony Hoagland-

Intense introspection is a motha’fucker. It can creep up from behind and smack you upside the head like a water bottle at a Pistons game. Last September, in fact, I was trying to recover from one of those psychic hold-ups, you know, the kind when the meaning you’ve planted your feet on has just dropped out from under you. A real Keirkegaard-I-stuck-my-finger-into-existence-and-it-stunk-of-nothingness-type-trip. Now, if you’re anything like me, then this recovery can be a bit of a painful process, ‘cause I’m severely lacking in mental bootstraps. And strapping myself up is what I needed. Yes, a shot of the ol’ psychological elbow grease to scrub off the weight of my new discovery.

You see, as a result of a multicultural counseling class during my training, I finally began to view myself as a white person. This discovery grinded through the digestion track of my consciousness as though I were a lifetime vegan who just glugged out on some finely prepared tripe. Just when I thought my freefalling identity might find itself stuck in the abyss forever, I wandered into a used bookstore.

And aren’t they all the same? Patchouli choking, Miles playing, with a twenty something anorexic behind the counter with dyed hair, rocking secretary porn star glasses and talking UFO conspiracies with an overweight, bearded, and barefoot Viking, looking like he just stepped out of middle-earth.

Ignoring the obviousness of the environs; I scooted into a random aisle and scanned the shelf. Sitting next to a tattered copy of *The White Boy Shuffle* by Paul Beatty, was a copy of *Memoir Of A Race Traitor* by Mab Segrest. Being firmly aware of the general belief in the field that counselors who examine their racial privilege and the active role it plays in the therapeutic relationship are less likely to rely on racial stereotypes and impose their own ethnocentric values, I thought the book might be a valuable resource (Neville, Worthington, & Spanierman, 2001). Really though, I was drawn to the John Brown posturing of the title, so I bought it.

Needless to say, the book and the dumbstruck experience of racial awareness inspired me. For me, this awareness has been a 20 year becoming, an emerging perspective on self that was launched into warp speed by the evolutionary slingshot of a counselor training program. What follows is my account of a journey through my own Whiteness blended with some thoughts and ideas of other thinkers on what it means to be White and become aware of one's own privilege. The trick will be communicating my experience and my thoughts in a cohesive manner without sacrificing much of the spirit of my journey to academic niceties.

But few, if any, want to get their hands dirty these days, and it costs us. Consider, just for an example, the subject matter of race in America. Why hasn't racial anxiety, shame and hatred—such a large presence in American life—been more a theme in poetry by Caucasian-Americans? The answer might be that Empathy is profoundly inadequate as a strategy to some subjects. To really get at the subject of race, chances are, it's going to require some unattractive, tricky self-expression, something adequate to the paradoxical complexities of privilege, shame and resentment. To speak in a voice equal to reality in this case will mean the loss of observer-immunity-status, will mean admitting that one is not on the sidelines of our racial realities, but actually in the tangled middle of them, in very personal ways (Hoagland,2003, p.14).

Like Hoagland, it is unattractive and tricky self expression I'm after. Therefore the voice and tone of this project will be as equal as I can make it to my experience of reality; the effort will be at removing me from observer-immunity status.

I hope that through this account I may add to the conversations taking place around white privilege and assist other white helpers (and those seeking to understand us) to grapple with the madness of the funhouse some of us find ourselves in when faced with the reality of our own privilege.

Honkey See Honkey Do

“In most books the I, or first person, is omitted, in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism is the main difference. We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well.”

-Henry David Thoreau-*Walden*

I am staring at a white word document-blank-and trying to put as many black letters on it as I can. This is what white meant to me before I understood what it meant to be White. White was a blank slate to fill with the “other.” In the 8th grade, I hadn’t read Mailer, The Beats (minus Amiri Baraka), or any other White cultural theorists trying to provide elegantly worded excuses for White folks trying to steal Black culture. Back then, the term was simply Wigger; and that’s how I identified. I was trying to put as much black over me as possible; I was pretty fly for a White guy; aka a wannabe. Through basketball, I gained access to Black culture and, from the moment I got my first taste, I was hooked.

I wanted to be Black, or at least the Black stereotype that I had internalized. I wanted the music, the style, the walk, the talk, etc. Thus began a deliberate and focused effort to construct my adolescent identity based on black stereotypes. I was a Wigger by choice and wore the marks with pride.

Fortunately, I ended up being pretty good at basketball, which made the cultural shift easier for me than many other White kids. The story smacks of embarrassment when I have to admit this. Basketball was my in, my access to the Black community of my town and I exploited this fiercely.

Like some starry eyed anthropologist I got myself invited to Thanksgiving dinners, to church, watched Aunt Birdie catch the holy spirit, listened to lectures on the historical and dietary importance of collards. I loved every minute of the experience. Be it eager youth or sheer persistence, somehow, I wasn't seen as a threat like most of the White people in town... at least not yet.

Throughout this experience I came to identify myself through the Black community in Waynesboro as a White boy. Which is to say I had a pass, I was accepted; White boy being a term of endearment signifying me as not so different as to be unfamiliar. I was the down-ass White boy, I was cool. I even learned to hate White people like many of my friends.

Like when I got my license I became the taxi for my crew. On the way to play ball every day we would drive by the golf course and shout out the window while some old man was in his back swing, "Fuck you, White people!"

Years of this trajectory set the stage for what would prove to be a significant blow to my identity. The summer between my junior and senior year, I was invited by my hero Cory Alexander, who at the time played for the San Antonio Spurs, along with a couple of my friends, to work a basketball camp for at-risk youth in Richmond Virginia. I arrived at camp excited and ready to soak up the urban experience from the distance and immunity my all-state talent afforded me. I had reached a point in the social life of my town where I didn't have to put so much effort into identity presentation. I made it. I was accepted by the Black community of Waynesboro and

even had extra pull due to my status as a Division I recruit. I was the cool White boy who got game.

In the beginning of basketball camp, most camp coordinators like to open the week by introducing the staff to the campers. This is a time when introductions are accompanied by a lot of hype from the presenter (in this case it was Cory) and are met by campers with applause, enthusiasm, and excitement.

At an early age I developed the habit of counting the White people in the room. I took pride in being the only White boy and if another was present, I would size him up. I would think, “Imposter, poseur, if a fight breaks out I’m gonna’ fuck that White boy up.” I viewed White people as a threat to my own authenticity and felt relieved on this day to find myself once again the only White person in the room.

