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Exploring How White and Asian American Students Experience Cross-Racial Interactions: A Phenomenological Study

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EXPLORING HOW WHITE AND ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS EXPERIENCE

CROSS-RACIAL INTERACTIONS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A Dissertation Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

HOW WHITE AND ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS EXPERIENCE CROSS-

RACIAL INTERACTIONS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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Interracial interactions between college students are responsible for important learning outcomes, however many colleges and universities have failed to purposefully encourage students to interact across racial backgrounds. As a result of a lack purposefully facilitated cross-racial interactions (CRIs), fewer interracial interactions occur on U.S. campuses and this has diminished the important learning outcomes that those interactions accrue. The purpose of this study was to qualitatively explore how 25 White and Asian American students, within two divergent campus settings, experienced interracial interactions. Findings demonstrated that environmental and individual characteristics shaped how students experienced CRIs. Environmental factors that influenced CRIs included the quality of the campus racial climate as well as students' perceptions of the environment. Individual characteristics that shaped how students experienced CRIs included whether students had been able to develop an advanced sense of racial identity as well as a history of pre-college CRIs. Based upon student feedback, I recommended that campuses, regardless of how structurally diverse they may be, assess

the campus racial climate and implement initiatives designed to ensure that CRIs, and

important associated learning outcomes, are purposefully facilitated by educators.

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I share this degree with my husband, confidant, and best friend, Brian Moore, MFA. He truly deserves his own ceremony for the boundless support, love, and care that

he has provided over the last six years. I know he is as relieved as I am for achieving this important goal. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Tim and Margaret Robinson for the countless sacrifices that they have made throughout the years on my behalf. They have provided enormous encouragement and helped me take my first tentative steps into higher education. With the support of all those mentioned above, this dissertation is a remarkable personal achievement. I look forward to extending this important work as I continue on my personal and professional paths.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education in the United States has long been viewed as a model for the world, producing significant scientific breakthroughs and providing the intellectual basis for continued economic growth. The U.S. Department of Education (DOE), in their 2006 Spellings Commission Report, noted that "in an era when intellectual capital is increasingly prized, both for individuals and for the nation, postsecondary education has never been more important" (p. 1). However, at a time when a college education is increasingly required for citizens to gain access to the financial stability necessary to support their families (Baum and Payea, 2005), the DOE noted that troubling signs have emerged. Specifically, they underscored reduced learning outcomes among undergraduate students, compared with those that were achieved in the 1990s, as a significant challenge that must be addressed by higher education.

In response to the Spellings Report, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) held discussions with its members throughout 2008-2009 and concluded that the federal government should not overstep its bounds in terms of oversight of postsecondary education. However, CHEA also agreed that institutions must increase "transparency," as well as establish "student achievement standards" (CHEA, 2009). Indeed, the CHEA affirmed the need for institutions to both track and improve student achievement standards. Given the central role that higher education plays in the

health and sustainability of the U.S. economy, The Spellings Report, as well as the more recent CHEA response, indicated that colleges and universities must focus on measuring and improving student learning outcomes and achievement standards.

The importance of measuring and improving student learning outcomes occurs at a time when increasing diversity among college student populations presents new challenges and opportunities for higher education in the United States. In fact, significant demographic shifts among college students are occurring. By 2018, the student population under the age of 18 is expected to be 55% White, 16% Black, 22% Hispanic, and 6% Asian (Solmon, Solmon & Schiff, 2002). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that, as a percentage of the overall college student population, White students declined from 77.6% in 1990 to 65.7% in 2005 (NCES, 2008). During that same period, NCES reported that, as a percentage of overall college enrollment, the representation of African American college students increased from 9% to 12.7%, while corresponding percentage increases for Hispanic and Asian students were from 5.7% to 10.8% and from 4.1% to 6.5%, respectively. As a result, more than ever before in U.S. history, students must be prepared to successfully function in a racially diverse society, where they are likely to interact with peers, co-workers, and neighbors whose racial backgrounds are different from their own.

Both the focus on learning outcomes among educators and the increase in racial diversity across all aspects of U.S. society are critical considerations in the development of ways to improve higher education. In fact, numerous researchers have studied the connections between racial diversity on college campuses and the potential for improved learning outcomes. Specifically, researchers have noted that social and classroom-based

interactions among racially diverse peers, or cross-racial interactions (CRIs), are linked to numerous educational benefits. Those learning outcomes include an enhanced commitment to democratic values (Nelson-Laird, Engberg & Hurtado, 2005; Saenz et al., 2007; Zuniga, Williams & Berger, 2005), gains in cognitive thinking (Chang, 2001; Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, 2003), and an increase in overall satisfaction, belonging, and persistence (Astin, 1993; Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Hurtado, 2005; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman & Oseguera, 2008).

While college educators should take the benefits of CRIs into account and structure purposeful CRIs among their students, many faculty and staff fail to do so. Indeed, Chang (2005, 2007) noted that educators interested in purposefully facilitating CRIs must "take into consideration various levels of dimensions of the campus racial climate and the institution's context in order to shape student learning outcomes" and that campuses with a racially diverse student body should not assume that CRIs occur "magically" (p. 15). However, many educators expect CRIs to magically occur and they consequently fail to create purposefully structured CRI opportunities (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Problem Statement

The problem that provides the foundation for this dissertation is the underutilization of diversity as a tool in learning processes on college campuses. Given that CRIs have been associated with a variety of learning outcomes (Astin, 1993; Chang, 2001; Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, 2003; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman & Oseguera, 2008; Nelson-Laird, Engberg & Hurtado, 2005; Saenz et

al., 2007; Zuniga, Williams & Berger, 2005) and college students may avoid interracial contact for a variety of reasons (Galupo, Cartwright & Savage, 2011; Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970), it is imperative that institutions purposefully create such learning opportunities. Unfortunately, faculty and administrators are often more interested in creating the appearance of diversity, rather than actually facilitating campus environments that are rich interracial interactions (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Without the direct intervention of institutional leaders, fewer CRIs are likely to occur on their college and university campuses. Less frequent CRIs among college students translates into a failure to capitalize on the educationally valuable nature of those interactions. Specifically, evidence suggests that these missed opportunities could result in a reduced commitment to democratic values, reduced levels of cognitive thinking skills as well as a diminished sense of belonging within the campus environment; feelings that are related to lower levels of satisfaction and persistence.

Purpose of Study

In this study, I focus on how White and Asian American students experience purposefully facilitated curricular and co-curricular CRIs. As Harper and Hurtado (2007) observed, many educators across the U.S. actively avoid diversity discussions. Further exacerbating this situation, Cashin (2005) asserted that many students – both White and students of color – live and attend high school in racially segregated communities. Despite this lack of prior experience with and preparation for CRIs, students on many U.S. campuses are given the de facto responsibility to structure their own interracial interactions. Students can certainly engage successfully with one another across racially

backgrounds, but most intergroup interaction theories emphasize that, within a particular context like a military unit, educational venue, or business, the presence of a supportive authority (Allport, 1954) has a profound positive effect upon the quality and frequency of interracial interactions. Therefore, this study explores how students experience CRIs with the goal of informing educators regarding current best practices for cultivating student CRIs.

As noted, the purpose of this study is to explore how participants experience CRIs in college. Therefore, the primary research question was, how do White and Asian American students experience CRIs in college? Five additional questions helped guide the study: (1) How do participants describe different types of CRI experiences in college? (2) What factors shape student perceptions of and experiences with CRIs? (3) How, if at all, do pre-college interracial interactions shape student interaction patterns in college? (4) How, if at all, does students' racial identity shape their college CRIs? And, (5) How, if at all, does the campus racial climate shape their CRIs?

Significance of Study

The current study responds to previous researchers' (e.g., Chang, 2005, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1999) calls to better understand how educators can more purposefully facilitate CRIs by exploring how participants experience those CRIs. In doing so, the study develops a more complex understanding of the contexts in which student CRIs occur, what barriers to CRIs students highlight, and what critical factors students identify as contributing to how they experience and seek out interactions with diverse peers.

This study has great significance for higher education researchers because it advances existing levels of knowledge regarding CRIs in college. Specifically, the current examination builds upon the existing quantitative inquiries into the educational outcomes associated with CRIs in college and provides the first in-depth qualitative exploration of the ways in which undergraduates experience CRIs. As has been noted, a large body of quantitative studies has established the educational relevance of CRIs within the college milieu (e.g., Chang, 2001; Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998; Locks et al., 2008; Nelson-Laird et al., 2005; Saenz et al., 2007; Zuniga, Williams & Berger, 2005). However, no study has utilized qualitative methods to illuminate the ways that students experience CRIs in college.

This study also has clear relevance for higher education policymakers and practitioners. Specifically, the inquiry aims to generate information that can advance knowledge to help postsecondary educators better understand how students experience and benefit from CRIs and inform institutional policies and practices that maximize CRIs and their associated benefits. It extends existing quantitative research on CRIs by generating a better understanding of how students understood their interracial interactions and the learning outcomes that resulted from those interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds, so that policymakers and practitioners can better understand how to structure institutional environments to facilitate CRIs that result in positive outcomes. In addition, the findings of the current inquiry inform educators regarding the effectiveness of their already existing interventions and enable those educators to improve those interventions with the goal of purposefully cultivating a campus environment rich in

CRIs. It is my hope that findings from this study will enable campus leaders to better structure post-secondary environments rich in CRIs.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Throughout this study, I utilize numerous terms and concepts related to CRIs and it is therefore important to provide clarity around the meaning of key terms and definitions. The literature indicates that three factors shape these student interactions, including a student's pre-college and college experiences with CRIs, a student's racial identity development (RID), and the campus racial climate (CRC) (e.g., Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Gurin, Dey, & Hurtado, 2003; Hurtado, 2005; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008). Thus, in the following sections, I provide (1) a typology of the various CRIs in which students can engage in both K-12 and higher education, (2) a definition of RID, and (3) a definition of the CRC. Finally, I offer some additional definitions for key concepts that are utilized throughout the current thesis.

Types of Cross-Racial Interactions in College

Cross-racial interactions can be (1) purposeful or non-purposeful and (2) curricular or co-curricular (see Table 1). Chang (2007) noted that colleges and universities must utilize diversity purposefully and in meaningful ways. Indeed, *purposeful CRIs* are interactions between students of different racial backgrounds that are the product of thoughtful planning on the part of faculty, administrators, and staff. To be specific, Chang noted that "educators ought to consider reimagining what interaction or higher levels of cross-racial interaction among a racially diverse student body might

ideally look like on their campus" (p. 34). Purposeful interactions, therefore, are the product of pre-planning, interventions, and activities that foster student CRIs.

In contrast to purposeful CRIs, *non-purposeful CRIs* are those interracial interactions that occur spontaneously between students. Harper and Hurtado (2007) noted in their multi-campus study that most educators do not engage students in purposeful intergroup contact. Therefore, CRIs on many U.S. campuses are likely to be the product of non-purposeful interactions, or CRIs that may occur at random. Unfortunately, as will be presented later, a number of factors complicate non-purposeful interactions and can diminish learning outcomes. As Harper and Hurtado noted, campuses that do not purposefully facilitate CRIs may be missing opportunities to encourage, facilitate, and improve these valuable interactions.

Both purposeful and non-purposeful CRIs can occur within either curricular (i.e., classroom) or co-curricular (e.g., student affairs) learning environments. *Curricular CRIs* include classroom or credit-bearing experiences that occur within the classroom. *Co-curricular CRIs* are those that occur within the student life environment including student groups, residence halls, and the dining halls. For the purposes of this study, Table 1 demonstrates that students can engage in four types of CRIs.

Table 1 Cross-Racial Interaction Typology		
	Purposeful CRIs	**Non-purposeful CRIs**
Curricular	Educator initiated student CRIs within the classroom and/or other credit-bearing experiences (e.g. presentation groups purposefully arranged to maximize the demographics of each group).	Random or unplanned CRI opportunities within the classroom and/or other credit-bearing experiences (e.g. CRIs among students who sit near each other in class).
Co-curricular	Educator initiated student CRIs among individual students or diverse student organizations (e. g. diversity dialogue groups, cross-racial leadership retreats, funding provided to encourage collaboration among specific racial groups).	Random or unplanned CRI opportunities that occur among individual students or diverse student organizations (e.g. CRIs that might occur through participation in a club, activity, study space, shuttle bus or other co-curricular forum).

Any of the aforementioned types of CRIs can vary along a continuum, from short-lived to sustained. *Sustained CRIs* can be described as interactions between peers of different racial backgrounds that are maintained over time, whether as a personal friendship or formed during an institutional intervention such as opportunities for longer-term interaction that may occur in a diversity course, lab, or leadership position (Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Rather than superficial encounters, sustained CRIs emphasize enduring relationships between students of differing racial backgrounds similar to interactions that are sustained throughout a semester (e.g., lab partners, dialogue groups, student organizations, or leadership positions). While many CRIs can have educational value (Astin, 1993; Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998; Gurin, Dey & Hurtado, 2003; Odell, Korgen, & Wang, 2005; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman & Oseguera, 2008; Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007), sustained CRIs lead to more lasting educational benefits (Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004). Finally, CRIs among students can also be described as interracial interactions. Interracial interactions involve purposeful or non-purposeful contact between students of different racial backgrounds within curricular or co-curricular environments. Throughout this paper, I utilize the terms CRIs and interracial interactions interchangeably.

Definition of Racial Identity

Perry, Vance, and Helms (2009) defined racial identity as "how someone forms a self-concept as a racial group member and how he or she views and interacts with other racial group members" (p. 252). Essentially, concepts of race and ethnicity can mean

different things to different people depending on their particularly perspectives. For the purposes of this proposal, I follow the taxonomy currently in use by the U.S. federal government, which treats race as a pan-ethnic category (US Census, 2010). For example, the U.S. federal government collapses 57 specific combinations of racial groups into 7 pan-ethnic groups; including two multi-racial categories. For example, Korean-Americans, Japanese-Americans as well as Vietnamese-Americans are all categorized within the "Asian Alone" racial category by the federal government (OMB, 2010). Therefore, ethnicity is treated as a sub-category of larger racial groupings.

Definition of Campus Racial Climate

Within the literature, the CRC has been defined in numerous ways. For example, Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solorzano (2009) define campus climate as "the overall environment of the university that could potentially foster outstanding academic outcomes and graduation rates for all students" (p. 665). Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, and Hagedorn (1999), defined the CRC as a combination of "perceptions of" and "experiences with prejudice and discrimination" within the campus racial setting (p. 141). And, Hurtado et al. (1999) observed several criteria that define the quality of the CRC including (1) the presence of structural diversity or the physical presence of a demographically diverse group of students, faculty and staff, (2) reflections of the culture and histories of people of color within the curriculum, (3) institutional efforts to recruit faculty, staff, and students of color, as well as initiatives designed to retain, and graduate students of color, and finally (4) a university mission that clearly values multiculturalism (p. 4). Finally, Parker (2006) defined the CRC as "the mutually reinforcing relationship

among the perceptions, attitudes and expectations of racial and ethnic groups and individuals and the actual patterns of interaction and behavior between and among groups and individuals" (p. 18). For the purposes of this study, based on the abovementioned literature, I define the CRC as perceptions and experiences regarding equity among racial groups within curricular and co-curricular campus environments as well as the supportive actions of faculty, staff and students to create an inclusive environment where multiple racial groups feel valued and welcome.

A clarification of the definitions of several other key terms that are used throughout this study is warranted and provided below:

- **Belonging** – A sense of membership within a campus context in which a student feels integrated with and valued by other members of an institution (Locks et al., 2008).

- **Cognitive Disequilibrium** – A moment or phase of intellectual growth in which previously grounded beliefs and values are challenged and brought into question. Usually leading to gains in cognitive thinking skills (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Gurin et al., 2003).

- **Cognitive Flexibility** – The ability to understand a set of circumstances from various perspectives. The ability to vary one's intellectual framework and analyze a set of circumstances from multiple perspectives (Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998).

- **Critical Thinking Skills** – The ability to successfully gather, analyze and react to information from a variety of sources (Chang et al., 2006).

