

**Ruth Frankenberg (1993) "White on White: The Interviewees and the Method"**

**Main Point:** Frankenberg discusses her research methods and strategies in analyzing how white women view race—including how they view people of other races and how they view themselves as raced individuals. She problematizes her focus on white women as her research subjects, her role as a fellow white woman interviewer, categorizing diverse groups of white women into categories for research, and the segue into the topic of race given that it is taboo. This section is a discussion on how methods and language provide an explanation for how white women view race. Although she briefly discusses activist white women's enlightened responses, she highlights other interviewees' manifestations of shame, discomfort, and memory lapse during interviews, and verifies race as a taboo subject through reactions to the study and responses to her questions.

**Central Issues And Concepts:**

- Race consciousness is affected by diversity of experience of privilege and oppression
- White women may view racism as a structural and not a personal issue.
  - Racism as not a 'white people's problem'
- Race is a taboo subject, so white women are discouraged from engaging in dialogue about race. If they do, they fear being labeled as racist. Her focus on white women was perceived to be white supremacist in nature.
- Democratized the research process by using a "dialogical" approach in order to create safer interviewee of being labeled as racist and because it is a difficult subject to talk about.

**Two Key Quotes:**

"My interest in white women's race consciousness was also threatening. For, as I will argue in chapter 6, in a racially hierarchical society, white women have to repress, avoid, and conceal a great deal in order to maintain a stance of "not noticing" color. From this point of view, there are apparently only two options open to white women: either one does not have anything to say about race, or one is apt to be deemed "racist" simply by virtue of having something to say."

"I also used myself at times as a source of validation or shared misery with regard to the internalization of racist ideas or feelings. This, it seemed to me, was particularly crucial given the shame associated with racist feelings in a society that has repressed rather than abolished them" (36)

**Two Questions:**

- I She discusses the diversity of white women in depth, but wouldn't this diversity solicit a wide range of responses that would make it hard to generalize any findings?
- I She seems to treat anti-racist, feminist women and other women who manifest "dominant modes of living whiteness" as two separate groups, simplifying the issue.