On this particular day, Cory cruised through the introductions with the expected hype and a very enthusiastic crowd. When it came time for Cory to introduce me he did so with flair, hyped me up, and I walked out in front of the campers to bask in this acceptance, to soak-up the experience of having a camp full of young Richmond City Black youth captivated in awe by my talent and general presence. In the split second between when the introduction was finished and applause usually erupt, I spanned the audience and that’s when my eyes met a little 6-year-old named Na Na.

The moment our eyes met, Na Na’s face turned to a big smile and he shouted: “Check out this honkey yo.” The campers erupted in laughter; some were indeed rolling on the floor. I expected Cory to stop this and so I looked in his direction and he was doubled over laughing, too. I then looked to my friends for some sort of rescue or sympathy and they were laughing.

There I stood, signified honkey, being laughed at by everyone in the gym...

I don't remember how I got out of the moment. I probably slinked back to where my friends stood. Throughout the day they kept laughing and saying things like: "Bloss just got carried by a hood rat." Not even years of intimate friendship could fill the empty space I felt between them and me.

The story ends on a darker note. At lunch the first day of camp, I, using my parent's money, took my friends out on the west side of Richmond while Na Na sat eating free lunch provided through the free lunch program with the city. The difference struck me as appropriate. I could even sense a whiff, a hint of resentment deep in my psyche towards both my friends and Na Na.

Now, after articulating this sentiment, it takes no large leap for me to view the action of buying lunch for my friends as the expression of this resentment. At the time I just thought, "Na Na should be so lucky to find a rich honkey to take care of him." I tucked the thought deep into my soul as quickly as it bubbled up and spent the rest of the week nursing my cracked identity and trying to forget that word; honkey.

I have not forgotten the word or the experience. The memory has since taken on a much larger meaning to my development. The story of how I came to be called a honkey is in fact an entry point into understanding who I am and what it means to be White and privileged. Spurred on by the recognition of my personal meaning tied up in the word honkey and a yearning to become comfortable with my emerging identity, I went searching for a way to name the experience.

Clarence Major in his book *From Juba to Jive, A Dictionary of African-American Slang* defines honkey as deriving from the West African Wolof word honq meaning a pink man or woman; it is a derisive term used to identify a white person (Major, 1994). Through Na Na's choice of word, he was carrying on a verbal tradition going back more than 500 years to pre-

American Slavery West Africa. Na Na was also participating in another tradition, the art of signifyin'. There are probably as many definitions to the word signifyin' as there are writers who write about it. Major's dictionary defines signifyin' as "Performance talk; to berate someone; to censure in twelve or fewer statements; speaking ironically" (Major, 1994).

Daryll Dickson-Carr in his book on African American satire titled: *African-American Satire: The Sacredly Profane Novel*, describes signifyin' as verbal behavior used in African American vernacular communities to describe verbal jousting, consisting of insults and trickery used to create a critique of a person, idea, or object. Roger Abrahams believes signifyin' can mean a number of things, including, talking around a person or subject, making fun of a person or situation, or speaking with hands and eyes. Basically, it is a method of encoding that must be decoded for its significance to be revealed (Dickson-Carr, 2000).

Jordan (2002) mentioned that for reasons not clear; the tradition of satire has been dominated by men. Scholars note that men from African "tribal" communities would regularly trade gibes about each other's mother. When the game transported to America it became known as the dozens. In addition, satire has a long history in African-American culture. The very language that Black people created once they arrived in America is filled with ironic rituals and stories, which like all satire point out failures and foibles using humor. Throughout African and African-American culture, satire exists in many forms, both oral and written, in art, and even dance, such as slave parodies of White movements in the "cakewalk" (Jordan, 2002).

Perhaps the most well-known definition of the act of signifyin' comes from the Henry Louis Gates Jr. book that won a National Book Award in 1989, *The Signifying Monkey, A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. Remember Gates? He's the Harvard Professor that was arrested on his front porch for breaking into his own house resulting in a beer summit with the white arresting cop, Professor Gates and President Obama. We now know that even the choice of

beer one drinks can be a political statement and we also know that he defined signifying as a technique of indirect argument or persuasion (Gates, 1988).

When viewing my experience through this lens not only was Na Na identifying me as an imposter via vocabulary, he was also twisting the act of signifiyin' on its head. While for me the situation may have felt ironic, Na Na's invective needed no ironic encoding or persuasion. Signifiyin? No sir. I was signified rather than being bested in a friendly game of the dozens. In doing so, Na Na managed to identify me as outsider not only in language but in tradition and technique as well.

Assimilation Happens

“And all the girlies say, I'm pretty fly for a white guy.”

-The Offspring-

I was born White to a Mom and Dad who paid lip service to the civil rights movement of the 60's from the comfort of their dorm rooms and went on to receive advanced degrees in human service fields. They then moved to Charlottesville, Va., bought a Volvo, joined the Unitarian church and decided to have kids. From there my life can be read like a movie script written for one of the Osmond's by a Jimmy Carter speech writer. My childhood was spent being serenaded by Harry Chapin and Jim Croce, playing neighborhood soccer, eating green onion over sea bass, and having family game night where we laughed for hours over an edgy game of Chutes and Ladders. When I was 9 the family moved to Waynesboro, Va. Soon, I gave up soccer for basketball and everything changed.

Writing about his own childhood in a segregated town in 1950's New Jersey, professional counselor Mark Kiselica noted that Black and White children rarely mixed, except on the basketball court, where sporting events brought the town together for superficial contact

(Kiselica, 1999). Waynesboro fit Kiselica's description, despite integration 30 years earlier. After school, I'd leave the all-White public school of the country club neighborhood to go to the YMCA and experience integration for the first time.

When my world was integrated it went something like this:

"May I please play?"

"Fuck you talkin' 'bout Whiteboy?"

"Can I play?"

"Sittha' ass down."

Of course I sat down, and everyone started laughing. "Damn dude, he's a bitch. You gonna' do everything I say?"

Thus began my adolescence and maneuvering of a cultural landscape I had previously never known existed. Within a year the differences melted away into jump shots and a local version of the dozens fondly remembered as "holdin' up the porch" or "jonin";

"Your mamma's so fat."

"How fat is she?"

"She so fat, when she sat on a rainbow, bitch made skittles."