- **Cultural Competency** – The acquisition of knowledge regarding the values, beliefs, and daily experiences of a variety of racial groups and cultures, which can be particularly beneficial during interpersonal, academic or professional interactions (Jayakumar, 2008).

- **Democratic Values** – The interest in and engagement in activities, groups, or social causes designed to enfranchise and improve the socio-political circumstances of others (Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004).

- **Interaction Anxiety** – A negative psychological fear of interactions with individuals who do not share your own racial or ethnic background usually leading to withdrawal behaviors that limits intergroup contact (Littleford et al., 2005).

- *Non-Purposeful Cross-Racial Interaction* – Interactions between students of different racial backgrounds that occurs as a result of happenstance or simply proximity to on another. An interaction that is not encouraged or cultivated by a student leader, faculty or staff member.

- **Persistence** – The ability of a student to maintain academic progress towards graduation (Astin, 1993).

- **Perspective Taking** – "the ability to recognize, evaluate, and analyze the opinions and values of others in relationship to their own" (Hurtado, 2005, p. 601).

- **Prejudice -** "a negative evaluation of a social group or negative evaluation of an individual that is significantly based on the individual's group membership" (Crandall & Eshelman, 2003, p. 414).

- ***Purposeful Cross-Racial Interaction –*** a faculty or staff initiated activity or intervention designed to encourage interactions between students of different racial backgrounds. Interactions that are encouraged, cultivated or maintained based upon a strategy or plan developed by faculty or staff. Purposeful CRIs are generally part of a series or encouraged over the course of a semester or longer, but can also occur on a one-time basis.

- **Satisfaction** – The extent to which a student approves of their general experience within the curricular and co-curricular atmosphere on campus (Astin, 1993).

- **Stereotype -** "negative over-generalizations about a group of people" (Son & Shelton, 2011, p. 51).

While this list of terms and key definitions is not exhaustive, it provides a shared language related to CRIs.

Chapter Summary

In recent years, the U.S. federal government has placed a stronger focus on the need for colleges and universities to more clearly demonstrate that students are achieving desired learning outcomes related to degree attainment (DOE, 2006). One source of important learning outcomes is interracial interactions between college students (Chang, 2001; Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998; Locks et al., 2008; Nelson-Laird et al., 2005; Saenz et al., 2007; Zuniga, Williams & Berger, 2005). Unfortunately, campus leaders neglect to purposefully facilitate student CRIs (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Chang, 2001), which diminishes the learning outcomes associated with those interactions.

Further complicating the lack of purposefully facilitated CRIs is a paucity of research regarding how students experience interracial interactions. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap in the literature through a qualitative exploration of how students experience CRIs. Results from this study may inform practical efforts to more purposefully facilitate student CRIs and associated learning outcomes.

In the next chapter, I review four areas of literature relevant to constructing a better understanding of how students experience CRIs. In Chapter Three, I discuss the methods that were used to conduct the current study. Chapters Four through Six include a presentation of the findings of the inquiry. Specifically, Chapter Four includes a discussion of the types of CRIs that emerged from the current investigation, Chapter Five details the findings regarding the factors that shape CRIs in college among participants in the current inquiry, and Chapter Six illustrates how students in the study made sense of the educational outcomes that resulted from their CRIs in college.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes a review of existing empirical research regarding the factors that shape how students experience CRIs. In Section One, I discuss research regarding the educational benefits of CRIs. Section Two outlines the types of CRIs described in the literature, and how White and Asian American students experience CRIs. In subsequent sections, I discuss the factors that prior research suggests shape students' CRIs. Specifically, in Section Three, I review literature on the influence pre-college CRI experiences. In Section Four, I provide a detailed description of relevant racial identity development models. Which is designed to highlight the connections between RID literature and CRIs. While this connection is underappreciated within CRI research, RID literature clearly outlines how identity development can inhibit and subsequently enhance students' interests in CRIs. In Section Five, I discuss the campus racial climate, which is the primary context within which participants in this study, live, attend classes, and interact interracially with one another. In Section Six, I highlight the negative influence of interracial interaction anxiety on CRIs. This review of relevant literature is designed to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the factors that shape how students experience CRIs. At the conclusion of the literature review, I present the initial conceptual framework for this study, which emerged from the review of literature.

Educational Benefits of Cross-Racial Interactions

Resulting from a tremendous interest in better understanding the educational value of diversity, numerous researchers have studied the learning outcomes associated with CRIs. Those can be easily separated into three categories of educationally significant outcomes of CRIs, including an enhanced commitment to democratic values and social justice (Nelson-Laird et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Saenz et al., 2007; Zuniga, Williams & Berger, 2005), gains in cognitive thinking (Chang, 2001; Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998; Gurin et al., 2003; Hurtado & Gurin, 2002), and an increase in overall sense of belonging and persistence with a student's college experience (Astin, 1993; Chang et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005; Locks et al., 2008).

Enhanced Democratic and Social Justice Commitment

Numerous researchers have studied the extent to which interracial interactions among college students contribute to an enhanced commitment to democratic values (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin; Saenz et al., 2007; Smith & Associates, 1997; Zuniga & Lopez, 2010; Zuniga, Williams & Berger, 2005). Zuniga, Williams and Berger (2005) define a commitment to democratic values as "students' motivation to take self-directed actions to reduce their own prejudicial thoughts and behaviors, or to take outward actions that promote inclusion and social justice" (p. 660). Existing research suggests that exposure to peers of different racial backgrounds enhances a student's familiarity with individuals who were previously poorly understood.

Researchers have illuminated the connections between student CRIs and an enhanced commitment to democratic values. Zuniga et al., (2005) for example, used pre-

test (from the fall) and post-test data (from the spring) from a representative sample of 597 freshmen students including 122 students of color. Zuniga et al. found that respondents who participated in multiracial dialogue groups during the fall semester were more likely to demonstrate a higher level of commitment to democratic values when compared with their peers who had not participated in similar opportunities. Multiracial discussion groups, the authors noted, were designed to encourage students to engage with one another around topics related to diversity, race and culture over the course of a semester. The authors noted that important changes occurred among students who had participated in diversity dialogue groups and attributed enhanced commitment to democratic values to that participation. Lopez and Zuniga (2010) recently re-visited these findings and confirmed that more recent research has provided additional support regarding the efficacy of CRIs in augmenting student commitment to democratic values.

Chang, Astin, and Kim (2004) provided additional evidence that CRIs are related to an improved commitment to democratic values among students. Chang et al. studied a longitudinal, nationally representative sample of more than 200,000 students who enrolled in 460 institutions during the fall of 1994. The researchers implemented a follow-up survey in 1998 and received more than 16,000 responses from students at 154 institutions. Chang et al. controlled for students' background variables, institutional characteristics, and diversity experiences, and concluded that classroom CRIs and social interracial interactions, such as those that occur during dating or dining experiences, were significantly related to increased interest in civic engagement.

Gains in Cognitive Ability and Flexibility

Research also shows that CRIs are associated with gains in cognitive abilities. For example, Hurtado (2005) analyzed a national longitudinal sample from nine public universities from different geographic regions with varying enrollments sizes. With a response rate of approximately 35%, or 4,403 students, she sought to explain the results of curricular campus interventions designed to encourage CRIs. Hurtado's findings detailed a range of educational benefits associated with purposeful CRIs, including improved levels of cognitive thinking skills, as measured by "perspective taking" abilities, which she defined as the ability to "recognize, evaluate, and analyze the opinions and values of others" in relationship to their own (p. 601).

Chang et al.'s (2004) study also provides evidence that CRIs are not only related to enhanced commitment to democratic values, but gains in cognitive abilities as well. Chang et al. found that, particularly for students who had engaged with peers of different racial backgrounds during classroom interactions, those CRIs were related to self-reports of greater "intellectual self-confidence" as defined by their enhanced opinions of their capacity to think "critically" and increases in "general knowledge " (p. 533).

Increased Sense of Belonging

Finally, researchers found that CRIs are related to an increased sense of belonging. Specifically, Locks, Hurtado, Bowman and Oseguera (2008), in a longitudinal study of more 1,112 students on seven campuses, found that "positive interactions with diverse peers resulted in a greater sense of belonging to one's college or university" (p. 277). Locks et al. defined "sense of belonging" as "perceived social cohesion" or the

degree to which individuals felt a sense of welcome and membership within the campus community (p. 260). Using surveys administered in 2000 and again in 2002, the researchers found that a sense of belonging was important within college settings because belonging served as a measure of a student's "adjustment to a new social and cultural context" (p. 259). Essentially, students who felt a sense of belonging were more likely to have experienced positive interactions with their peers of all racial backgrounds.

The factors involved in perceptions of belonging, Locks et al. (2008) asserted, were often related to the extent to which participants maintained positive opinions regarding the campus racial climate and interracial relationships within that campus. Students who had lower opinions regarding the quality of the campus racial climate also experienced "intergroup" interaction anxiety (p. 278). As a result, the authors suggested that positive CRIs enhanced students' opinions of the quality of that campus racial climate, reduced their self-reported intergroup interaction anxiety and increased their overall sense of belonging on campus. Locks et al. argued that lower perceptions of the quality of the campus' racial climate diminished students' sense of belonging and negatively shaped persistence decisions, particularly for students of color within predominantly White colleges and universities.

Understanding White and Asian American Students' Cross-Racial Interactions

Existing literature outlines the types of CRIs that occur on college campuses. I reviewed these types of CRIs in Chapter One (see Table 1). It is useful, however, to revisit the two major elements of CRIs here – whether they are curricular or co-curricular and whether they are purposeful or non-purposeful – and I do so in this section. In the

remainder of the section, I discuss the sparse existing literature on White and Asian American undergraduates' experiences with CRIs in college.

Types of Cross-Racial Interactions

As noted, research regarding CRIs proposes that interracial interactions occur within two primary environments: curricular and co-curricular (Chang, 2001; 2005; Saenz et al., 2007). Saenz et al. described curricular CRIs primarily as faculty interventions, or interactions that may occur within a classroom setting. Saenz et al. also defined co-curricular CRI settings as "students' choices in peer groups, including those defined by fraternity/sororities, ethnic organizations, athletics, and student government" (p. 8). Curricular CRIs occur most often within credit-bearing classroom settings, while co-curricular CRIs frequently occur within areas of student life including student groups and other non-credit-bearing activities.

Saenz et al. (2007) observed that a critical ingredient for positive intergroup interactions was the constant oversight and encouragement from an authority within the environment. Chang (2001; 2005) referred to these educator-initiated and organized CRIs as purposeful in nature. Essentially, purposeful CRIs are those opportunities in which educators structure interactions for students within college environments.

A proven and effective example of purposeful co-curricular activities, as described by Zuniga et al. (2010), are diversity-related discussion groups. Diversity dialogue discussions are often voluntary, non-credit, or, in some cases, integrated credit-bearing academic experiences facilitated by faculty, staff, and student peers. The discussions are designed to explore issues of privilege, diversity, discrimination, and

prejudice with the goal of fostering conversations that may not naturally occur despite the structural diversity present within the student body (Zuniga et al., 2010).

Finally, Saenz et al. (2007) suggested that when students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds "work, study and socialize together," significant educational benefits occur (p. 8). Saenz et al. highlighted that even CRIs that do not involve the purposeful efforts of a campus leader, have educational benefits. These non-purposeful interactions, or those that occur without the intervention or support of a faculty or staff member, may be the most common on campuses. Although non-purposeful CRIs are educationally valuable, students may, for a variety of reasons, avoid those interactions (Littleford, Wright & Syoc-Parial, 2005; Plant, 2004; West, Shelton & Trail, 2009). Consequently, Chang (2005) asserted that, rather than relying upon non-purposeful co-curricular opportunities to "organically" form, educators should also develop mechanisms that purposefully support these co-curricular CRIs opportunities (p. 13).

Unfortunately, there is some indication that that few institutions actively engage in efforts designed to purposefully cultivate CRIs among their students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Instead, educators continue to focus on enrolling students of color to create demographic diversity within the campus setting with little or no emphasis on purposefully helping students interact with one another. Building the capacity of faculty and administrators to structure purposeful academic (i.e., curricular) and social (i.e., co-curricular) experiences conducive to positive CRIs is vitally important. Thus, researchers have asserted that more must be known about how students engage in the purposeful curricular and co-curricular cross-racial opportunities available to them within the

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campus context (Chang et al., 2006; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Saenz et al., 2007). Table 1 details the types CRIs described in existing research.

Cross-Racial Interactions Among White Students

The frequency of CRIs among White students appears to depend upon a range of secondary and postsecondary factors, as well as what researchers (Littleford et al., 2005; Saenz et al., 2007) have identified as heightened levels of interaction anxiety among White students when compared with their African American and Latino/a peers. Additionally, Ellis (2004) and Twenge and Crocker (2002) noted that White students are more likely to hold biased or prejudiced opinions of students of color, a factor that may lead White students to reduce their interest in and ability to engage in CRIs successfully. Not surprisingly, Saenz et al. additionally noted that White students reported finding it harder to engage in CRIs than any other racial groups.

The pre-college experiences of White students have also been found to be predictive of their behavior in college. Saenz et al. (2007) reported that White students who experienced pre-college CRIs were more likely to engage in additional CRIs when they arrived on campus. Alternatively, Saenz et al. observed that White students who were exposed only to predominantly White pre-college racial environments were significantly less likely to engage in CRIs in college. The authors noted that White students from predominantly White pre-college environments who also had significant CRIs in some way prior to college, reported higher levels of CRIs in college. Therefore, the authors asserted that despite living in homogenous White communities, some White students had somehow been "primed" for interaction (p. 28). Saenz et al. further

described these pre-college CRI experiences, or lack thereof, as "perpetuation experiences" that are largely predictive of college behaviors (p. 28).

Chang et al. (2004) reported that the structural diversity of pre-college and postsecondary environments has a "uniformly positive" effect on the frequency of CRIs for White students (p. 542). Jayakumar (2008) further clarified that this positive effect is particularly enhanced when White students experience and perceive a positive CRC. While this is consistent with prior research, it is important to recognize that White students are the majority on many campuses across the U.S. and, as a function of probability, they simply have fewer opportunities for CRIs. Therefore, increases in the number of students of color on campus have a direct effect on increased opportunities for White students to engage in CRIs.

While increasing structural diversity is important for the development of all students, Saenz et al. (2007) detailed that White students benefited the most from purposeful curricular (e.g. classroom) and co-curricular (e.g. student activities) CRIs. The authors observed that White students who participated in opportunities for in-depth diversity discussions in college settings also reported engaging more frequently in CRIs. Saenz et al. concluded by emphasizing the importance of the co-curriculum and curricular experiences in terms of providing White students with structured opportunities for CRIs. The authors noted that while institutional efforts to foster CRIs may begin with structured opportunities, White students subsequently reported engaging in co-curricular CRIs more frequently.

As Saenz et al. (2007) suggested, once White and Asian American students begin to interact with peers of different racial backgrounds, a "perpetuation effect" does occur

(p. 28). Students who build their own familiarity, capacities, and skills related to intergroup interaction report more frequent, and more successful CRIs. Institutions concerned with fostering opportunities for students to engage in CRIs will, the research suggests, be able to build the capacity of students to engage with one another as well as achieve the important learning outcomes inherent to those interactions. In the following sections, I review literature on four factors that, research suggests, shape students' experiences engaging in CRIs in college: pre-college CRIs, racial identity development, the campus racial climate, and interaction anxiety.

Cross-Racial Interactions Among Asian American Students

Numerous authors have cited a persistent lack of empirical data regarding the college experiences of Asian American students (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Saenz et al., 2007; Suyemoto et al., 2009). Further complicating this paucity of research, studies that include Asian American students often fail to disaggregate data by racial category. Despite this paucity of research on Asian American college student CRI experiences, two recent studies provide some much-needed insight. For example, Saenz et al. (2007) reported results from their quantitative study of more than 4,700 students, including 686 Asian American students at 9 public U.S. universities. Saenz et al. noted that Asian American students in their study showed significant differences from their Latino/a and African American, and White peers regarding pre-college experiences, intergroup interaction anxiety levels, responses to institutional diversity efforts, and sensitivity to "attributional complexity," which Saenz et al. defined as "the ability to … move past generalizations and stereotypes" during CRIs (p. 7).