You get to know people well when you spend five hours a day with them, and hey...assimilation happens. My parents did what they could to prevent me from forgetting all of the "straight English" I'd learned. But soon, basketball increasingly took over my life; I chose to refuse to put band on my school schedule and dropped both Latin and Geometry. Waynesboro High School didn't know what to do with a country club kid who didn't want to pad his college

application with meaningless extracurriculars and AP courses. As a result the only classes available to me were all remedial. Suddenly I found myself in classes with kids from neighborhoods with nicknames like “The Hill,” “The Quadrangle,” “Phillipines,” and “Maupintown.”

The remedial track granted me even more pull in the black community, although it was a status that created a great deal of inner turmoil. In Paul Beatty’s novel, *Tuff*, there is a White character surrounded by a cast of Black characters. Beatty illustrates this character’s position in the following passage:

Charles “Whitey” O’Koren was an American anachronism, the last of a dying breed: the native, destitute, inner-city white ethnic...It was the neighbors who revived the old Anglo-American sobriquet and dubbed the boy Whitey...Whenever a stranger asked Charles whether he found the ethnic blatancy of his nickname a hindrance, the hard-hearted, freckled boy of nineteen replied, “It makes me no nevermind.” In private he preferred to be called C-Ice or Charley O’. But there were paranoid tendencies lurking underneath his b-boy scowl. Often while walking the streets of Spanish Harlem minding his business, Charles flinched upon hearing a frustrated local curse the living gods with a “Fuck Whitey!,” forcing him to ask what he’d done wrong. Charles implored his friends not to call him Whitey, and they begrudgingly agreed. However, old-timers such as Winston, Fariq, and Armello sometimes slipped and called him that, out of equal parts habit and condescension (Beatty, 2000,pg.52-53).

When I was first told that I had a “Hill pass” granting me immunity in the black neighborhood, I felt like a small town version of Whitey. And like Whitey, it was the “old heads” or old-timers that greeted me with the sting of condescension.

My parents figured, “why fight it?” And the breezy middle class liberalism they had inherited from residual hippy sensibilities left over from their own cultural revolution eventually turned our home into what on the surface seemed to be a suburban center for racial harmony, despite the frustrations of our neighbors and the harassment of our city’s finest.

One summer between my freshman and sophomore year at Waynesboro, I met Matt Williams. Matt was the only other “young’n” at the YMCA evening open gyms and Matt was Black. In addition, Matt was not from Waynesboro. Matt grew up on the streets of DC, where he lived with his mom and spent summers in Waynesboro with his dad. Being from out of town, and my age, Matt overlooked the dark potentials my skin color might mean and we became close friends. This friendship set the stage for my first real time experience with flagrant old school racism; a racism with the nobility to drop all subtlety, though the power to cause great pain.

When reading the Segrest book I came upon the following passage:

When had my “racist daddy” contracted to himself—to one aging man—from the balloon into which I had inflated him: a caricature of everything in the culture that I hated, my archetypal white person, whom I could never convert because I could never accept the him of me? No Black friend had ever asked me not to love my daddy (Segrest, 1994).

This passage takes me back to the moment I engaged this feeling of wondering, “Can I ever accept the him of me?” Would Matt ever ask me not to love my family? Soon we were spending every minute together. One night I’d spend the night at Matt’s house where we would drink Sunny Delight and eat micro waved miniature hotdogs bought pre-packaged in bulk 40 at a time. The next night we’d spend the night at my house and drink fresh squeezed orange juice and eat grilled steak with asparagus something or other. Matty often tried to tell me that White folks’ cooking was bad for his digestion.

One day we managed to find a ride home from the Y for lunch and an afternoon swim before heading back for open gym. When we arrived at my house, sitting in the driveway was my mother’s mother, Grace.

At an early age I picked up on the tension between my dad and Grandma Grace. Add to it the myth that grandma hated men and this was one woman that I just didn’t feel like being in

the same room with. She was nurturing like the praying mantis that eats the weak offspring so the others can thrive is nurturing. She is the pink Cadillac the Avon lady wins for selling more products in a month than any other employee only to find out the Cadillac needs new tires and won't start when it's too cold. She had a scary old lady grump face and liked to save her scowl for me.

On this day, Matty and I were unusually hungry and we hopped out of the vehicle to run into the house before the full-on blood sugar crash. I knew Grandma was home because of her old maroon Reliant K car, smelling of Red Door perfume and parked in the driveway. As I approached the door I saw the curtain in the window close quickly. When Matty and I stepped into the house, it was silent and still. We went straight to the fridge and scarfed down pizza left over from the night before. After finishing off the pizza, we drank about a gallon of orange juice and then decided to go swimming. At this point there was still no sign of life at the house with the exception of the family golden retriever outside barking.

After the swim, we came into the house and I went upstairs to get a change of clothes for Matt and myself before heading back to the Y for more workouts. Still a little confused about where Grandma and my sisters might be but not really putting any effort into worrying about it, I tried to open the door to my parent's room to see if Mom had finished the laundry to be put away. The door was locked. When I knocked on the door, nothing happened. Curious about why Mom and Dad's bedroom door was locked in a house that didn't even lock the front door and thinking that it might have been a mistake I got a clothes hanger from my closet and jimmied opened the door.

When I pushed the door open it felt heavy and I was able to get my head in the door. On the other side was Grandma Grace leaning with her ear stuck flat to the door. Our eyes connected

and her first question was; “Who is that boy?” I ignored Grandma and asked my sisters what they were doing in the bedroom. In unison they stated: “Grandma made us.”

At first I shook this behavior off as more eccentric old lady stuff. Matty and I changed our clothes and I yelled upstairs that I was going back to the Y to work out and would be home by 9:30 that evening. At this announcement I heard a door open and shut and little feet rush down the steps knocking off pictures on the wall and knocking over a bell on the table in the Hallway. Grandma Grace reached us out of breath and with a look of terror in her eyes. Holding one finger out and propping herself up with the other hand on her knee we waited for a full minute for her to catch her breath.

When she was finally able to make a sound she shouted for us both to “Stop right there.” Which of course we didn’t have to do, seeing as how we were already standing there staring at her to make sure she wasn’t going to pass out. She then proceeded to make Matt empty out each of his pockets and turn them inside out before we could leave for the Y. I told Matt he didn’t have to do it, but Matt did anyway.

That was the first time it dawned on me what the look of anger and embarrassment in a black person’s eye might mean. The gesture triggered something dark and violent in me and I flipped out. I threw an explosive tantrum crashing through the house breaking the nearest things I could find. This of course validated all of my grandmother’s fears but I didn’t care. I was embarrassed and pissed off. The tantrum ended with me using my size to physically intimidate Grandma out of the door of our house and into her car. I screamed at her before going back to the Y that she was never allowed back into our house again.

Mom and Dad came home that afternoon from work to a mess. I don’t know if Grandma was there or not, I stayed at the Y until closing and then spent the night at Matty’s house. When I got home the next day, Grandma was gone and my parents were furious. I didn’t care and tried

punishing Mom and Dad with silence for tolerating this behavior. Being a teenager, any attempt to contextualize her worldview didn't work. I wrote her out of my life forever. And for the next couple of years if she came over to the house, I either stayed far away or made sure to roll up into my house deep with a crew of friends to terrorize her.

A few years later, my grandmother out of the blue called mom up and asked if she could come see me play basketball. It turns out we were playing a game in Lynchburg and she came to watch us play. She had a great time cheering for us. While I know better than to think that her racism was cured, in fact it could have just been reinforced, she also got excited to see Matt and J.R. on the court with me.

Grandma soon became a huge fan of us and when our games were written up in Lynchburg or other nearby print, she would clip them out and save them. After one game in Lynchburg, Grandma insisted we come over for a late dinner. I agreed to come over for a couple of minutes but when we got to the house she grabbed Matt and J by the arm and escorted them into the house. We sat around the table that night while Grandma cooked for us. Matt acted like the humiliation 3 years before never happened and when it came time to leave, Grandma gave all three of us a hug. She then asked Matt if she could call him Dark Chocolate and dubbed J.R., Milk Chocolate.

While I wanted to cringe at this oblivious old woman disrespecting my closest friends in the world, it was known by all of us that this was a huge turning point for her. And Matt and J handled her shift from anger and fear to curiosity and condescension with grace and forgiveness. After the dinner, she would seek Matt and J out when she came to the house. Grandma Grace's shift didn't stop here; she joined a church committee that started organizing fellowship socials meant to create a bridge between her all White church and traditionally Black churches. Grandma even went out and bought a church "crown" once again meaning well, but in her

curiosity and enthusiasm reduced the Black experience to a stereotype, Black church ladies in big hats. In Black culture, Grandma found a bridge to connect with me.

As I'm writing this my fingers are shaking overtop of the keyboard; knuckles white with tension. How sick and fucked up and condescendingly beautiful it is that my racist grandmother found in Black culture a way to connect and heal the broken relationship she had with her grandson. And how inappropriate and embarrassing to realize that in doing so, Grandma and I turned my best friends into some twisted version of magic Negroes. What's worse to realize is that my whole life I'm guilty of the same curiosity and enthusiasm, the same exotic otherness that defined Grandma's shift.

There are many questions and levels to examine about the above anecdote which will be fleshed out in a later section of the paper. For now, I'd like to continue to position my personal narrative as a lightning rod for racial confrontation and volatility. Of the many anecdotes to pull from, the previous demonstrates that well. There is one episode however that has left a lasting impression on my life, my relationship to my wife's family (and my wife), and my experience around people of color.

The story ends with a marriage, so relax; it's got a happy ending. Joy and I were married in a blur of festivities, excitement, and drama. For our wedding we were attempting to integrate wealthy White Long Island Catholics with working class Black Baptists with suburban middle class White Lutherans with Southern White, rural and poor Methodists. A couple of kegs were added just in case things already weren't interesting enough and for the most part we pulled it off with one huge exception.

Two days before our wedding, Joy's family threw a party for us out in the county. Naturally everyone in the wedding party was invited and the party began low key and fun. As the

evening progressed so did the drinking and folks whom neither Joy nor I knew were showing up to the party.

It didn't take long before tensions spilled out in conversation and after a couple of racially charged comments were made, a friend of Joy's family member addressed J.R., a Black member of the wedding party as "boy" and threatened to go get his shotgun. Escalated by the guilt I was experiencing for putting my friends yet again in a situation where they would feel the flagrant sting of racism and the fear I was experiencing around the memory of my college teammate being shot in a Baltimore bar by a White boy from the county just 8 months before, I asked everybody to get in their cars in order to avoid a fight.

I then exploded at Joy's family with a verbal tirade of accusation and poorly aimed comments about meth addled toothless hillbillies. The tantrum ended with me in a scene perfect for a comic book. Drunk on Hennessy and adrenaline, I stood in front of the bonfire, ripping the shirt from my chest like some pasty pathetic hulk and declared as loud as I possibly could to my wife's family, soon to be my family, "You're all fucking racist rednecks."

We left without a fight, but the next day Joy's brother and sister in law came to my parent's house to announce that they were boycotting the wedding because of the damage I might cause some of the other family members with my slander. The logic around the boycott was that many of them own working class businesses and if people found out that I accused them of being racist, then none of the "Mexicans" would work for them. That's not a joke; by the way, this was actually presented to me in this manner.

That night I wrote an apology letter to Joy's family connecting the threat of the shotgun to the event of my teammate being shot. The letter worked and Joy's family decided it would be safe to participate in our wedding.

The wedding went smoothly and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. I could still sense the tension at the reception though possessed neither the wisdom nor self-awareness to understand it. Nor had I considered the emotional toll all of this might have taken on my Black friends. Towards the end of the reception, after most of the people had left, somehow an argument erupted between Joy (remember we were married only hours before) and J.R. (the target of the shotgun threat). Pissed off over the racial drama of the week and feeling guilty, angry, and pressure to take my wife's side, I blew up at J.

We traded blows before being broken up. A couple of days later, Joy and I flew to Hawaii to start a new life. I haven't seen or spoken to J.R. since. I was married 9 years ago this month. I can't find any other way to think about this event than to view it through the lens of my own privilege. I've shifted from hating him for "creating trouble" on my wedding day to wanting to apologize to him and have to accept that I may never get the chance.

Welcome to the Panopticon

Earlier in the paper, I mentioned briefly the deflating experience of engaging the White privilege material for the first time in a multicultural counseling class. Throughout much of the previous anecdotes, I have written myself into the hero role, the savior out to fight or convert any racist I sense on the horizon. This held true the first day of class when I sat among my cohort feeling superior because I knew that I had multicultural clout.

In fact, I had the gall to compare my own personal narrative around race to the story of the poet Gary Snyder when he was a young anthropology student at Reed College and attempted to join the spiritual tradition of the Hopi tribe he was studying. The story goes that the Hopi's rejected Gary because he was White. Gary, feeling frustrated with this rejection, fled the U.S. and joined a Buddhist monastery in Japan where he studied Buddhism for 7 years before returning.