In Saenz et al.'s study, Asian American students who experienced negative

interracial interactions in high school were less likely to pursue interactions with diverse

peers in college (Saenz et al., 2007). This relationship between the pre-college

experiences and postsecondary behavior of Asian Americans differed from their Latino/a

and African American peers who were not as limited by prior negative CRI experiences.

This suggests that interventions designed to support Asian American students may need

to also address their pre-college experiences and hopefully help Asian American students

reflect on prior negative experiences in ways that promote college level CRIs

Saenz et al. (2007) noted that Asian American students reported higher levels of

"attributional complexity" than their Latino/a and African American peers (p. 7). These

findings suggested that Asian American students appeared to more readily discard the use

of stereotypes when participating in CRIs. Conversely, Saenz et al. reported that Asian

American students were more significantly affected by intergroup interaction anxiety or

significant negative psychological reactions to interactions with racially different peers;

reactions that promoted withdrawal from CRI opportunities. Consequently, researchers

have noted that increased interaction anxiety is associated with lower levels of CRIs

(Levin, van Laar, & Sidanius, 2003; Littleford et al., 2005).

Interestingly, specific institutional interventions were more valuable for Asian

American students than others. Saenz et al. (2007) explained that, while support for

intensive diversity dialogues was helpful for all four racial groups in their study,

disaggregated data revealed that diversity dialogue groups and leadership programming

were particularly significant for Asian American students in terms of increasing their

interactions with diverse peers. In this sense, the presence of purposeful co-curricular

CRI opportunities may be more helpful for Asian American students as they overcome intergroup anxiety related to previous negative interactions.

Finally, Chang et al. (2004) observed a small decline in CRIs among Asian American students as the structural diversity of an institution increased. The authors found no clear explanation for this phenomenon, but suggested that it is possible that Asian American students, presented with higher numbers of in-group peers, focused slightly more on in-group interactions. Again, this relates to previous discussions of the definition of an in-group interaction. Chinese American students interacting with Korean American students, for example, may appear in a quantitative survey as an in-group interaction. However, there are clear ethnic differences similar to those present between major racial groups and this may explain some of the small declines in CRIs among Asian American students when significant Asian American structural diversity is present.

Pre-College Cross-Racial Interactions

Research suggests that pre-college CRIs have a profound influence on the ways in which students experience CRIs in college. One way that pre-college CRIs influence CRIs in college is that they shape students' perceptions of their college environment and propensity to engage in CRIs (Hall, Cabrera & Milem, 2011). Indeed, as Chavous (2005) observed, student pre-college CRI opportunities often shaped student "perceptions and interpretations in new settings" (p. 250). Similarly, quantitative researchers examining CRIs have consistently noted that a student's propensity to engage in CRIs in college is significantly related to their pre-college exposure to racially different people, cultures, and peers (Bowman & Denson, 2010; Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Chavous, 2005; Hall,

Cabrera & Milem, 2010; Hurtado, Engberg, Ponjuan, & Landreman, 2002; Locks et al., 2008; Saenz et al., 2007). These researchers asserted that more than any other influence, pre-college CRIs prepare first-year students for CRIs in college. This important point illustrates the relationship between pre-college CRIs and postsecondary CRIs. Engagement in pre-college CRIs helps students gain a greater sense of comfort with such interactions and, in turn, shapes how those students seek out and engage in interactions with diverse peers in college settings.

Further highlighting the importance of the linkage between pre-college CRIs and first-year CRIs is additional research that shows that those first-year CRIs predict the extent to which students engage in CRIs throughout the college experience. Indeed, Levin et al. (2003) and Antonio (2004) noted that students who engage in CRIs during their first year of college are likely to be similarly engaged throughout their undergraduate career. In contrast, students who engaged in primarily in-group peer interactions during their first year, despite the presence of diverse peers, were likely to maintain those homogenous patterns of social interaction throughout college (Antonio, 2004).

Other researchers have underscored the importance of students' capacities to engage in CRIs, Saenz et al. (2007), for example, conducted a longitudinal study of 4,757 students on nine college campuses. Students were surveyed prior to their first year in college and then again at the start of their second year. Based upon their findings, the researchers asserted that pre-college CRIs "appear to offer opportunities for students to have experiences and develop skills that make it more likely for them to engage with diverse peers in college" (p. 32). Saenz et al. asserted that participation in pre-college social interactions, whether in secondary environments, their neighborhood or other

social settings, prepared students to engage diverse peers in college environments. Essentially, students who had cross-racial competencies or experience with the practices, beliefs and customs of other racial groups (Jayakumar, 2008; King & Baxter-Magolda, 2005) were more likely to experience higher levels of CRIs in college.

Saenz et al.'s (2007) made a significant contribution to the literature on CRIs by disaggregating student-level factors by racial category. This revealed differences across racial categories in terms of the factors that influenced student CRIs. For example, White students and Asian American students reported significant levels of intergroup anxiety, a factor that reduced CRIs in both populations (Levin, van Laar & Sidanius, 2003). The benefits associated with student interactions across racial boundaries are clear and compelling. Despite this compelling evidence, numerous researchers have observed that few colleges and universities purposefully facilitate the environmental conditions conducive to CRIs (Chang, 2005, 2006; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Saenz et al., 2007).

Finally, Saenz et al. (2007) cited important between-group differences. First, they noted that White students tended to benefit the most from the presence of structural diversity and CRIs in general. The authors found that White and Asian American participants exhibited the highest levels of intergroup interaction anxiety and that Asian American students particularly benefited when authorities in pre-college environments supported interactions across racial groups. Unfortunately, when institutions neglect to purposefully support opportunities for CRIs in the social and academic milieu, students are more likely to have negative interactions with diverse peers (Chang, 2005; Hurtado, 2005). Negative CRIs can result from unstructured social interactions across race and

ethnicity, excessive political correctness, and contentious, unstructured disagreements regarding discrimination and privilege, among other issues. These negative experiences can lead to increased racial segregation (Chang, 2007), contribute to a negative CRC (Hurtado et al., 1999), and ultimately lead to fewer opportunities for students to benefit from interactions with diverse peers (Goff, Steele & Davies, 2003).

Racial Identity Development

In addition to pre-college interactions, student RID has been identified as an important characteristic that influences CRIs. As noted previously, Perry, Vance, and Helms (2009) defined racial identity as "how someone forms a self-concept as a racial group member and how he or she views and interacts with other racial group members" (p. 252). A key component of enhancing faculty and administrator efforts to create and sustain student CRIs, is an improved understanding of the process through which students modify their opinions and beliefs regarding race and ethnicity. Helms (1992) suggested that theories of student RID take their roots in "the tradition of treating race as a sociopolitical and, to a lesser extent, a cultural consideration" for students in postsecondary environments (p. 71). RID theories collectively attempt to explain the changing capacity of a college student to understand his or her own race or ethnicity as well as the race or ethnicity of others.

In this section, I introduce RID stage models and link them to the work of college educators and CRIs. Then, I discuss White identity development, placing particular emphasis on Helms's (1992) White identity stage model. Finally, I discuss Asian American identity, and emphasize Nadal's (2004) ethnic identity stage model, which

underscores the importance of both race and ethnicity in formation of identity. As will become apparent, the Helms and Nadal models proved useful in making sense of student CRI experiences in the current study. Finally, I conclude by drawing connections between RID and CRIs in college.

Identity Development Stage Models

Many RID models are structured as a series of stages through which students go as they develop more complex understandings of themselves and the world around them. Torres, Howard-Hamilton, and Cooper (2003) observed that, "a college student's identity development is a complex and individual process based on choices that bring congruence between old and new beliefs" (p. 7). A student's RID is a process often described as involving stages of development. Numerous RID theories share the common themes of pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, and integration stages (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1992; Phinney, 1990, 1992). These stages describe the reactions among many students as they engage in new CRI experiences. Importantly, the stages may, at times, reduce a student's interest in CRIs. For example, Helms (1992) suggested that White students may initially avoid interacting with people of color as well as avoid reflecting on painful revelations regarding privilege and discrimination. Similarly, Phinney (1990, 1992) suggested that students of color might enter an immersion phase during which they develop a deeper understanding of their own racial and ethnic backgrounds. Phinney further suggested that the immersion stage for students of color is often characterized by an aversion to interactions with White students, faculty, and staff.

The specific stages that students encounter as their racial identity develops may differ based upon their racial or ethnic background; however, most theorists agree that educators must play an active role in a student's RID. Sanford (1962) posited that an educational environment should both challenge and support a student during their education. In the context of RID, Sanford's seemingly simplistic challenge and support model suggests that educators should disrupt or challenge student beliefs regarding race (producing cognitive disequilibrium), ethnicity, privilege, and discrimination. Once challenged, Sanford asserted that educators must also support students as they navigate these new challenges. In spite of Sanford's theory, Harper and Hurtado (2007) argued that the CRC is the product of "institutional negligence" rather than the result a purposeful series of interventions designed to challenge and support students (p. 16).

Racial and Ethnic Identity Stage Models. Early identity development theories, such as Erikson's (1964) foundational theory of identity development, were based primarily on the experiences of White male college students. Early on, these theories were applied to the experiences of both women and students of color. More recently, however, researchers have begun to develop RID theories that reflect the racial and ethnic experiences of a wider range of students. Various RID theories exploring the experiences of African American students (Cross, 1995; Jackson, 2001), Asian American students (Ibrahim, Ohnishi & Sandhu, 1997; Kim, 2001; Kodama, McEwen, Liang & Lee, 2002; Nadal, 2004; Yeh & Huang, 1996), Latino students (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Torres & Baxter-Magolda, 2004), and Native American students (Horse, 2001; LaFromBoise, Trimble & Mohatt, 1990) have proliferated.

These newer theories emphasize how RID may differ for students of color, including the degree to which students grew up in diverse or predominantly White environments, the extent to which students of color embrace their ethnic background, whether students of color are first-generation Americans, and the degree to which students of color recognize discrimination in society in general. The experiences of Asian American students, for example, may vary based on their country of origin or the length of time their families may have lived in the U.S. The next section of this paper delves more deeply into the RID of White and Asian American students specifically, and provides a lens through which similarities and differences can be discussed.

White Racial Identity Development

Croll (2007) suggested that a continuum of White racial identity development (WRID) exists in the United States. Specifically, using a nationally representative sample of more than 2,000 White respondents, Croll asserted that only 37% of Whites found their Whiteness salient in their daily lives. This percentage was compared with 72% of people of color who found their race salient. Furthermore, Croll suggested that it is "quite possible that the strongest White racial identities lie at both ends of the spectrum, for Whites who are part of either racist or anti-racist organizations" (p. 618). Accordingly, only a minority of Whites actively considers their racial identity with some Whites engaged in building equity among racial groups and others focused on preserving a system of White racial privilege. Researchers (Croll, 2007; Gallagher, 2003; Perry & Shotwell, 2009) reported that engaging White people in diversity conversations can produce strong reactions with participants affirming racist belief systems or, by contrast,

eventually embracing active anti-racist attitudes. In general, this study highlights that many White participants were not previously prompted to consider their Whiteness and were not likely to have considered issues of White privilege and institutional racism.

Branscombe, Schmitt and Schiffhauer (2007) conducted a study of 189 White undergraduate students and found that White racist attitudes are "contextually dependent forms of legitimization that can be mobilized to protect social identities of privileged groups" (p. 212). Branscombe et al. asserted that actively racist Whites are operating from a perspective of status protection. Importantly, the authors observed that Whites who did not find their race highly salient responded well to interventions designed to promote a social justice agenda. In complete contrast, challenging the privileged nature of Whites in U.S. society can, for Whites who are strongly identified with their racial background, significantly increase their levels of racism.

Given this reality, WRID has been the subject of a great deal of research and discussion throughout the last 30 years. The dominant voice on WRID is certainly Helms (1992), who first described a stage model that emphasizes the progression of White students from *contact* to *autonomy*, a social justice perspective that can be described as actively anti-racist. Helms' first stage of *contact* is straightforward as it describes a White person's first experience with a person of color and a stage when issues of race and racism are considered unimportant.

Disintegration, or stage two, describes the beginning of a White person's struggle with dichotomous beliefs in terms of the importance of equality and any beliefs that devalue people of color. Those struggles might include, for example, trying to reconcile beliefs about equality and yet the need to confront negative social beliefs about living

near or marrying a person of color. *Reintegration,* stage three, emphasizes what Helms (1992) believed was a common White response to their first interactions with the moral dilemma that racism presents. Whites, Helms argued, retreat in this stage and embrace, to some degree, messages about White superiority and the inferiority of people of color. Stage four, or *pseudo-independence*, suggests a deeper level of thinking about the dilemma that racism presents. Helms described this stage as "intellectualizing" the problem of racism, a stage in which a White student may seek to identify White role models, but still lack the ability or convictions necessary to model those behaviors. *Immersion/emersion*, the fifth stage, describes the continued efforts, particularly if supported by others, of a White person to explore issues of diversity, race, and racism. This stage may also include White peoples' first efforts to develop a voice related to diminishing racism in the world around them. The final stage, *autonomy*, describes congruence between internally held beliefs about equality and external actions in the workplace, with family, and friends and in society in general.

Helms' (1992) WRID has been tested extensively and a lively debate continues to explore the applicability of the model to White people. The White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS), a survey developed based upon Helm's theory, has been widely used and tested. Numerous studies provide some support for the theory (Carter, Helms & Juby, 2004; Tokar & Swanson, 1991), while still other researchers (Behren, 1997; Hardiman, 2001; Mercer & Cunningham, 2003; Pope-Davis & Vandiver, 1999) have criticized the theory as lacking the ability to account for the full range of stages in the White racial identity development process.

Hardiman (1994, 2001) summarized criticism regarding Helms' (1992) WRID theory including that (1) the theory is primarily concerned with a dichotomous White and Black phenomenon, (2) the theory focuses not on White identity development, but rather how Whites can unlearn racism towards Blacks, and finally (3) that the theory is not developmental as individuals can skip stages. Hardiman, one of the first theorists to describe a model of WRID, observed that these criticisms have at least some merit and that alternative models for WRID may be necessary. This necessity for alternative WRID is further emphasized by the increasingly diverse demographics that White students will surely encounter on college campuses.

Greater insight into alternative models of WRID may ease the transition for many White students over the next decades, as many institutions of higher education become increasingly demographically heterogeneous. For example, Croll's (2005) research suggested that Helms' WRID model may also be missing an important stage, because Croll found that after the first encounter stage, some Whites may not progress towards a social justice orientation. By contrast, Croll suggested that some Whites may respond negatively to the contact phase and become more biased as a result. Instead, Helm's theory defines Whites on a continuum from racist to anti-racist behavior and beliefs.

More recent research into WRID focuses on the value of not treating Whites as a homogenous group. Hartigan (2005) and McDermott and Samson (2006) noted that within-group differences, including those related to class and levels of educational attainment are important to consider. Hartigan, in particular, asserted that an "understanding of Whiteness remains contingent upon grasping how the heterogeneous functions of race alternate between stark definition, absolute positions, and swirling

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ambiguity" (p. 500). Hartigan referred to the dynamics of class and race and how Whites

from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have more in common with people of color

of similar socio-economic backgrounds than affluent Whites. These dynamics make it

difficult, Hartigan asserted, to rely upon the concept of one monolithic group of Whites.

While these within-group differences are important to consider when conducting

RID research on White participants, it is clear that the foundation of nearly all studies of

White RID appears to treat Whites as existing along a racist to anti-racist continuum.

McDermott and Samson (2005) stated this phenomenon most simply by asserting that

WRID is a "process" rather than a state and that Whiteness is a mixture of "pride, denial,

and ambivalence" (p. 256). Even the more recent conceptions of WRID still rely upon the

model that Helms (1992) first posited; the basic idea that WRID progresses from a racist

to anti-racist-racist alignment. Of course, this approach to WRID has limitations, because

it identifies Whites on a continuum of whether or not they are racist.