As I shared the story, the professor eyed me with what I interpreted then as suspicion. Now, the memory of the professor's expression has softened into a gentle and worried look. I believe that she was seeing my blind spot and witnessing my own obliviousness to racial grandiosity. It's a grandiosity that can be read throughout the first two sections of this paper in my personal episodes. It's the grandiosity that puts me as the central character in a racial conflict out to smash racism wherever I find it, while also being ignorant of my own racist transgressions.

Shannon Sullivan, in her book *Revealing Whiteness*, describes this grandiosity as ontological expansiveness. She defines the expansiveness as a relationship between self and the environment in which the self assumes that it can and should have complete mastery of its environment (Sullivan, 2006). Sullivan develops the idea in the following passage.

To be a white person means that one tends to assume that all cultural and social spaces are potentially available for one to inhabit. The habit of ontological expansiveness enables white people to maximize the extent of the world in which they transact. But as an instance of white solipsism, it also severely limits their ability to treat others in respectful ways. Instead of acknowledging others' particular interests, needs, and projects, white people who are ontologically expansive tend to recognize only their own, and their expansiveness is at the same time a limitation (Sullivan, 2006).

Slowly the material and the very idea of White privilege grabbed onto my psyche. The experience and paper for that matter can best be described as an attempt to define or better yet to identify. Through the process of searching for a definition, I've come to understand that an increased focus on defining and dismantling White privilege, with a continued appreciation for diversity, may ameliorate current dynamics in professional counseling education and practice.

This focus may also enhance counseling trainees' racial identity development (Hays, Chang, Havice, 2008).

Personalizing the increased focus on defining and dismantling I continued to read and try to position myself in the text I was engaging. Definition after definition bubbled up into my consciousness.

To be “white” means to be insensitive to the possibilities for oppression within one’s self, therefore out-of-touch, for opportunistic reasons, with who one is and who others are. If “white” meant all-inclusive, like white the color of light containing all colors, then “white” would be a term of love and life. But the “white” I am talking about is a whiteness of exclusion, an absence of color, an absence of responsibility and self-awareness. Whiteness is a death trip. And the attempt to break out of it is an attempt to gain life (Eakins, 1996).

This particular passage blew me away what with the whole “Whiteness is a death trip” rhetoric. Was this the self loathing I’ve been experiencing most of my adolescence and young adult life? At this point I started to understand myself not through who I was, but rather through who I wasn’t. I wasn’t Black, but I certainly wasn’t White. And right on cue, I discovered Tim Wise and he had a thought to offer up on my thought process around racial privilege.

To define yourself, ultimately, by what you’re not, is a pathetic and heartbreaking thing. It is to stand denuded before a culture that has stolen your birthright, or rather, convinced you to give it up. And the costs are formidable, beginning with the emptiness whites so often feel when confronted by multiculturalism and the connectedness of people of color to their various heritages. That emptiness then gets filled up by the privileges and ultimately forces us to become dependent on them (Wise, 2008).

I wasn't empty, was I? Is this what I really meant when I so proudly proclaimed to be a cultural orphan because of my own drab interpretation of my White heritage? Furthermore what does this mean for me as an emerging counselor?

My definition of what it means to be White took on an evolutionary trajectory that if graphed might serve as a great model for the latest design of a thrilling theme park ride. Simply put, I was and to some extent continue to exist in a state of racial crisis.

The material and my own fear that I have been acting out a racist script on autopilot for two decades launched me into a chaotic state. And remembering that both neurosis and creativity are attempts to solve the same problem I understood that I would fluctuate from neurotic to creative states. However, I wanted to take the Creative path. I want to make something new from the situation. And so, much like before, I set out to name the experience of my own personal crisis (Echterling, Presbury, McKee, 2005).

This part of the journey led to the White racial identity models. The common goals of White racial identity models include acceptance of and appreciation for diversity, greater interracial comfort, openness to racial concerns, awareness of one's personal responsibility for racism, and an evolving nonracist identity (Parker, Moore, & Neimeyer, 1998). Seeing these goals as noble I sought to position myself within a model in hopes of becoming clearer of where I was and where I wanted to be.

The model that at first glance seemed to work the best for me was Helms' White identity model. White racial identity statuses described by Helms are Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independence, Immersion/Emersion, and Autonomy (Helms, 1993).

For me, and I suspect for many White helpers, when encountering this material in a counselor training program the game changes a bit. It is no longer about positioning yourself on Helms' developmental model. It's this objective and cool detached approach to understand

myself that I have spent so much of my life relying on. In fact, most likely I would be tempted to place myself either on the full-on autonomous side of the model or place myself in a step in the model that implied I was not racially aware of self. This is performed with the explicit function of winning the hearts of whom I might be with at the time. And yes, this is greatly influenced by the racial profile of the other people in the room.

Thinking on this I experienced a pull of paranoia. In trying to present myself as if I was in a certain stage, yet also trying to be honest with myself-a dissonance developed. Every movement and every thought spoken was first passed through a filter before being acted on. I felt like I was in Jail, being watched by a thousand jailers at every angle waiting for me to make a mistake.

Remembering my introduction to the French theorist Michelle Foucault as an undergrad and his writings on discipline and power, I went investigating further a word that stuck out from his writings; panopticism which is the panoptic modality of power. Foucault describes panopticism as a technique of power created to make it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements. Foucault's work on Panopticism stems from a much earlier idea known as the panopticon (Foucault, 1984).

Panopticon is a plan of management using construction first developed by Jeremy Bentham in 1787. The Panopticon was proposed to be used with any houses where inspection is required. These include: prison, houses of industry, work-houses, poor-houses, mad houses, and schools (Bentham, 1787).

The panopticon was designed as a sphere with the inspection house in the center with the area reserved for the prisoners on the grounds inside the sphere below. The idea was that the workers, prisoners, or patients would not know when the inspectors were watching, but would

know that at anytime and from any angle they could be watched. This type of system created an experience of paranoia and anxiety in many of the prisoners.

The panopticon is a concept that I felt immediately; more so than Helms' identity models. I am stuck in a liminal space, a space where I have to make the creative choice or the fear choice. This betwixt and between is the meta-experience of mind placing itself smack in the middle of the idea; the emotional expression of the Oroboros where the snake eats its own tail. It is the obstacle the White helper must overcome in order to be a competent multicultural counselor.