Aveling (2006), writing about her work in Australia with White Australians

learning about their privilege in relation to aboriginal people, observed that education can

be "detrimental in developing multicultural consciousness if firstly, students see it as 'too

preachy' and secondly, alternate models of being White that move beyond guilt are not

made available" (p. 271). This appears to summarize the research presented by Croll

(2007), Branscombe et al. (2007) and others by asserting that a purposeful and delicate

balance of challenge and support (Sanford, 1962) must be established if educators want to

prepare White students to assume a more anti-racist or social justice orientation.

Asian American Identity Development

The research on the racial and ethnic identity development of Asian American students reflects two realities. First, the research has been overshadowed in favor of studies of both White and African American RID. Accordingly, too little is known about how Asian American students experience their own race and ethnicity in relation to their peers in college. Second, the term Asian American reflects a pan-ethnic category that obscures the immense diversity present in students from Southeast Asia, the Pacific, China, South Korea, and Japan, among many others. Despite these significant differences, some interesting similarities are evident. For many Asian American students, their RID is influenced by familial connections (Kim, 2001; Yeh & Huang, 1996), the maintenance of harmony within their personal and public lives (Kodama et al., 2002), a need to maintain emotional discipline (Kodama et al.), and finally a certain drive to be perceived as competent in their work (Yeh & Huang, 1996).

Importantly, the very characteristics that may be common to many Asian Americans conflict with some of the basic tenets of traditional racial identity models. Most RID models measure an individual's progression through a series of stages that emphasize individual achievement, development of one identity, and growing comfort regarding that identity. Given the emphasis on connection to family and harmony within a community, the application of traditional RID models to Asian Americans may be incorrect. Specifically, achieving identity is a very western individualistic conception that emphasizes personal authenticity and exploration as a sign of independence from family. This conceptualization of individualistic identity conflicts with values that some researchers have identified within the Asian American community (Kim, 2001; Kodama

et al., 2002; Yeh & Huang, 1996). In fact, it may be more difficult for some Asian Americans to achieve an identity that emphasizes independence from family and community (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Li & Wang, 2008). Some Asian Americans may value interdependence more highly and may not break away from family or community expectations in the same ways as some Whites.

Kim (2001) presented a model that mirrors those of Helms (1992) and Phinney (1990). Kim outlined a five-stage identity model in which Asian American students first gain *ethnic awareness* from their family and potentially their community. This is closely followed by *White Identification,* which Kim noted is accompanied by a "strong sense of being different from their peers" (p. 73). The author additionally observed that, during this stage, an intense awareness of differences is also accompanied by a sense of shame and "quiet suffering," emotions that have been noted to be more prevalent among Asian American students than their White peers. This phase of development additionally includes identification with White culture and a devaluing of their own ethnic background. Stage three, or *Awakening to Social Political Consciousness*, is a process through which many Asian American students begin to confront White racism. Students may become active in political and cultural groups as they recognize White racism and systems of oppression. Many Asian American students in this stage prefer to limit or altogether omit interactions with their White peers.

Next, *Redirection to an Asian American Consciousness* begins. Kim (2001) noted that this is a stage where Asian American students begin to explore their own backgrounds and the histories of other socio-political movements. Many Asian American students find themselves focused on the experience of Asian Americans and feel an

intense sense of pride regarding their ethnicity. This stage is often concurrent with primarily in-group interactions. Finally, Kim observed that a final stage of development, *incorporation*, marks a student's ability to incorporate feelings of pride in one's ethnicity, history, values, and culture, while simultaneously appreciating the cultures of others. A student's identity as an Asian American is incorporated into his or her worldview and becomes a part of a student's larger sense of self.

This model, while helpful, treats all Asian Americans as one racial group and therefore under-appreciates the role that ethnicity may play in Asian American students' identity development. For example, Nadal (2004) and Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Sandhu (1997) noted that many Asian Americans may choose to focus on their ethnicity instead of a pan-Asian American identity. Some Asian American students may choose to identify as White, Hispanic or with their respective national identity such as Indian or Pakistani. These identities often lead individuals to identify as belonging to multiple ethnicities.

Nadal (2004) contributed to this conversation by noting that some Pilipinos, based upon hundreds of years of colonialism, feel that they are either Asian, White, Hispanic or a combination of these identities. Nadal pointed to dominant phenotypes and noted that many Pilipinos have skin tones that may contrast, for example, with those of other Asian communities. These assertions simply underscore the diversity of individual beliefs, even within the Pilipino community, about the extent to which they are members of Asian American, Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or White communities. In any event, Nadal noted that entering an intense stage of Asian American Consciousness might be followed by an additional stage of further ethnic identity development.

Therefore, Nadal (2004) built upon Kim's (2001) model through an additional, and, he believed, critical stage of development. For reasons related to the specific history of the Pilipino people, Nadal argued that simply gaining an *Asian American Consciousness* was not sufficient for many Pilipinos. He asserted that some Pilipinos may reject their membership in a pan-Asian American racial category in favor of an *ethnocentric realization.* Essentially, this is a stage where Pilipinos may concentrate more closely on their own ethnic background, values, socio-cultural history, and beliefs. He agreed that this *ethnocentric stage* may be followed by Kim's *incorporation* stage, but Nadal noted that the path to this ultimate stage differs significantly for many Pilipinos.

As has been observed, a major problem regarding Asian American RID theories is the paucity of studies that test the validity of Kim's (2001) theory. Lagdameo, Lee, Nguyen, Liang, Lee, Kodama, and McEwen (2002) explained that this lack of attention extends beyond empirically testing theories and into the general campus milieu. They observed that racism targeted at Asian American students is often unnoticed and frequently unaddressed by educators. Lagdameo et al. further commented that while numerous other identity groups enjoy significant financial support and the presence of professional staffing patterns and cultural centers, Asian American students are not often supported in similar ways. The reasons for this neglect are certainly numerous, but these issues emphasize the need to be concerned with the RID of Asian American students. The challenges inherent in the development of Asian Americans are no less serious than those of other racial groups and Asian American students deserve the attention of educators.

Racial Identity Development and Cross-Racial Interactions

The preceding section presented numerous identity models, their strengths, weaknesses and limitations. The WRID model presented by Helms (1992), for example, has been the subject of a great deal of criticism as previously outlined. Despite these criticisms, recent research into WRID models provides a more nuanced understanding of WRID, but do not depart from Helms' general assertions (Branscombe et al., 2007; Croll, 2007; Hartigan, 2005; McDermott, 2006; McDermott & Samson, 2005; Perry & Shotwell, 2009). White students, with appropriate interventions, can be encouraged, cajoled, and supported through stages of White identity development (Sanford, 1962) with the goal of surfacing and confronting racist assumptions and stereotypes and, ideally, adopting an anti-racist agenda.

The purpose in reviewing the aforementioned racial and ethnic identity theories in detail is to better understand how student RID may shape student CRIs. Rather than being viewed as a primary determinant, RID has been likened to one of several necessary ingredients in preparing students to engage successfully in CRIs (King & Baxter-Magolda, 2005). The influences of RID on CRIs, as has been noted, are commonly referred to within social-psychology literature, where most RID models have been developed and refined. While these linkages are detailed in RID literature, a comprehensive review of CRI literature omits student RID as a factor that may influence interactions across racial boundaries. This section details the RID-CRI linkages discussed within the RID literature, and subsequently provides a discussion of the implications of connecting these two important bodies of literature.

All RID theories provide an array of possible outcomes regarding student attitudes about race and diversity. Those outcomes include (1) the presence of non-linear stages or phases through which students move from "contact to interdependence" in a process characterized by "developing competence" related self-confidence and the ability to interact successfully with diverse peers (Torres et al., 2003), (2) the realization that student RID, and consequently their interest in CRIs, can vary based upon the student's stage of development, and (3) the importance of challenging and supporting (Sanford, 1962) students through developmental stages with an ultimate goal of facilitating both more frequent and higher quality CRIs. When developing purposeful curricular and co-curricular CRI opportunities, educators should consider the RID stages of their students. Those stages, researchers have shown, influence the capacity of students to participate in CRIs (Helms, 1992; Phinney, 1992).

An analysis of Kim's (1981, 2001) model of Asian American RID provides some important insights and implications for CRIs. As previously discussed, Kim's model presents five stages through which Asian Americans may pass as they mature. Those stages include (1) ethnic awareness, (2) White identification, (3) awakening to a social political awareness, (4) redirection to Asian American consciousness, and (5) incorporation. Nadal (2004) added an additional step after stage 4 in which a Pilipino person may redirect to a specific ethnic awareness. Nadal's additional step explains that a Pilipino individual often further directs significant energy and passion towards their particular ethnic background, almost to the exclusion of other ethnicities within the pan-Asian American racial group.

Within these six stages of Asian American RID, only the first and final stages of development are characterized by a specific openness to CRIs. During the first stage, an individual could be characterized as being in a color-blind status that diminishes racial differences between people. In this sense, a person in the initial stage of awareness may not possess what Jayakumar (2008) described as cultural competencies about racially different others, nor are they likely to exhibit the skills necessary for sustained and positive CRIs. Consequently, only the last stage of development within Kim's (2001) model is characterized by "a healthy, secure balance, feeling both comfortable with their own identity and appreciative of other racial groups" (Torres et al., 2003, p. 61).

Therefore, at every stage of development, for one reason or another, Asian Americans in Kim's (2001) and Nadal's (2004) models engage in a challenging and sometimes difficult process of identity development. This process of development is often characterized by explorations of personal opinions and beliefs as well as an in-group focus. In fact, Torres, Howard-Hamilton, and Cooper (2003) noted that Asian Americans in the "redirection" stage "start to embrace their Asian American identity and demonstrate a desire to immerse themselves in the Asian American heritage. During this period, individuals can feel anger or outrage at White society" (p. 60). Clearly, these emotions and self-explorations may temporarily diminish the extent to which Asian Americans interact with other racial groups (Torres et al., Kim 2001; Nadal, 2004). Therefore, an institution that provides purposeful opportunities, consistent with Sanford's (1961) challenge and support thesis, for Asian Americans to explore their identity may paradoxically, and hopefully temporarily, diminish a student's frequency of CRIs.

Similar to Kim's (2001) Asian American identity model, WRID outlines a series of identity stages often marked by diminished capacities to engage in CRIs. As Cashin's (2004) research suggested, White students are likely to experience their first significant contact with a person of color during their first semester in college. Passing through a series of stages in which a White student explores and refines their beliefs, Helms suggested that Whites can often retreat into previously held biased beliefs and temporarily avoid contact with people of color. Disintegration, or stage two of WRID, suggests that White students may struggle to reconcile biases towards people of color in light of their new proximity to peers of color. The disintegration stage features moments of dissonance when Whites must reconcile their biases with notions of equality and equity. Further confronting the moral dilemma that prejudice and discrimination presents, White students may become overwhelmed. Helms suggests that during stage 3, or reintegration, White students may reduce their contact with students of color and retreat into a comfort zone that omits sustained interactions with people of color. Helms further suggested that Whites could eventually move beyond the reintegration stage. This may occur with the help of concerned peers or through the purposeful interventions of faculty and administrators focused on cultivating cross-racial discussions of prejudice, discrimination, and equality.

Finally, Helms (1995) explained that, after some significant reflection and dialogue, White students may find their voice on issues concerning racial equality and equity. White students may generate a level of equilibrium between internally held beliefs regarding equality and equity and external actions in the workplace, classroom,

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family, or their broader community. Throughout these stages, Helms noted that increased levels of CRIs characterize the first, and possibly the last two, stages of WRID.

White students in the pre-contact or contact stage might feel fewer inhibitions about CRIs due to their lack of awareness of the extent to which his or her peers of color experience prejudice and discrimination, as well as a reduced appreciation of the cultural differences that may be present. This lack of awareness may lead White students to discount the negative experiences of, and complicate their relationship with, people of color. In the last two stages of Immersion/Emersion and Autonomy, there is a developing sophistication among Whites that is likely to infuse their relationships with people of color and ultimately make those interactions more sustainable and enjoyable. Far from being a linear process featuring continual gains in cross-racial competencies, White students, similar to their Asian American peers, might move from contact, through a series of stages that better prepares them for CRIs. Importantly, educational environments that do not provide opportunities for students to reflect on their racial identity consequently diminish the level of CRIs on their campuses and the associated and educationally valuable learning outcomes (Hurtado et al., 1999).

Reflection on one's identity may not always be straightforward and educators must also be aware of several potential barriers to student development. As Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokely, Cross, and Worrell (2001) asserted, several negative tendencies can occur if students fail to progress through the stages of their identity development. Those problems include assimilation tendencies, which involve the desire to fit in with dominant White culture, fixation tendencies, characterized by a prolonged immersion phase in which a person maintains an intense and permanent within-group focus, and

self-hatred tendencies, which include internalized biases based upon dominant racist critiques of one's culture, ethnicity or racial background (Vandiver et al., 2001). Similar to how negative interactions across racial and ethnic boundaries can have a detrimental effect upon the educational benefits associated with CRIs, fixation tendencies can develop among students who are not supported through their own RID. Remaining in the immersion phase, or only fixating upon one's own reference group to the exclusion of all others, can represent a permanent loss to the campus community as it reinforces an apprehension to engage in CRIs. Remaining in the immersion phase may be a survival technique for Asian American students and other students of color; however, it also reflects a failure among educators to develop a safe environment in which students feel greater comfort engaging one another across racial differences.

While the RID literature clearly suggests that there are connections between students' racial identity and CRIs, this relationship has not been the focus of systematic empirical inquiry. Through this study, I seek to address this limitation of extant literature and shed light on the ways that racial identity and the perspectives that result from that identity shape the experience of students engaging in CRIs.

Campus Racial Climate

In addition to pre-college CRIs and RID, higher education literature underscores the critical role that campus racial climates play in shaping students' CRIs (e.g., Chang, 2006). Before discussing the CRC literature, it is important to consider how researchers understand the various elements of the racial climate. Hurtado et al. (1999) outlined four criteria for assessing the quality of the CRC. In addition to possessing *demographic*

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diversity on campus (e.g. racial and cultural numerical diversity), the researchers

suggested that an institution must be *attentive to any history of discrimination* in terms of

admissions, campus organizations, bias incidents, and disparities in satisfaction or

participation (p. 4). Hurtado et al. also asserted that faculty and staff must be aware of

how students perceive and experience the campus. Bias among White students or feelings

of isolation among students of color, for example, must be explored in an effort to

identify problems and initiate appropriate responses (p. 4). Finally, faculty and staff, the

researchers observed, must *structure the curriculum and co-curriculum in ways that*

reflect the experiences of all students (p. 4). This involves an awareness and use of

pedagogical practices designed to support all students and not just the learning styles of

one group or another. Hurtado et al.'s criteria created a comprehensive approach to

understanding the development of a healthy CRC.

      While Hurtado et al.'s model highlighted the complexity of the CRC, it is useful

to employ a more specific definition of the CRC for the purposes of this study. Parker

(2006) defined the CRC as "the mutually reinforcing relationship among the perceptions,

attitudes and expectations of racial and ethnic groups and individuals and the actual

patterns of interaction and behavior between and among groups and individuals" (p. 18).

Parker's definition emphasizes not only student CRC experiences and perceptions, but

the social context of those interactions as well. It should be noted that, while students

may have their own opinions and perceptions of the CRC, their perceptions and

experiences are also shaped by how they perceive the opinions of other students.

      In this section, I explore research regarding how students perceive and experience

the campus racial climate, the extent to which the quality of the CRC is perceived and

experienced differently by different racial groups, and the relationship between the CRC and educational outcomes (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000; Cabrera et al., 1999; Chavous, 2005; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Locks et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Rankin & Reason, 2005). I also discuss how the quality of the CRC shapes students' behavior with regard to their interracial interactions with peers. Specifically, I review social psychology research that examines how the CRC shapes CRIs through three avenues: (1) students' perceptions of interracial common ground (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Gomez, Dovidio, Huici, Gaertner & Cuadrado, 2011), (2) the presence of racial prejudice (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Crandall & Eshelman, 2003; Jackson, 2011) and (3) the existence and influence of racial stereotypes (Chu & Kwan, 2007; Elliot, 2008; Pinel, 1999; Pinel & Paulin, 2005; Shelton, Richeson & Salvatore, 2005; Son, & Shelton, 2011).

Perceptions and Experiences with the Campus Racial Climate

Harper and Hurtado (2007) conducted a qualitative study including 278 Asian American, Black, Latino, Native American, and White students on five campuses in different geographic regions of the United States. Resulting themes established that participants believed that campus authorities emphasized the importance of diversity in publications and public speeches, but did little to actually facilitate CRIs. While White and Asian American students in this particular study were mostly satisfied with the CRC, Latino, Black, and Native Americans were dissatisfied with "social supports" and the CRC in general (p. 17). Additionally, White students overestimated how satisfied Latino, Black, and Native American students were with the climate. White students'

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misconceptions regarding how students of color perceive and experience the CRC are particularly problematic given that all of the White students in their study occupied student government leadership positions on the five campuses.

As one might expect, researchers have also established that students of all racial groups who perceive or experience discrimination within the campus environment are likely to exhibit lower levels of adjustment or belonging on the campus (Cabrera et al., 1999; Chavous, 2005; Locks et al., 2008). Researchers have also noted that, while perceptions of or experiences with discrimination were negative for all racial groups, students of color were more likely to perceive or experience discrimination within the CRC (Cabrera, Nora, Pascarella, Terenzini & Hagedorn, 1999; Hurtado et al., 1999), and corresponding lower levels of belonging to their institution (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000; Cabrera et. al., Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Locks et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Rankin & Reason, 2005).

Researchers have statistically linked negative perceptions of the climate with lower adjustment, sense of belonging, and persistence (Cabrera et al., 1999; Chavous, 2005; Locks et al., 2008; Museus et al., 2008). For example, Cabrera et al. conducted a study including 315 African American and 1,139 White freshmen students at 18 universities across the U.S. The researchers sought to better understand the extent to which students experienced a healthy sense of adjustment to their new campuses. Cabrera et al. found that African American and White students in their study both perceived elements of discrimination on their campus and this undermined adjustment to their new environments as well as their commitment to attaining their degrees at that institution.

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Other studies support the notion that negative perceptions of the CRC are associated with lower levels of adjustment and persistence towards graduation among students of color on U.S. campuses (Cabrera et al., 1999; Hurtado & Carter, 1996; Museus et al., 2008; Nora & Carbrera, 1996). Further emphasizing the negative experiences of students of color, studies suggest that White students maintain higher levels of prejudice than students of color (Ellis, 2004; Twenge & Crocker, 2002), which further confirms higher levels of reported discrimination among students of color. These findings underscore the important role that positive (or negative) student interracial interactions play in the successful adjustment of all students and students of color in particular.

There is some evidence that the CRC can influence how students experience CRIs in college. For example, as Solorzano et al. (2001) explained, experiences with discrimination within a negative CRC can lead some students to become more engaged with their own racial or ethnic group as a source of support, activism, and safety. In contrast, students of color and White students who perceive and experience a supportive CRC are likely to report higher levels of CRIs which, in turn, develops increased levels of self-confidence, motivation, critical thinking skills as well as increased persistence, and an enhanced commitment to racial equity (Chang et al., 2006). Moreover, as I discuss later in this chapter, there is some indication that elements of the CRC – such as students' perceptions of common ground among racial groups, racial prejudice, racial stereotypes, and interaction anxiety – all play a role in shaping students' experiences with CRIs. However, the role of these factors in shaping students' interracial interaction experiences in higher education has not been systematically and qualitatively examined.

White Students and the Campus Racial Climate

The experiences of White students within the CRC indicate that they are more likely to be satisfied with the CRC than their peers of color. Specifically, White students not only view the CRC more positively than their peers of color, but also over-estimate how positively their peers of color feel about the CRC (Ancis et al., 2000; Harper and Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992). Among students who perceived a CRC laced with prejudice and discrimination, White students and students of color had similar reactions (Cabrera et al., 1999). Those reactions included a diminished "commitment to the institution" and lower levels of persistence towards their degree (Cabrera et al, p. 153). While Harper and Hurtado noted that there are gaps in terms of how White students and students of color view the quality of the CRC, among those students who identify a discriminatory campus climate, there can be negative implications for student persistence across racial groups.

For all racial groups, Cabrera et al. (1999) observed that adjustment to college can be complicated and that students navigate the transition from high school to college often with difficulty. In fact, many White students often have little experience with CRIs prior to attending college (Cashin, 2004; Pewewardy & Frey, 2002). Further complicating how White students experience the CRC, Antonio (2004) noted that White students frequently reported having homogenous White friendship groups in college, a phenomenon he partially attributed to the low representation of students of color on many campuses. Ancis et al. (2000) further asserted that White students are better able to experience a comfort zone on campus that is free of harassment, discrimination, pressure

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to conform to racial stereotypes, and that White students "seemed relatively immune" to the hostile racial climate described by many of their peers of color (p. 183).

Given the lack of CRI opportunities for White students in many pre-college and postsecondary educational environments, Levin et al. (2003) commented that White students are more likely to experience intergroup interaction anxiety. Ominously, Levin et al. reported that students who had fewer out-group friends by the end of their first year in college were also likely to maintain those homogenous friendship patterns throughout their undergraduate career. In this sense, the lack of prior, CRIs for White students has a self-perpetuating and lasting effect on their levels of CRIs. Accordingly, Littleford et al. (2005) asserted that White students with few CRIs experience higher levels of intergroup interaction anxiety, and higher levels of stress within the CRC.

These findings are paradoxical. According to the research, White students, not surprisingly, report having a wide comfort zone on most undergraduate campuses. They perceive a positive CRC and have the misperception that their peers of color share similarly positive opinions of the CRC. Despite these positive opinions of the CRC, White students are least likely to experience CRIs in postsecondary environments. This appears to contribute to higher levels of interaction anxiety among White students. Breaking this cycle of White student segregation on campus may be one of the most difficult challenges for educators concerned with improving levels of CRIs on campus.

Asian Americans and the Campus Racial Climate

The experience of Asian American students within the CRC has been the subject of recent research. Museus and Truong (2009) noted that Asian American students

experience "salient difficulties" with CRCs on predominantly White campuses (p. 18).

These difficulties have been under-researched, a phenomenon explored by Museus and

Truong, who described a series of biases that have traditionally discouraged research

regarding the experiences of Asian American students. These biases include the "model

minority myth" or the belief among educators that Asian American students are

uniformly successful in higher education and do not experience prejudice and

discrimination within campus environments (Chuo & Feagin, 2008; Li & Wang, 2008).

By contrast, contemporary research regarding the experiences of Asian American

college students reveals a range of negative experiences and outcomes. Cress and Ikeda

(2003) reported that negative experiences and perceptions of the CRC are related to

depressive tendencies among Asian American students. Museus (2007, 2008) asserted

that Asian American students find unwelcoming college environments, the presence of

significant levels of racism and prejudice, as well as pressure resulting from the model

minority stereotypes. This all occurs, researchers have observed, within an environment

where faculty and staff underestimate Asian American student experiences with prejudice

and discrimination compared to their Latino, and African American peers (Kiang, 1998;

Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Museus, 2008; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Lorenzo, Frost, and

Reinherz (2000) concluded that Asian American students have higher levels of

"depressive symptoms and feelings of anxiety" than their White peers (p. 299). Similarly,

Asian American students, across numerous studies, have revealed that they experience

higher levels of social isolation, self-segregation, and exclusion (Chou & Feagin, 2008;

Suyemoto et al., 2009).

As serious as these findings are, Museus and Truong (2009) and Harper and Hurtado (2007) found that Asian Americans tend to view the CRC differently depending upon a range of pre-college experiences. In particular, Museus and Truong suggested that Asian American students differ in their perceptions of the CRC based on the level of diversity in their high school environments. Asian Americans from diverse high schools were more likely to perceive the CRC negatively than their peers who attended predominantly White high schools. Specifically, Asian American students who attended diverse high schools perceived higher levels of prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes than their Asian American peers who attended predominantly White high schools. Orsuwan and Cole (2007) additionally noted that social class and level of affluence of Asian American students in their study may also be a predictor of expectations for and perceptions of the quality of the CRC.

Finally, Museus and Truong (2009) suggested that additional disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data regarding the experiences of Asian Americans is necessary. Such disaggregated data may reveal additional important within-group differences and allow researchers to better understand how different ethnic groups in the pan-Asian American group experience the CRC.

Psychological Aspects of the Campus Climate

Research from social psychology offers several key concepts that contribute to current levels of understanding regarding how students' perceptions of their climate might shape their interracial interaction experience. First, social psychology researchers suggest that intergroup contact is shaped by perceptions of in-groups and out-groups as

well as the propensity of most individuals to affiliate with in-groups (Brown &

Hewstone, 2005; Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Mallet, Wilson & Gilbert, 2008; Pettigrew,

2009; Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970; West, 2009). Second, in-group affiliations are often

easier for individuals to maintain because the experiences, preferences, and culture of in-

group members often significantly overlap (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005; Rogers &

Bhowmik, 1970). Researchers often describe this overlap between the experiences of in-

group members as "common ground" (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Cottrell & Neuberg,

2005). Third, researchers have additionally noted that interactions between members of

different racial groups can sometimes be fraught with prejudice and stereotypes (Crandall

& Eshelman, 2003; Son & Shelton, 2011).

In-Group and Out-Groups. Individuals tend to affiliate with groups of peers who

are like themselves across one or more salient social categories (Rogers & Bhowmik,

1970). Rogers and Bhowmik described the urge to affiliate with like individuals as

"homophilious" behavior, which they specifically defined as the "degree to which pairs

of individuals who interact are similar with respect to certain attributes, such as beliefs,

values, education, social status, etc" (p. 524). In contrast, the researchers asserted that

individuals do not typically demonstrate "heterophilious" behavior, which they

additionally defined as "the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are

different with respect to certain attributes" (p. 524). Rogers and Bhowmik further

asserted that, "homophily leads to greater credibility, defined as whether the source is

considered trustworthy and reliable" (p. 533). Therefore, individuals are likely to affiliate

with similar peers and, whether accurate or not, those affiliations are often considered

safer than affiliations with members of an out-group.

Cottrell and Neuberg (2005), in a study of 235 European American students recruited primarily from upper-level psychology courses, administered questionnaires that asked participants to rate different racial and religious groups regarding their perceived level of threat. The researchers found, among other things, that "different groups are often believed to pose different profiles of threat to one's in-group" (p. 784). Essentially, each out-group was perceived to have different levels of threat when compared to in-group members. Of course, all participants in Cottrell and Neuberg's study were European American students and this may have limited the findings to White students, who have been shown to have higher levels of prejudice (Ellis, 2004;Twenge & Crocker, 2002).

Common Ground. Interaction between members of two different social groups is often eased when there is a degree of overlap between the experiences of the two groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Gomez et al., 2011). More plainly stated, members of different groups are less likely to interact than members of in-groups, but when they do, those interactions are eased if they perceive or experience some common perspectives, values, or experiences. In short, the perception that common ground exists between interaction partners eases that interaction (Galupo, Cartwright & Savage, 2011; Gomez et al.). Contemporary social psychologists refer to these concepts straightforwardly as the propensity to interact with like individuals within an "in-group" or the propensity to view people who are different from oneself as an "out-group" (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Mallet, Wilson & Gilbert, 2008; Pettigrew, 2009; West, 2009).

Gaertner and Dovidio (2005) explained in-group and out-group dynamics in the context of race with their Common In-group Identity model. They posited that:

if members of different groups are induced to conceive of themselves as a single

group rather than as two completely separate groups, attitudes toward former out-

group members will become more positive through the cognitive and motivational

forces that result from in-group formation—a consequence that could increase the

sense of connectedness across group lines (p. 628).

Gaertner and Dovidio further observed that, "we believe it is possible for members to

conceive of two groups as distinct units within the context of a superordinate identity" (p.

629). The authors suggested that the groups would retain their real or perceived

distinctiveness while foregrounding aspects of their experiences that formed the basis for

common ground. They described this Common In-group Identity as the "superordinate

identity." Gaertner and Dovidio demonstrated, through a series of studies designed to test

these relationships, that while each group retained its distinctiveness, certain overarching

identities could become more salient. When this occurred, the researchers identified a

reduction in bias toward the out-group, as well as less anxiety during interactions. In the

context of CRIs in college, their work suggests that encouraging students of color to

connect with one another during a retreat or workshop, for example, while highlighting

commonalities across their particular ethnic or racial groups, should lead to a reduction in

bias and anxiety during those interactions as well as improve future interactions.

Prejudice. There are varying perspectives regarding the definition of the term

"prejudice." For example, Crandall and Eshelman (2003) defined prejudice as "a negative

evaluation of a social group or negative evaluation of an individual that is significantly

based on the individual's group membership" (p. 414). Jackson (2011) similarly noted

that prejudice is "a disrespectful attitude toward or negative evaluative response to groups

as a whole or toward individuals on the basis of their group membership" (p. 20). In both definitions, the emphasis is on a negative evaluation of a group or individual based upon the group within which they may closely identify.

Prejudice has been described as a complex and dynamic phenomenon (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Jackson, 2011). As noted earlier, Cottrell and Neuberg asked 235 European American students to rate nine sets of racial, ethnic or gender groups in terms of how threatened they felt by the groups and observed that prejudice can elicit a range of negative emotions that result from feeling threatened by an out-group. Those emotions, the researchers asserted, often took the form of feeling threatened. Threats could exist on a physical level or could be related to the consumption of scarce resources (e.g. illegal immigrants taking scarce employment positions). Results of the study revealed that individuals typically displayed more prejudice toward out-groups when compared with their own in-group.

Stereotypes. Racial stereotypes are often blamed for creating a hostile racial climate for individuals and groups as well as diminished interracial interactions within college campus settings (Plant, 2004; West, Pearson, Shelton & Trail, 2009). In fact, studies have included participants who have described the existence of racial stereotypes on their campuses (Chu & Kwan, 2007; Pinel, 1999; Pinel & Paulin, 2005; Son, & Shelton, 2011). Son and Shelton defined stereotypes as "negative over-generalizations about a group of people" (p. 51). Stereotypes pose potent threats to individuals or groups, because stereotypes are often used to discredit or diminish the accomplishments or identity of individuals and groups.

The literature on stereotypes, and the various ways this phenomenon affects individuals and groups, has expanded in recent years. Research has been conducted on how individuals perceive and react to stereotypes about groups with which they are affiliated (Chu & Kwan, 2007; Elliot, 2008; Pinel, 1999; Pinel & Paulin, 2005; Shelton, Richeson & Salvatore, 2005; Son, & Shelton, 2011) as well as the ways in which stereotypes diminish CRIs (Plant, 2004; West, Pearson, Shelton & Trail, 2009).

To explore the effects of stereotypes further, Shelton, Richeson and Salvatore (2005) conducted a study of 54 students of color, including 27 African American, 20 Asian American, and 4 Latino/a students at Princeton University. Participants had previously been randomly assigned White freshmen year roommates through the Residence Life Office. The study began during the first week of students' arrival at Princeton and continued for 15 days. Participants were prompted to answer an online questionnaire each day over two weeks as well as a final, more comprehensive survey at the end of the 15-day period. The questionnaires asked participants to share their level of awareness that stereotypes might be involved in interactions with their roommates as well as daily logs designed to reveal the frequency and quality of those interactions. The researchers found that expectations about being targeted by stereotypes led the students of color to experience interactions with their White roommates more negatively.

In fact, Shelton, Richeson and Salvatore (2005) found that students of color who expected their White roommates to rely upon stereotypes of them during interactions, shared more about their backgrounds. The researchers commented that it is possible that the students of color compensated for expected stereotype use among White roommates by sharing parts of their personal history and backgrounds in ways designed to "dispel the

negative expectations" of their White roommates (p. 1199). Results of this study revealed that students who expect stereotypes to be used against themselves adjust how they present themselves and these constant adjustments, the researchers asserted, reduced the extent to which students of color in this study enjoyed their interactions with White peers.