The panopticon of privilege overwhelms the emerging white male heterosexual counselor who identifies as open-minded and has spent time digesting all of the diversity training his undergraduate schools could throw at him. It is the attempt of this helper to wrestle with Sullivan's paradox of ontological expansiveness; the moment when a decision is made to creatively strike a new path or make the fear choice and return to the homeostatic moment.

Chewing On A Worn Out Chuck Taylor;

Was that a micro aggression, or did you just stick your foot in your mouth

“I do not think that this realization should lead to despair, although it does snuff out any Pollyannaish dreams of the easy elimination of racism.”

- Shannon Sullivan-

When I first named my experience and understood it through the lens of the panopticon was angry. I didn't need this shit. It was as if I had been de-skilled. Prior to taking the multicultural class and even joining the program I thought that I could coast by in multicultural settings on the strength of my own history. Now however there was something new to worry about. My gigantic god-damn privilege.

At first there were obvious ramifications. I had trouble sleeping and whenever I found myself encountering a person of color I would fall quiet. The ridiculous and grandiose part of me that views me as savior of Black folks reasoned that I was protecting them from me. When I really put some thought to it, the truth around it was that I just didn't want to look stupid. I didn't want to blow an image I spent years trying to construct. Soon, however I started noticing mistakes I was making.

A big one is the need to rewrite my own history. The reader probably noticed my puffed up posturing and positioning as anti-racist hero, converter of grumpy racist grandmas. I will have to reconstruct this narrative from a new perspective; one that rather than denying my own privilege sets it up front and center. This of course presents a new problem, the paradox of privilege. Sullivan writes that:

The very act of giving up (direct) total control over one's habits can be an attempt to take (indirect) total control over them by dominating the environment. The very act of changing one's environment so as to disrupt white privilege paradoxically can be a disruption that only reinforces that which it disrupts (Sullivan, 2006).

Aggh! By actively taking on White privilege I must act as a White privileged person. I may be able to broach the topic of race by opening up a session with a Black or Latino client by asking "What's it like to work with a White counselor? This may be helpful, and then again, it may not be. In my effort to open up the racial tension in the room, I may just be caring for myself and using my privilege to push the client into talking about race.

Armed with the intent to use my own ontological expansiveness to confront my own ontological expansiveness and spinning from the zero gravity effect the panopticon of privilege

was having on my psyche I dove into my training. And stepped on a few landmines in the process.

During my training, I had the opportunity to work under the structural family therapy model. Eventually, I was asked to become a lead counselor where it was my task to put together a team of therapists to best serve the family, based on my impressions from the initial assessment.

Following one of these assessments, I was thinking about putting together a team and it struck me that, with this particular family, a Black therapist would be more helpful than a White therapist. So I made a decision that I wanted a Black therapist to work with me to help the family. The agency that I was doing my training with lacked diversity and when thinking about a Black therapist for my team, this meant that there was only one choice. Upon realizing that my choice was limited to only one person, it hit me how ridiculous it might seem for me to invite this counselor onto the team.

I was nervous about how to broach the topic without seeming racist or communicating that I saw this counselor as a token in an all-White system. Secretly, I had always wanted to ask the counselor what it was like to be a token in an all-White system.

Even as I write this now, I'm unsure as to the most appropriate approach to the situation. At the time, based on my experience with White privilege literature, I was going to share with the counselor that I was interested in this counselor's help because of the counselor's potential ability to get to issues of the family quicker based on the position of the family as Black and struggling with issues of racism. When I finally was able to ask the counselor to join the team, my upper middle class White "politeness" and privilege reared its ugly head and what came out of my mouth was, "So, how do you feel about multicultural counseling?"

The counselor looked perplexed and I stumbled deeper into micro aggression territory in my effort to back away from my original idea. I can't remember the words that guided me deeper

into dangerous territory, though I do remember that as my anxiety increased my tone of voice grew increasingly smug. I may have even been trying to front with a calm smile. The conversation ended with the counselor looking at me and stating, “I don’t want to work on this case with you.”

I carried around the shame of this moment with me for the rest of the day. I don’t know what may have been the best approach and even now, despite spending a couple of years reading, and thinking through my own privilege I don’t know if it is appropriate to assume that a Black counselor can help a black family through their community struggles with racism any better than a White counselor. What I do know is that the moment I asked that question to my colleague, I sent a message to my colleague that race was not a topic that I was open to exploring. I was an armchair anti-racist.

Another training story took place between me and a client. I had been working with a family of color for several months and through this work had developed what felt like a positive therapeutic relationship. On one occasion in a family session the energy of the session turned to the identified client in the room and the parents focused on the changes in language and self-expression the client was going through. At first the mother and father seemed to approach these changes with a light and joking manner. I can remember sitting in the room and feeling happy and even proud that I was able to sit in the kitchen of a Black family as a White professional counselor in training and the family participate with me in such a comfortable manner.

At this moment the father turned to me and made a statement that sent my pride through the roof. The father opened a question by stating, “Ryan, I got something to ask you and I know, I can tell, you’ve been around a lot of Black folks your whole life.” I was feeling good about this statement. It was for me a mark of acceptance. As if I’d been given props and welcomed into the club of cool ass White people that can be trusted. My ridiculous glow came crashing to a halt

when the father followed the statement up by asking me, “What do you think of when you hear the term niggerish?”

The question struck me like a blow to the stomach. I stuttered my words and muttered something to the effect of, “I can’t begin to know how to answer that.” The room filled with silence on the tail of my response and members in the family, including my client, actually backed up.

I am a firm believer in the wisdom of the master counselors in my training program that taught me that feedback--not failure—is a constant in the counseling process. In most situations, the fractal patterning of the therapeutic dance proves this to be true. When it comes to this family, and for that matter multicultural counseling in general, the pattern of therapeutic dance seems too chaotic, too out of balance already and feedback--not failure—is no longer a helpful mantra.

There are ruptures in multicultural counseling from which the relationship cannot recover. When I refused to respond to the family I was helping out of my own fear and baggage tied up in the word nigger, I sent the message to them that when it came down to the real work, the uncomfortable work of helping, I was useless.

On another occasion, I was transporting a client to a treatment team meeting involving several social workers, therapeutic foster parents, counselors and psychologist. The individual was presenting as nervous through pressured speech and rumination around what might be the outcome of the meeting. I wanted to try and join with the client by naming the client’s experience without the client having to verbalize it. I took my time to carefully construct a short wondering about what it must be like for the individual to enter a room full of professionals. The individual looked at me with disbelief and proceeded to school me around making poor assumptions. The client stated, Intimidated? By professionals? When you say professional, do

you mean White? Man, what kind of shit are you talking? I put my pants on the same way everybody in that room does, one leg at a time.”