As mentioned, stereotypes can be threatening to different groups for different reasons. In fact, Goff, Steele, and Davies (2008) explored this concept through several studies involving 82 White students who were asked to participate in conversations with African American partners. The researchers defined "stereotype threat" as "the sense of threat that can arise when one knows that he or she can possibly be judged or treated negatively on the basis of a negative stereotype about one's group" (p. 92). Stereotype threat, Goff et al. argue, caused participants in their study to avoid interracial interactions. For example, White participants in their studies, concerned that they may enter a contentious conversation with a person of color about race or racism, sat further away from their African American interaction partners. Importantly, Goff et al. asserted that, even in the absence of racial prejudice, White participants were still vulnerable to stereotype threat and the corresponding distancing from people of color that often resulted. Individuals who are accustomed to being stereotyped often generate an acute awareness of the stereotype of their particular group (Chu & Kwan, 2007; Pinel, 1999; Pinel & Paulin, 2005; Son, & Shelton, 2011). This acute awareness has been described as meta-stereotypes or "stereotypes that members of a group believe that members of an out-group hold of them" can possess the power to alter individual and group behavior (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2009, p. 191).

As the research demonstrates, complicated situations can ensue when individuals experience stereotypes during interracial interactions. This is particularly true if, for example, White students interact with a student of color. White students may or may not rely on a stereotype, or may even be actively trying to avoid reliance upon the stereotype, while a student of color may present themselves in ways that contradict the dominant stereotype of their group, even though that presentation may not be a truly accurate presentation of themselves. Shelton, Richeson and Salvatore (2005) asserted the following about the relationship between expecting stereotypes and negative affects:

> expectations about being the target of prejudice have negative effects for ethnic minorities' experiences in interethnic interactions. Specifically, ethnic minorities who expected prejudice against their ethnic group experienced more negative affect, liked their partner less and felt less authentic during interactions (p. 1198).

Within this complex web of interactions, the quality and frequency of CRIs can often suffer when stereotypes are used or simply expected.

Again, while the fact that the CRC shapes students' interracial interactions, much of the aforementioned research examining this relationship is quantitative in nature. Higher education researchers have not utilized qualitative methods to systematically examine and generate rich descriptions of the ways in which the CRC shapes students' CRIs within college of university environments.

Interracial Interaction Anxiety

Interracial interactions, researchers have shown, are sometimes complicated by anxiety among participants (Littleford, Wright & Syoc-Parial, 2005; Plant, 2004; West,

Shelton & Trail, 2009). Plant (2004) defined interaction anxiety as "feelings of tensions and distress that result when interacting with a person from a different racial group" (p. 1458). Plant additionally noted that "when people are motivated to make a particular impression but doubt that they will succeed" interaction anxiety can be a byproduct (p. 1458). Importantly, anxiety during interracial interactions is common and it is often negatively related to future CRIs (Plant, 2004; West, Pearson, Shelton & Trail, 2009).

One of the main factors that can diminish CRIs is anxiety (Littleford, Wright & Syoc-Parial, 2005; Plant, 2004; West, Shelton & Trail, 2009), which can manifest in a number of ways. First, an individual's anxiety can lead to decisions that remove intergroup contact as a possibility (Littleford, Wright & Syoc-Parial, 2005; Plant, 2004; West, Shelton & Trail, 2009). Given the literature on homophily and preference for in-group contact over out-group contact, this is not surprising. Second, anxiety is often visible to interaction partners through a range of verbal cues (Tropp, 2009; West et al., 2009). West et al. noted that, "during an interaction, the anxiety of one person can enhance or generate anxiety within the person with whom they're interacting" (p. 289). This is partly because interaction partners make assessments regarding how they presented themselves and how the out-group member perceived them prior to, during, and after the interaction. Third, researchers indicate that the causes of interracial interaction anxiety are often related to low perceptions of common ground (Galupo, Cartwright & Savage, 2011; Gomez et al.), as well as the presence of prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) and stereotypes within the climate (Pinel, 1999; Plant, 2004; Shelton, Richeson & Salvatore, 2011). Finally, different racial groups appear to handle interracial interaction anxiety differently (Littleford, Wright & Syoc-Parial, 2005; Park, Suliaman,

Kim, Schwartz, Ham & Zamboagna, 2011; Son & Shelton, 2011). Generally speaking, Plant (2004) asserted that White students often experience anxiety because they are concerned that they may say something 'wrong' during a CRI or that they would be stereotyped as harboring discriminatory beliefs (Norton, Sommers, Apfelbaum, Pura & Ariely, 2006; Plant, 2004). Asian American students, according to Park et al. revealed that they were also anxious during CRIs because they often experienced prejudice during interracial interactions, particularly related to dominant stereotypes of Asian Americans (e.g. model minority stereotypes).

Anxiety and Reduced Cross-Racial Interactions

Plant (2004) added further complexity to interracial interaction anxiety by noting that experiences with anxious out-group partners will likely lead to fewer future interactions, as well as higher levels of anxiety among those who previously perceived another person's anxiety. Plant reached these conclusions by surveying 143 non-African American students (71% White, 4% Asian American, 19% Hispanic, and 4% biracial) regarding the levels of anxiety they experienced during interactions with African Americans. Surveys were given twice over the course of a two-week period. Results confirmed that higher levels of interracial interaction anxiety with African Americans were related to fewer CRIs with African Americans. Additionally, Plant found that participants who experienced anxious interactions with African American peers developed a "strategy of avoiding such interactions" in the future (p. 1465).

Visibility of Interracial Interaction Anxiety

West et al. (2009) found evidence that, during interracial interactions, perceptions of a partner's anxiety can lead to decisions to disengage from further interaction. In fact, West et al. found that anxiety from an out-group interaction partner was likely to be attributed to prejudiced beliefs or reliance upon stereotypes. This may be because individuals are likely to guess that an out-group partner's anxiety, which can "leak out" during an interaction, was due to negative or prejudiced beliefs or stereotypes about them (West et al., p. 289). Interestingly, Tropp (1999) also found that anxiety among in-group partners (e.g. same-race interactions) was likely to be met with positive assessments of the anxious in-group member. Therefore, out-group members, West et al. (2009) concluded, were subjected to higher levels of scrutiny during interracial interactions.

Sources of Interracial Interaction Anxiety

One of the primary sources of interracial interaction anxiety is the use of stereotypes (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Littleford et al., 2005) as well as the absence of an intergroup identity, or common ground between participants of different racial backgrounds (Littleford et al.; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Stephan, Boniecki, Ybarra, Ervin, Jackson & McNatt, 2002). For example, in a study of 246 undergraduate students, Littleford et al. sought to better understand the links between stereotypes and interracial interaction anxiety. The researchers paired participants in White-African American, White-Asian American and White-White dyads and video-taped three minute interactions. Prior to the interviews, participants completed questionnaires designed to elicit information regarding any prejudice they might have of racial groups. In addition to

video-taping the interactions, Littleford et al. measured the blood pressure of the interaction partners. Results of the study revealed that White students changed their affect when interacting with Asian American and African American students in ways designed to be friendlier. This took the form of smiling and showing more positive non-verbal forms of communication. The researchers found that White participants were less comfortable when interacting with Asian American and African American peers when compared to interactions with White peers. In fact, White interaction partners paired with African Americans exhibited higher levels of blood pressure and reported feeling less comfortable during those interactions in particular. Littleford et al. pointed to lack of prior positive interactions and the presence of stereotypes and prejudice among some White participants as reasons for the heightened levels of interaction anxiety.

Whites and Interaction Anxiety

Many White participants in Littleford et al.'s study noted that they experienced anxiety during interactions with interracial partners. This is consistent with literature on how other White college students perceive and experience cross-racial interactions (Littleford, Wright & Syoc-Parial, 2005; Son & Shelton, 2011). White students are primarily anxious about appearing prejudiced during classroom or social settings in which CRIs occur (Son & Shelton, 2011). While Son and Shelton reported that Whites can often hide their anxiety during brief encounters, anxiety based upon prejudiced beliefs that Whites may instinctively be suppressing became more apparent to the students of color with whom they interacted over longer periods of time. In fact, Norton,

Sommers, Apfelbaum, Pura and Ariely (2006) conducted a study of White students who professed a color-blind ideology regarding race and found the following:

> Whites are adept at identifying other people on the basis of race, their ability to do so outstrips their reports of that ability. Such avoidance of race when interacting with a Black partner led Whites to perform poorly on a dyadic task: assessment of nonverbal behavior suggested that the more reluctant Whites were to use race in the presence of Black confederates, the more unfriendly they appeared (p. 952).

In other words, White students in Norton et al.'s study appeared to diminish their ability to interact successfully with students of color because they felt the need to suppress the realization that they do, in fact, notice and account for race during interracial interactions.

Asian Americans and Interaction Anxiety

Interaction anxiety can be particularly potent for Asian Americans. As has been previous noted, Asian Americans are subjected to a number of stereotypes including that they are a model minority (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Li & Wang, 2008), that they are international visitors or recent immigrants to the U.S. (Cheryan & Monin, 2005) or that they are cliquish and unsociable with non-Asian American people (Chu & Kwan, 2007). Most Asian Americans are well aware of these stereotypes and these forms of prejudice often lead to reactions among Asian Americans that can produce anxiety. In fact, meta-stereotypes are often more salient for Asian Americans during interracial interactions and can further complicate those interactions (Son & Shelton, 2011).

Given the salience of these meta-stereotypes, among other reasons, Asian Americans have been found to have the highest levels of social anxiety of any racial

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group (Park, Suliaman, Kim, Schwartz, Ham & Zamboagna, 2011). For example, Park et al. conducted a study with 784 Asian American participants, of whom 79.7% were East Asian Americans, and found that 59.1% of their participants could be categorized as exhibiting clinical social anxiety disorder.

Among other reasons that Park et al. (2011) identified for high rates of social anxiety within their participants, Asian Americans are often from collectivist cultures in which close ties to family and community are frequently valued over individual achievement. Scales of social anxiety may be biased against Asian Americans as a lack of individuation may be negatively assessed by those scales. Park et al., noted that "Asian Americans are socialized to be more interdependent in their definition of self, and individuals with higher levels of interdependent self-construal are more likely to be attuned to social cues, more sensitive to others' evaluations of them, and thereby experience higher levels of social anxiety" (p. 40). Evaluations of social anxiety may be biased against Asian Americans as a lack of individuation may be negatively assessed. Additionally, the pressure to separate from community and family derives in part from an interest among Asian Americans in appearing more sociable. However, anxiety is produced in when Asian Americans experience difficulty in maintaining ties to family and community while establishing connections across racial boundaries.

Whatever the reasons for high levels of social anxiety among Asian Americans, it is important to consider how these levels of anxiety may be portrayed during interracial interactions. This is particularly important, because out-group interaction partners often interpret anxiety during CRIs negatively (West et al., 2009). This can lead to diminished

interest among interaction partners and higher levels of anxiety may even inadvertently reinforce the unsociable stereotype of Asian Americans.

Interracial interaction anxiety research reveals that anxiety experienced during CRIs diminishes the quality of those interactions and promotes withdrawal behaviors among anxious individuals (Littleford, Wright & Syoc-Parial, 2005; Son & Shelton, 2011). Anxiety is often visible to interaction partners during interracial interactions and anxiety is often attributed to hidden prejudices. Unfortunately, the causes of interracial interaction anxiety are often related to experiences with or perceptions that an interaction partner may use stereotypes during an interaction. Finally, different racial groups often experience anxiety related to CRIs in different ways. Given all of these details, what is clear is that interracial interaction anxiety can reduce the quality and frequency of CRIs and educators should be aware of the possible presence of anxiety during student interracial interactions.

The preceding social psychology literature sheds much light on how students experience CRIs. Yet, it is difficult to find research that examines the role that interaction anxiety plays in CRI experiences in campus settings. In addition, researchers have not examined how the CRC, RID, and interaction anxiety might interact to shape CRIs.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study emerged from a range of factors that research suggests shape CRIs among college students (Figure 1). Specifically, the conceptual model suggests that previous CRIs (e.g., pre-college CRIs) are linked to how students experience subsequent interracial interactions (e.g., postsecondary CRIs)

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because they appear to "prime" students for future interactions (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 27). Next, racial identity shapes a student's interest in CRIs (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1992; Phinney, 1990, 1992). As an important environmental factor, the quality of the CRC serves as the context in which CRIs occur. Research demonstrates that student perceptions of the quality of the campus racial climate can additionally shape the CRI experience (Chang, 2007; Locks et al., 2008; Fischer, 2008; Saenz et al., 2007). Interracial interaction anxiety can diminish how students experience CRIs and the frequency of their engagement in CRIs (Littleford, Wright & Syoc-Parial, 2005; Plant, 2004; West, Shelton & Trail, 2009).

The conceptual framework also posits that perceptions of the CRC and students' racial identity shape one another. A student's level of RID often frames how they interpret CRIs as well as the quality of the campus racial climate (Perry, Vance & Helms, 2009). Similarly, the quality of the CRC shapes the racial environment in which students exist, and consequently the way they make sense of their own racial identity in relation to that environment. Finally, the model posits that pre-college CRIs, RID, and the CRC all influence a student's level of interracial interaction anxiety, thereby indirectly influencing subsequent CRIs through their direct impact on experienced anxiety.

Figure 1. A Model of How Students' Experiences Shape CRIs in College
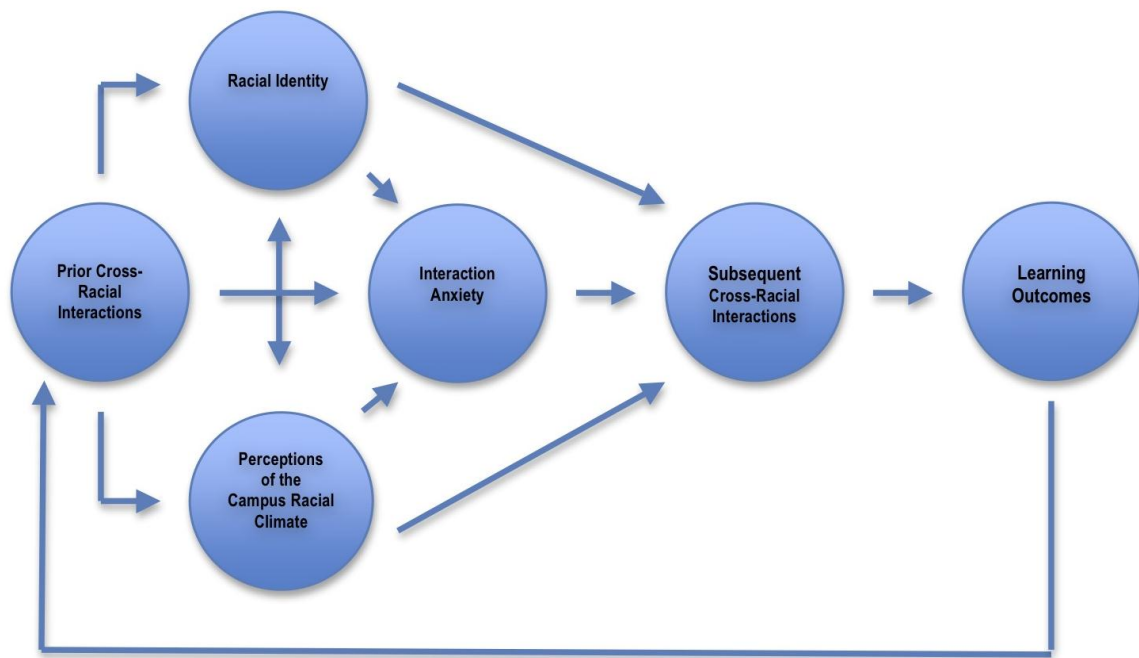
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Before detailing the research methods that were utilized throughout the current inquiry, it is useful to revisit the research questions that guided the investigation. In order to vividly illustrate the invariant structure of how participants in this study experience purposeful CRIs, this study explores the following primary research question: How do Asian and White students experience CRIs in college? A series of sub-questions will cultivate a deeper understanding of how students engage in CRIs, as well as how participants construct meaning from those interactions. Those sub-questions are: (1) How do participants describe different types of CRI experiences in college? (2) What factors shape student perceptions of and experiences with CRIs? (3) How, if at all, do pre-college interracial interactions shape student interactions patterns in college? (4) How, if at all, does students' racial identity shape their college CRIs? And, (5) How, if at all, does the campus racial climate shape their CRIs?

In this chapter, I review the methods used to explore how participants experienced CRIs. I begin with a description of my rationale for choosing the phenomenological approach for this study. I continue by sharing information about site section, participant selection and the ways in which a pilot study further informed my interview protocol. Next, I share the ways in which an advisory board composed of staff and students at each

institution augmented the trustworthiness of this study. Subsequently, I share reflections on my own connections to this research as well as the limitations of this study.

Rationale for Phenomenological Approach

With the intent of exploring how students on two specific college campuses experience CRIs, this study employs the qualitative tradition of phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) asserted that phenomenology is "a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness" (p. 49). Phenomenologists premise their work on the belief that all representations of objects are filtered through the lens of experience. Moustakas further argued that all knowledge is subjective and the modern goals of objective, scientific research falter on the pre-supposition of a "real world" (p. 48). Moustakas concluded that objective scientific research "departs from its own commitment to objectivity by assuming that there are absolute and unchanging concepts that can be statistically measured and accurately described" (p. 48).

Phenomenology, as a qualitative research method, is predicated upon the belief that researchers and co-researchers, or participants, together create the meaning of an essential experience. Matthews (1996) contributed to this discussion when he observed, "human existence can be argued to be essentially dialectic between the imposition on us of (social) situations and our creation of situations through the choices we make" (p. 94). Phenomenologists assert that the "dialectical nature of human existence suffuses our sense of personal location within the self-social. Our sense of who we are –our selfhood, is forged in the crucible of social relationships" (p. 210). Therefore, the experiences of

participants in this study with CRIs can be explored by understanding how students experience interracial interactions as a "self-social" phenomena. In this sense, phenomenology is a powerful approach to exploring how, within the social context of the campus racial climate, students experience CRIs.

Moustakas (1994) described numerous applications of the phenomenological approach when used in social science research. Those applications include (1) a focus on "the appearance of things," (2) an emphasis on the "wholeness" of a phenomenon, (3) the use of "intuition" and "reflection" as methods for establishing meaning, (4) rich descriptions of the central experience from participants, (5) integration of the perceptions and experiences, and finally (6) the assertion that the researcher's intuition, reflections, descriptions of data, and experiences form the "primary" basis for conclusions (p. 58). Phenomenology, therefore, requires researchers to surface their own beliefs, while simultaneously encouraging participants to share their own experiences related to purposeful CRIs. As with other qualitative approaches, this continuous researcher-participant dialogue forms the data from which larger themes can be revealed. Husserl (1970), whom Moustakas himself relied upon as a seminal authority on phenomenology, described this process of continual communication between researcher and their participants as "communalization" (p. 27).

Consistent with Husserl's (1970) goal of surfacing an essential structure of experience, Moustakas (1994) explained that two important concepts interact during a phenomenological study: noema and noesis. Moustakas defined noema as perceptions of the central phenomenon and noesis as experiences with the central phenomenon. Together, noema and noesis construct the relationship of an individual within the context

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of their social relationships. In this regard, CRIs are both perceived and experienced by researchers and participants alike and the complex interplay of perceptions of critical incidents and the experiences themselves construct meaning.

Moustakas (1994) noted that researchers must acknowledge their relationship to and passions about their research. Moustakas referred to the process of surfacing the researcher's relationship to the topic as 'epoche,' the Greek word that he noted has the literal meaning of "staying away from" or "to abstain" (p. 85). Moustakas asserted, researchers must "abstain" from using their own perspectives, opinions, and experiences as the primary lens through which participants' experiences are viewed (p. 85). Other qualitative researchers have referred to this important concept as bracketing (Creswell, 2007, Lee, 1999; Merriam & Associates, 2002). With bracketing, the goal is to help researchers identify potential biases that they may employ during the process of data gathering and interpretation. Moustakas asserted that bracketing gives researchers "an original vantage point, a clearing of mind, space, and time, a holding in abeyance" of all preconceptions that may "color" their interpretations while engaged in a phenomenological study (p. 86). Rather than simply asserting that objectivity has been established, Moustakas outlined how researchers must focus on their subjectivity as a method of potentially clearing the mind in preparation for whatever outcomes may be revealed during interviews.

Finlay (2009) highlighted that more contemporary approaches to phenomenological research (Gadamer, 1975; Giorgi, 1994; Merleau-Ponty, 1968; Wertz, 2005) have developed. Specifically, Finlay noted that phenomenological researchers should balance the relationship between their "preunderstandings [of the central

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experience being studied] and exploiting them reflexively as a source of insight" (p. 13).

In Finlay's view, researchers are often familiar with the experience that they are

exploring and it is important to simultaneously understand one's own opinions as well as

overtly rely on those understandings as one among many sources that may influence

phenomenological inquiry. My reflexive statement is designed, therefore, to highlight my

connections to the research, and exploit my own intimate knowledge of the CRI

experiences.

Moustakas (1994) also summarized the primary methods of data reduction. He

asserted that researchers should first "horizonalize" aspects of data collected during

interviews (p. 97). Horizonalization is a process in which all of the data from interviews

are given equal treatment and the researcher identifies all of the themes that seem to be

present within the qualitative data. Next, researchers must reflect upon the range of data

in light of the research question, a process that should result in the development of

specific, intricately related "horizons." Horizons, Moustakas asserted, are the "textual

meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon" (p. 97). Subsequently, the

horizons should be clustered into groups with similar meanings and relationships. Finally,

these clusters should result in a synthesis of the horizons into statements of the essential

meaning of the experience being researched.

Moustakas (1994) noted that examples that "vividly illustrate" the "invariant

structure" of the phenomenon should be described in detail (p. 99). Moustakas and

Spinelli (2005) argued that the concept of an invariant structure constitutes the purpose of

phenomenological research. Spinelli observed that the object or process being researched

must be examined within a context. Essentially, CRIs are the product of personal

decisions and environmental influences. Specifically, the literature review reveals that students' pre-college experiences with CRIs, students' RID, and the CRC form a complex web of relationships that shape CRIs in college. Spinelli suggested that these influences must be considered when the researcher describes the essential experience.

Further complicating the conceptual aims of Phenomenology, Spinelli observed that Phenomenology's goal is not to find the objective reality experienced by students, but rather a collective interpretation of that reality. Spinelli carefully asserted that perceptions of an experience can shift based upon a "sedimented outlook," which he likened to the power of suggestion (p. 52). Essentially, Spinelli argued that perceptions are constrained by beliefs as well as by suggestions within an environment. In this sense, individual and group perceptions of CRIs influence the invariant structure of how students experience sustained CRIs.

Site Selection

This study was conducted on two campuses in the Northeast, including the Harbor State University (HSU) and Private Cooperative University (PCU). I utilized purposeful sampling in the selection of HSU and PCU for this study. Creswell (2007), defined purposeful sampling as "selecting individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem" (p. 125). Patton (2002) explained that criterion sampling is one goal of purposeful sampling. Criterion sampling refers to locating participants based on a set of pre-determined criteria. Sampling for variation has to do with selecting samples that vary along a particular dimension. With regard to criteria, I selected institutions that have (1) some structural diversity to

maximize the likelihood that CRIs to occur frequently on each campus and (2) a substantial number of Asian American students on their campuses to ensure that I would be able to acquire a sufficient number of participants in each racial category. As will be discussed in greater detail below, approximately 39% of HSU students and 20% of PCU students are students of color. Additionally, both campuses have about 1,500 undergraduate Asian American students. Therefore, the campus environments at the two selected institutions provided rich contexts in which the CRIs of Asian American and White students could be explored.

Harbor State University

HSU is a major public research university located in an urban environment. The university serves a range of students, including traditional 18-22 year old and older adult learners. HSU has approximately 15,400 students, including 11,550 undergraduate students. The demographic diversity of HSU is significant with approximately 6,000 undergraduate students of color, 1,850 of whom identify as Asian/Pacific Islander. HSU additionally has nearly 5,000 White undergraduates. HSU is a commuter university, however 3,000 students live in private housing adjacent to campus. With more than 60 undergraduate degree programs, and more than 60 Master's and Doctoral degree programs, HSU is a comprehensive university with a clear focus on undergraduate students. The one-year retention rate, or the number of first-time first-year students who return after their first year is 70% (HSU, 2009). The disaggregated data by monoracial category for the one-year retention rate is 82.2 percent for Asian American and Pacific Islanders, 79.2 percent for Black non-Hispanic students, 62.8 percent for Hispanic

students, and 60% for White students. The six-year graduation rate of first-time freshmen is just 33% (HSU, 2009); a result that ranks HSU near the bottom of non-flagship, Public Doctoral/Research Universities. HSU's tuition is approximately $11,000 for 2 semesters of academic study.

I received approval to conduct the study at HSU through their Internal Review Board Office. I complied with all HSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures and policies. The IRB required all individuals intending to conduct human subject research to complete the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI), which is offered through the University of Miami. In accordance with the procedures and application details for expedited IRB approval, I followed all guidelines necessary for conducting this study.

Private Cooperative University

PCU is a private, selective, comprehensive research university with a total enrollment of approximately 21,000 students. With 15,500 undergraduate students, PCU focuses primarily on traditional 18-22 year old adults. The university draws students from across the US and roughly 10% of the freshman class is composed of international students. The Office of Institutional Research reports that 20% of undergraduates are students of color with approximately 1,580 Asian American students attending as full-time undergraduates compared with 11,074 White students. PCU's six-year graduation rate is 70% and most first-year students live in on-campus housing (PCU, 2009). With approximately 200 academic programs, PCU offers a range of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees. The cost for tuition for two full semesters is approximately $34,000, with $11,000 for room and board for two semesters.

In order to obtain approval to conduct interviews on the PCU campus, I worked with the IRB staff at PCU to obtain the permissions. PCU required me to first complete an online course "Protecting Human Research Participants." Given that I am a student at HSU and my dissertation advisor is not a PCU faculty member, PCU IRB staff required that I develop a relationship with a PCU faculty member who could sponsor my study on campus. In response to this request, I approached a faculty member who is the Dean of one of the colleges within PCU. He consented to sponsor my study on the PCU campus and I have provided regular updates for the Dean.

Pilot Study

Given the complexity of discussing CRI concepts with students, I conducted a pilot study prior to starting this study. During the pilot study, I interviewed two White and one Asian American PCU students utilizing a draft of my interview protocol. These three students were not included in the main sample of 25 students discussed above and analyzed in the remainder of this dissertation. Individual, 45-90-minute interviews were conducted during the course of one week and were followed by a discussion with the student about their experience during the interview. The pilot study afforded me an opportunity to refine my research questions. Based upon the pilot study, I submitted my revised interview protocol through both IRB offices and received amended approval to conduct the phenomenological study.

Participant Selection

Similar to the selection methods employed to choose the sites for this study, I also utilized purposeful sampling for participant selection. The two types of purposeful sampling that I utilized to select students were intensity (i.e., information richness) and variation (i.e., diversity in the sample) (Patton, 2002). Regarding intensity, I sought participants who had experiences with CRIs in general and purposeful CRIs in particular. With regard to variation, I sought students who spanned multiple racial groups. Due to limited time and resources, I was not possible to include all racial groups in this study. However, the inclusion of more than one racial group led to a richer understanding of how students experience this phenomenon as it was instructive to identify themes that were common among all participants and those that varied across racial groups.

As discussed in Chapter One, the rationale regarding the selection of Asian American students related to a paucity of research regarding the experiences of Asian Americans as well as their status as a quickly growing segment of college going populations. In addition, White students were additionally chosen for this study, because, while all students need to develop skills interacting across racial lines, research suggests that White students have the most to gain from CRIs (Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004) and the increasing demographic diversity on U.S. campuses continues to highlight that White students will need to enhance their skills related to interracial interactions within academic and professional settings. After conducting 10 interviews, I paused interview efforts and reviewed data. A number of themes that spanned across major racial categories and even across most interviews began to emerge. I conducted additional interviews and created rich and complex data regarding themes related to how students

experienced the CRC, their own racial identity and pre-college CRIs. After reaching

saturation, which Creswell defined as continuing to collect data until "no more can be

found," I continued to interview students and found little additional categories (p. 56).

Recruitment Procedures

After receiving the support of the HSU IRB office, I began working with

gatekeepers at each university to identify participants. I intended to work with two

gatekeepers at HSU, but a key faculty member was on sabbatical during the timeframe of

my data collection. Instead, I worked extensively with a staff member in the Office of

Student Life and worked with an alternative staff member who was also well-connected

to the Asian American community at HSU. Similarly, after receiving approval from the

IRB office at PCU, I began working with gatekeepers who were well connected with

potential participants for this study. One gatekeeper was intimately involved with Asian

American student groups on campus and the second gatekeeper worked in the Student

Life Office where she, among other responsibilities, managed various co-curricular

leadership and diversity dialogue groups.

I contacted all four gatekeepers and asked for recommendations regarding

participants who had the necessary set of CRI experiences. In order to help gatekeepers

select participants who had experienced purposeful CRIs, I met with each gatekeeper to

review the purpose of study and encouraged gatekeepers to identify students who have

experienced numerous CRIs while in college and attended K-12 in the U.S. as well.

Subsequently, gatekeepers emailed potential participants to give them some of my

background and make them aware that the gatekeeper recommended them for this study.

One gatekeeper at HSU was unable to assist me with the study as he was on sabbatical during my data collection. Instead, I contacted a strong alternative gatekeeper who was more than willing to connect me with appropriate participants After the initial contact from gatekeepers, I sent a follow-up email to participants, which often received a quick and positive response, to schedule days and times to conduct the interviews.

Participant Sample

With 14 HSU and 11 PCU students, a total of 25 students participated in this study. I initially hoped to interview a total of 20 students including five White and five Asian American students from each campus. Given the strong response rate from initial contact, I was able to interview more students than I initially planned. While some interviews were particularly strong, two participants had difficulty reflecting on their CRI experiences in ways that were useful for this study. Therefore, my ability to oversample compensated for the two interviews that provided little useful data. As Table 2 below indicates, the sample of Asian American students was heterogeneous in the sense that six ethnic groups were represented in this study. Approximately one third of the participants were Chinese American and one-quarter of participants were Pilipino.

Table 2. Asian American Participants by Ethnicity and Campus

Asian American Participants	PCU	HSU
Cambodian American	0	1
Chinese American	3	2
Indian American	2	0
Korean American	1	0
Pilipino American	2	2
Vietnamese American	0	1
Total	8	6

Only two White participants, both at PCU, spoke about their ethnic backgrounds with one student describing himself as Irish American and one student describing herself as Lithuanian American.

Interview Procedures

At the beginning of each interview, I disclosed some of my personal and professional background and discussed the purposes of the study, as well as provided an overview of the informed consent form. Interviews took place primarily in quiet conference rooms or classrooms on either of the campuses. The interview protocol is included in Appendix A. As an icebreaker, I first spoke with students about their involvement on campus. This gave me a better sense of the environments in which they spent their time on campus and provided a low intensity way to start the interview. Student descriptions of their involvement on campus also allowed time for them to adjust to the format of the interview and diminish some of the nervousness they may have been experiencing. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked to complete a demographic survey. Finally, each participant was given a copy of the consent form and a $20 gift card to the campus bookstore.