Another rupture I won't be coming back from. The remainder of the trip was completed in silence. And once again, the panopticon of privilege failed me. How did I miss such an obvious mistake?

Beyond the Panopticon-A framework for my experience

“We wander because no nation, no ideology, no culture, no religion, no philosophy holds our loyalty or pins us down in time or place. We are cut loose. We drift”

-Peter Lamborn Wilson-

While I recognize that it is ambitious to propose a framework at this point in the paper and for that matter at this point in my training, a framework none-the-less is what I'm offering. Funny thing about this is that it is an expansive and grandiose belief that I have ideas worth sharing before I'm even a professional counselor-this is part of the privilege that I carry with me. In that spirit, the proposal of this idea is a tentative one. For my own sanity I no longer want to inflate myself with the delusions that every action I make, every thought I think is worth considering as important to everyone in or out of the profession. Instead, I want to offer the following ideas as a way I am framing my own experience. Think of this as an exercise in using my ontological expansiveness to challenge my ontological expansiveness.

There is research to indicate the effectiveness of personalizing White privilege in order to challenge it. Focusing on White's illegitimate benefits might evoke collective guilt which can increase positive response to people of color. To the extent that Whites begin to consider some of

their benefits illegitimate, thinking about one's own privilege might reduce racism (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Schiffhauer, 2006).

In addition, a fundamental goal when working with White counseling students is to assist those in the development of a healthy identification with the white community. By engaging the White developmental models and acknowledging the privilege that comes with being White, a healthy sense of White racial identity can be developed (Pack-Brown, S. 1999).

Having engaged the developmental models and found them helpful, though at certain points inadequate to my own becoming, the following is an attempt at understanding the self through personal intellectual discovery.

Throughout my experience, I've had three major ideas propping up my worldview like a stool, or rather like the tripod on a video camera utilized to stabilize the camera and increase the likelihood for clarity in the picture. These ideas have provided some form of relief and a part of me while I write about the experience and frame the ideas that helped me through it worry that I'm yet again appropriating ideas from other traditions and other cultures to justify my own professional, intellectual, and personal growth at the expense of people of color. This is a problem that I don't see any way around at this point.

As I'm conceptualizing my experience in becoming, I want to resist the urge to create yet another developmental model for my experience. Personally, I have a difficult time fitting my own narrative into Helms' model. William Burroughs once wrote that time is control while space is freedom. To measure the becoming of competency in multicultural counseling with time restricts the experience to unknowable milestones and false plateaus that ultimately lead to more grandiosity and risks the development of a large multicultural blind spot for even seasoned counselors. Space on the other hand, is abstract enough as to allow the me to wander about in, without ever forgetting that the model is a tool, rather than items on a to do list to be checked off.

It is a tool used to help me wander about my own social and cultural landscape in comfort. And comfort paired with intense introspection and wholistic interest is my vision of how I want to be a multicultural competent counselor.

While the framework is not intended to be developmental, there is a starting point. This beginning is the panopticon of privilege described in a previous section. It is the moment the emerging helper begins to use the tool of the oppressor-of the dominant culture-against the self. The mark of this experience is one of intense introspection; an uncomfortable reckoning marked by paranoid and suspicious awareness of motivation and presentation. Once one enters the panopticon of privilege one never comes out. To paraphrase Nietzsche, stare into the abyss and the abyss stares back... One is never the same having locked eyes with the abyss. The panopticon of privilege possesses the same game changing stare; except the eyes are many and they come from within and look in from without.

The next stage is that of authentic interest. If this smacks of elitism, it is. As a ballplayer, I used to always hear, "you can't coach effort." In multicultural counseling, you can't coach interest. Either you got it or you don't and like sports without effort, multicultural counseling without interest, will produce poor results. Where this experience gets tricky is in what kind of interest is helpful.

In Edward Said's famous book titled *Orientalism*. He writes of the tendency for colonial powers to eroticize and exploit the differences of the colonized. This action, even when executed with the intention of helping, reduces many people and peoples to a cardboard cutout of who they really are. In addition, traditions get co-opted and adapted to fit the western experience. (Said, 1979) At one extreme level of this you get the stereotype of the hyper sexed Asian. In fact in the blog, "Stuff White People Like" there is an entry that states, "Asian women" (Lander, 2008). Another example of Orientalism is the practice of frustrated and educated westerners leaving the

familial wisdom tradition he or she was born into for exotic spiritual practices. Thus one finds an ashram by the name of Yogaville in the middle of Buckingham, Virginia.

This practice can cheapen both the seeker and the tradition from which the seeker is mining the “exotic” information. Without proper intention and a measured interest in fully understanding the whole tradition or culture behind the tradition, the seeker can lose humility and forget that they are in fact an outsider. This is much like my own experience in the Black community of Waynesboro. On the other hand, it is important to have some knowledge about the cultures and traditions one is interacting with. When these two elements are combined, what results is much like what seems like the grocery store approach of religion in the U.S. Instead, multicultural counseling classes and emerging helpers run the risk of taking a grocery store approach to learning about different populations.

Much like the difference between a gas-ripened December tomato in a produce section and an outdoor-grown tomato at a farmers market, the grocery store approach to...pick a population...takes the nutrients out/the meaning out of the consumption.

The Counterculture theorist and independent intellectual Peter Lamborn Wilson aka Hakim Bey, who is also a White writer and thinker, spent years abroad studying a mystical sect of Islam known as Sufism. While studying Sufism and spending time as a White man among Islamic peoples of the Middle East, Wilson sketched out a theory of traveling based on the Sufi Bedouin tradition. Wilson set out to articulate the difference between authentic seeking and cheap tourism. In the following passage Wilson describes his frustration with the act of tourism:

Tourism, in a nutshell, takes the Exotic Other and alienates you from it—by interposing tour guides, buses, schedules, and tasteless boring misinformation between you and the goal of your travel. Instead of experiencing the Other you consume a representation or even a simulation of the Other, a fake which is sold

under the slogan “Experience exotic Abyssinia!” or words to that affect. All tourists merely tour the Abyss itself, the empty space from which meaning has vanished; they too are existentialists but they don’t know it;--and therefore they become the opposite of heroes—they become villains. They have inherited the mantle of colonialism and are vampirizing the last “natural resource” of the exotic faraway lands and wildernesses through which they swarm: difference.

(Wilson, 1993 pg. 156)

The concept of tourism can be applied to the grocery store approach to cultures found in some multicultural educational curriculums. Wilson, then went on to elaborate an act that he names as Sacred Drifting or a poetic wandering as coming from a blend of the romantic spiritual travel of the Sufi’s and the romantic cultural wanderings of the American poetic traditions. Wilson writes that; “Whitman plus Zen equals a new art of travel, innocent of “rules” but plunging headlong into the unknown in search of treasure and the water of life.” (Wilson, 1993)

This technique of passage through varied ambiances retains the romance of the other. However, it’s a romance with substance. Rather than a one-class-stand fueled by quick fevered curiosity satiated through the gorging of movies and cookbooks, it’s a patient and respectful travel through the whole culture with the intent of full understanding.

In the end, the concept of Sacred Drifting as I’m imagining it to be applied to multicultural counseling is an intentional approach to difference that retains the mystery in this difference while simultaneously reducing the mediation involved in the pursuit of the experience to the interpersonal level. Not movies or cookbooks but conversation.

The drifter or counselor is fully aware of her outsider status and seeks to position herself at the front door with her finger on the door bell. It is the choice of the one who answers to let her in or not. Wilson writes of the Sufi’s being something of Spiritual beggar’s, in my

framework, the White counselor is the beggar, offering himself up with humility and an empty bowl to be filled by those willing to share their life.

The final piece of my experience as an emerging White helper is yet again an act of intellectual appropriation. It is my experience that I came upon these ideas through my own Sacred Drifting; a technique that as my time in the panopticon of privilege increases becomes more refined.

The third leg in the tripod is a concept taken from a writer by the name of Vilsoni Hereniko. Hereniko is a Fijian writer and associate professor at the Center for Pacific Island Studies at the University of Hawai'i-Manoa. In the essay titled *Four Writers and One Critic*, Hereniko and colleague Sig Schwarz responded to the problem of White/colonial critics inappropriately reviewing and writing about Pacific island literature based on White cultural norms. The problem in this case is one where the critic becomes the "arbiter of good taste, defined in this case by a member of the dominant group or class who reproduces, consciously or otherwise, exploitative relations in colonial settings." (Hereniko, Schwarz, 1999)

The problematic parallel here is the risk the counselor runs in assuming the White counselors own dominant culture is the mythical norm by which all other cultures should be measured. The White counselor in this sense becomes like the colonial critic, the arbiter of good taste, passing judgment based on the assumption that all clients are White and probably male and certainly heterosexual. In these instances the tendency to pathologize difference can be heightened. So what does a White counselor do when he finds himself compelled to influence a client of color to change or "norm up" to White standards?

Hereniko and Schwarz argue that most writers write in order to make sense of their own experiences (Hereniko and Schwarz 1999). While this may be simplified to make a point, when distilled from raw motivation, the same statement can be made about clients. People seek out

counseling in order to tell their stories and make sense of their own experiences. The two writers believed that;

The Pakeha (white-sic) critic of Pacific Islands literature should support and fairly critique the work of the writer; otherwise, we believe it is best to leave the author's work to those from within to take issue with the author (Hereniko and Schwarz, 1999).

Their solution to this problem is what Hereniko and Schwarz describe as a need for Talking Chiefs. In many parts of the Pacific, the chief has someone who acts on his behalf. This person is known in Samoa as the tulafale. The tulafale is an appointed representative and is bestowed only on those considered most knowledgeable about culture and custom. Not everyone can be a talking chief. The tulafale speaks on behalf of the chief, explains or clarifies when necessary. The talking chief can also “criticize the chief—in a loving and constructive manner—when necessary.” (Hereniko and Schwarz, 1999) Hereniko and Schwarz write:

This relationship between the tamalii (high chief) and the tulafale (talking chief) known as feutaga in Samoa, is what we propose as a preferable alternative to the “expert” posturing endemic in literary circles today (Hereniko and Schwarz, 1999).

In my own journey as an emerging helper and through the panopticon of privilege I've come to understand the point in space that I want to be in as a counselor as a talking chief. In thinking about the role of the helper as talking chief it feels similar to that of the White literary critic. In counseling, the “talking chief” position, much like the form it takes in criticism, requires of the White counselor like the colonial critic a “new learning as well as unlearning and it also encourages a healthy reduction in ego size” (Hereniko and Schwarz, 1999).

Simply put, the white counselor throws away the expert posturing, approaches her task with humility and attempts to integrate her understanding of her own racial experience into how this experience is viewed by others through engaging in therapeutic, collegial, and personal relationships.

At the end, I have finally come to see that the effort on one level has been a struggle for a measure of psychic integration (which came more through relationships than solitary self-analysis) in a fractured world; never complete, but also not reversible (Segrest, 1994).

Then, like Segrest, there is hope that the counselor can become truly helpful to the person of color.

The above is my attempt at conceptualizing my own experience in struggling to become a competent multicultural counselor. I have used three ideas, the panopticon of privilege, sacred drifting, and talking chief to frame and communicate this experience. As each leg of the tripod develops, the clarity and stability of the emerging multicultural counselor ebbs and peaks; the comfort and even the competency of the counselor too ebbs and peaks. At its most effective, the three legs of the tripod are fully developed and sits stable, allowing me to be focused and clear in my own experience of the multicultural setting.

In revisiting an earlier passage in my paper when I wrote that feedback—not--failure is a mantra that doesn't fit in the multicultural arena I was wrong. It doesn't fit in the interpersonal immediate experience of the multicultural arena. Where it does seem to be most appropriate however is in the career of the White helper. Feedback—not--failure. Every time a mistake is made, the counselor must stick around and experience, even become sensitive to, the consequence of the rupture. When one can stomach this, and humble oneself in the moment of unconscious racism, when one can sit comfortably as a Talking Chief in the panopticon of privilege while the fires of self doubt rage around, when one can tolerate, even enjoy this bewildered and hyper-

vigilant state and simultaneously drift behind as the client of color leads the talking chief through their own reality tunnel, than the emerging will be complete. It's an emerging that ends with a becoming while never ceasing to be arriving. Grandiose isn't it? Well now, that's the point. And I ain't there yet.

“It is always morning, the caravan is always departing. All we can do is share the Prophet's prayer—“O Lord increase our amazement” – and set forth into the Bewilderness.”

-Peter Lamborn Wilson-

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