Following the interview, I wrote a detailed description of the information that students shared regarding their CRI experiences. This often began with a description of their pre-college CRIs and often ended with a summary of how they spoke about their racial identity. Each interview memo was approximately one to two single-spaced pages in length. Following the interviews, all but two students received interview memos describing the information that they shared during the interview. Of the 23 students who

received an interview memo, seven responded. All seven respondents wrote brief emails thanking me for the opportunity to talk and confirming that the memos accurately represented their comments and experiences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the first interview. As interviews took place, I began reviewing transcripts of previous interviews and identifying each discrete theme within each transcript. Consistent with this approach, Moustakas (1995) noted that all themes within each single transcript should first be identified. Next, Moustakas recommended that broad themes that were common across numerous transcripts should be identified. Finally, Moustakas noted, the broad themes and phrases should be clustered into "meaning units" (p. 118). To assist in this process, I loaded verbatim transcriptions of the interviews into NVivo 9, a software package recognized as a leading tool in the organization and analysis of qualitative data. The software allowed me to track each smaller theme within each transcript and, eventually, I was able to cluster similar student sentiments, concepts and observations into "meaning units" (p. 118).

My method for analyzing transcripts involved a thorough reading of the transcript followed by a detailed within-transcript process of coding each smaller theme (Moustakas, 1995). During this process, I began to combine similar smaller themes into broader themes. For example, I first identified smaller themes within individual interview transcripts, such as "self-confidence," then identified it as a broader theme across transcripts. I returned to the transcripts to re-read these sections of student responses and, if appropriate, re-coded some passages under new coding titles. I subsequently organized

data analysis around these larger umbrella categories. During this process of coding and re-coding, every relevant student quotation was tracked and linked within NVIVO to the particular appropriate concept(s). After the transcripts were analyzed and coded, ten themes were identified. These ten themes were then organized into four even larger clusters or meaning units.

Trustworthiness

An important component of any qualitative study is trustworthiness, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined as the "credibility," "authenticity," "confirmability," and "transferability" of qualitative findings (p. 125). To ensure trustworthiness, Creswell (2007) recommended that (1) researchers allow participants to reflect on initial findings as a means of ensuring that their sentiments and conclusions make sense to participants (i.e., conduct member-checks), (2) peers review the research during data analysis and afterwards, (3) researchers surface any potential biases related to the study. In the following section, I review my efforts to ensure that the findings of this study resonated with participants and represented their experiences with purposeful CRIs accurately.

In many ways, trustworthiness is an on-going process from the first conceptualization of the study to data collection and analysis. Throughout this process, I have made my best efforts to share my own reasons for conducting this study as well as establish a peer review process that will enhance my own analysis of the data. My first attempt at sharing my own passions and interests related to this study will follow shortly as I explore my own connection to this research.

Regarding member-checks, I have engaged in a multi-step process. First, I reviewed my impressions of how each student experienced interracial interactions by sharing a one to two page document with each participant. This document provided a summary of basic demographic information, pre-college CRI experiences, impressions of the campus racial climate, among other details. While many students did not respond to this analysis, seven did communicate their approval of this analysis.

After a painstaking review of all of the individual concepts and broad themes that emerged from first individual and then multiple transcripts, I established an outline of the major themes in this study. I then reviewed the outline of the findings themes with my dissertation chair who provided feedback. I then provided an extensive narrative format of the themes to my advisory board members. Subsequently, I received feedback from advisory board members in the form of hardcopy, electronic notes and in-person meetings. In particular, quotations from students were discussed to ensure that the themes I proposed accurately portrayed participants' sentiments. Advisory board members were individuals who cared about the cultivation of CRIs on the HSU and PCU campuses. As individuals engaged in this work, they had important insights regarding interracial interactions. Their review of the findings of this study, as well as their constructive feedback, strengthened my confidence in the accurate portrayal of how participants in this study experience cross-racial interactions.

Finally, to explore my relationship to the research, I discuss my own CRI experiences that occurred in both pre-college and college environments. Consistent with assertions from Finlay (2009), the goal of my reflexivity statement is to clearly share my

own biases related to the research question as well as highlight how my familiarity with CRIs may shape this study.

Reflexivity Statement

In the words of Madison (1982) who provided a detailed exploration of the phenomenological ideas of Merleau-Ponty, "the spectator is himself a part of the spectacle" (p. 147). In this spirit, I am clearly part of the phenomenon that I am exploring and my connection to this research is deep and personal. Please indulge the disclosures contained in this section, as I do believe they are pertinent to this study and important for me to consider when engaging in qualitative research regarding CRIs. This section represents my current thinking about my deliberate and highly personal path to and connection with this research topic.

Growing-up in Sturbridge, a small town in central Massachusetts, I was surrounded by a homogenous community composed of mostly White people. Sturbridge's central feature is an historic colonial New England style town common, and an open-air museum featuring dozens of homes dating to the 18th century, which attracts thousands of tourists every year. Sturbridge is an affluent, mostly close-knit community, has a strong school system, predominantly liberal attitudes, and most of my extended family still live there. I enjoy going home every couple of weeks to spend time with family, laugh, and hear the latest news.

I am very grateful for all of the sacrifices that my parents and extended family have made as those sacrifices have given me opportunities beyond those other people in my family have enjoyed. Despite these great opportunities, and related to my interest in

this study, I am often struck by how deeply ingrained in my personal psyche are messages regarding the superiority of White people. I sometimes wonder how these messages could be so deeply ingrained in my own thinking regarding race. As a young man, the explicit and implicit messages I received from community members and even family members regarding race conveyed that White people were hard-working, trustworthy, and law-abiding. In contrast, I was constantly bombarded with negative messages about people of color. A neighboring town had a large Puerto Rican community and the negative comments I heard from family, community leaders, and others conveyed that people of color were lazy, untrustworthy, and inferior in every way. As a high school student, these messages became ingrained in my own opinions about people of color in general.

In school, I clearly remember my U.S. history class, which was a required course for juniors. Mr. Ely taught the class, and his particularly intimidating style combined rants and racist comments in a toxic mixture that frequently left me shaking and red-faced. The degree of freedom that Mr. Ely exercised in sharing his racist views communicated to me that not only did my peers and teachers hold these opinions, but that the high school leadership itself explicitly agreed with these opinions. Mr. Ely regularly instructed the class to skip sections in our textbooks on the African American experience in the United States by saying "I don't mean to poo poo the Blacks, but they are irrelevant to this part of U.S. history." Mr. Ely mentioned that Blacks were added to the textbook for reasons of political correctness. The day before my advanced placement test in U.S. history, Mr. Ely provided a short cram-session regarding what we needed to know about Blacks to do well on the test. I scored in the 98th percentile on the test.

Members of my extended family, peers, and community leaders commonly expressed many of these same sentiments regarding the low value of people of color and these experiences shaped my own racist attitudes. Unfortunately, this very salient memory is only one of many high school experiences that I could describe. I think it is important to disclose that, while I knew that these attitudes were unethical and wrong, I simply did not overtly challenge them. Instead, I implicitly shared those beliefs during my high school years.

During my undergraduate and graduate work, I was constantly challenged by key faculty and peers to critically reflect on my racist beliefs. As an aside, I believe that most people associate the concept of White supremacist beliefs with extremist groups. Based upon my own experiences, I believe that most White people harbor White supremacist beliefs. Rather than being the domain of a small subset of radical Whites, I simply believe that Whites can only move beyond these beliefs by systematically reflecting on those beliefs and challenging themselves to be better people. Despite the critiques of Helms' (1984) model of White Racial Identity Development, I do clearly see my own path of identity development represented well by her theory. My own racial identity development is characterized by a pre-encounter phase and subsequent phases described by Helms. These phases reflect times in my life when I avoided relationships with people of color and later phases where I sought out and welcomed those relationships.

Throughout my own racial identity development, I believe my multiple identities created dissonance and facilitated growth in my understanding of racism. Specifically, my experiences with marginalization as a gay, White male provided a great deal of dissonance. While heterosexism – a system of power and privilege that is conferred to

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heterosexuals and serves to oppress homosexual people in society (Chesir-Teran &
Hughes, 2009) – is very different from racism, as a White gay male, I am constantly
affected by negative messages about gay people. This marginalization, I believe, has
provided a window for me into what oppression may feel like for people of color. Again,
I emphasize that racism and heterosexism are very different, but my own personal
experiences with being marginalized have sensitized me to the toxic nature of racism.
Consequently, I have used my own marginalization to disrupt my own prejudicial
attitudes and actions that might marginalize others.

As I reflect on my own path to where I am today, I have to say that I believe the
racial climates within which I have lived, the interventions of faculty and community
members, my own RID, and my varying reactions to opportunities for CRIs are
intricately linked. It is important, therefore, to surface these assumptions and realize that
my experience is not the same for the Asian American and White students who
participated in this study. The intensity of my own personal connection to this research
emphasizes the importance of providing strong trustworthiness measures in this study
including the incorporation of an advisory board, member-checks, and my partnership
with my dissertation committee. These steps served as constant reminders that, while my
own experience may be shared by some, it is more important to focus on, and explore the
CRI experiences of my participants.

As has been noted, I will be engaged in interviews with White participants with
whom I share a similar racial background, as well as with participants who are Asian
American. In this sense, I will either be conducting interviews with same-race or different
race partners. Foldy (2005) noted that the racial identity of a researcher "reverberates

through the research process" (p. 33). Foldy, a White researcher herself, observed that some critics could think that it is "presumptuous" of a White researcher "to write about the experiences of others from backgrounds and cultures that the researcher knows little about" (p. 36). Foldy continued by pointing out that concurrent with this criticism is the idea that genuine CRIs are not possible. Certainly this is a contentious point and one that deserves exploration; however, I can take steps to prepare for cross-racial interviews. Those steps include conducting research on the literature about Asian American students, reflecting on my own identity, and establishing an interview style that balances a need to demonstrate culture sensitivity and knowledge of the experiences of Asian American college students with the need to not lead Asian American students towards particular answers. Essentially, Foldy suggested that White researchers conducting interviews with people of color must establish that they can be trusted with sensitive information. To do this, Foldy further suggested that a White interviewer might need to share, where opportunities appear, information that communicates that they are knowledgeable about the experiences of people of color.

Specifically, Foldy (2005) shared excerpts from her study, which included cross-racial interviews with dozens of participants. During one conversation with an African American woman, Foldy discussed the racial climate in Boston, Massachusetts and added her own knowledge that many African American people find Boston's racial climate to be more challenging than the climates of other cities. This comment affirmed the participant's initial statement, seemed to demonstrate that Foldy had knowledge of the racial climate in Boston for African Americans, and appeared to build trust and rapport between herself and her participant.

Foldy asserted that it is important to provide some verbal or non-verbal cues, particularly during cross-racial interviews, that the researcher is both knowledgeable and trustworthy about the topic. In this study, it has been important for me to establish rapport with both Asian American and White participants. This was attempted through a range of thoughtful responses throughout interviews designed to demonstrate competence with the information being shared, but also in a manner that did not steer a participant in a certain direction.

Limitations

Merriam and Associates (2002) noted that the purpose of phenomenological study is "to describe and uncover the structures of personal meaning" for participants (p. 136). While it is my hope and belief that findings related to this study will be helpful for campus leaders interested in cultivating CRIs among college students, I am also aware that numerous limitations exist. In the following section, I will outline the primary limitations of this study and make brief comments about those limitations.

Limited transferability is one important limitation of this inquiry. The findings presented in this study are based upon 25 interviews with students on two campuses within two racial groups and eight ethnic groups. Therefore, what may be relevant to the participants in this study might not be transferable to other HSU or PCU students. The findings might also not be transferable to other racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, what resonates with participants in this study may not be applicable to other college campuses. Therefore, the findings in this study represent how participants in this study experienced purposeful CRIs and the transferability of the findings is limited.

Selection bias constitutes a second limitation of the study. The selection of students for this study, as has been noted, was accomplished through a partnership with gatekeepers. Those gatekeepers are faculty and staff who engage in purposeful CRIs and participants in this study were likely to represent a unique sample. Essentially, students in this study were more active in co-curricular activities than their peers. This is obvious given the types of experiences they mentioned during interviews including their participation in programs, initiatives, leadership opportunities that the gatekeepers themselves developed. In this sense, the sample for this study may, in fact, be a self-selected sample of relatively engaged students. This may, therefore, limit the transferability of the findings of this study to other HSU or PCU students.

Researcher bias is a third limitation of the study. Through my reflexive statement, I endeavored to surface my connections and biases related to the research. While I do not pretend to be objective, researcher bias is an integral part of phenomenological research. Despite this limitation, I have focused on telling the participants' story related to their experience with CRIs. Telling their story necessitated my own awareness of what I wanted them to say or how I reacted to aspects of their story that made me uncomfortable. For example, when an Asian American participant disparaged Whites as hollow and lacking a culture, I emotionally winced at the comment. It was important that I tell that student's story as she understood it and, in the process, I was able to develop linkages between her reactions to CRI opportunities and her prior experiences with prejudice from White peers. Of course, phenomenology necessitates the researcher-participant dynamic and my awareness of this relationship, and my role within the relationship, has hopefully allowed me to transparently tell participants' story.

A fourth limitation of this study is the limited timeframe of the study, which prohibited the examination of sustained CRIs. Indeed, data collection for this study occurred within the span of one semester. Students were interviewed and their reactions, information, stories and aspirations related to CRIs represent a snapshot of their interracial experiences with peers in college. In Chapter One, I shared that sustained CRIs were particularly powerful because sustained CRIs were interracial interactions that occurred over the course of a semester. Prolonged interracial interactions represent the best types of interaction opportunities, because they are more likely to lead to enhanced learning outcomes (Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; Gurin, Nagda, and Lopez, 2004). This study was not a longitudinal study and therefore could not take advantage of opportunities to explore how sustained CRI opportunities might enhance CRI related learning outcomes.

The reliance on self-reported experiences and viewpoints is a final limitation of the study. In conducting this study, I was constantly talking about race in same-race dyads or different-race dyads. White participants may have sought to portray themselves as more accepting and knowledgeable than they might otherwise have been. Asian American participants may have submerged experiences with prejudice from White peers, faculty, or staff. They may have avoided some conversations because they were unsure of how I would react to criticisms of White people. Essentially, the race dynamic within interviews must be calculated into the findings. However, it is difficult to measure my ability to build rapport with students in ways that allowed them to genuinely portray their experiences with interracial interactions. Despite these limitations, I have attempted to tell the stories of participants with maximum accuracy to inform the work of campus

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leaders, who will find these findings relevant to their work as they develop ways to more

purposefully cultivate interracial interactions among students.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

In the next three chapters, I present the findings of this study. Rather than incorporating all of the findings into one chapter, I have organized each separate findings chapter around a specific theme. In Chapter Four, I explore the types of cross-racial interactions (CRIs) in which students described engaging on campus. In Chapter Five, I discuss the factors that shaped students' CRIs in college. Subsequently, in Chapter Six, I detail what students identified as the learning outcomes associated with interracial interactions. Throughout these three chapters, I aim to accurately share the thoughts, beliefs, and intentions of participants. Then, I discuss those findings in the context of relevant literature in Chapter Eight. Finally, in Chapter Nine, I present the implications of this study for higher education researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

Cross-Racial Interaction Environments

As I explained in Chapter Two's review of relevant literature, I anticipated that there would be a range of purposeful and non-purposeful interactions occurring within curricular and co-curricular campus environments. Table 3 provides a useful reminder of those venues. In preparing for this study, I assumed that CRIs would occur either as

happenstance between students (non-purposeful) or through the intentional efforts of a

staff or faculty member (purposeful) concerned with creating CRI opportunities. While I

did hear from students regarding those two expected types of CRIs, an additional

category emerged from the interviews. More specifically, there were four students in this

study who were passionate about environments in which students from diverse

backgrounds interacted. These four student leaders often purposefully developed co-

curricular CRI opportunities. Therefore, in Table 3, I have added *student-led* to the CRI

Typology table first presented in Chapter Two. In Chapter Seven, I further discuss these

unique student leaders, their efforts, and their potential to partner with staff and faculty to

improve campus environments.

Table 3. Cross-Racial Interaction Typology		
	Purposeful CRIs	**Non-purposeful CRIs**
Curricular	Educator initiated student CRIs within the classroom and/or other credit-bearing experiences (e.g. presentation groups purposefully arranged to maximize the demographics of each group).	Random or unplanned CRI opportunities within the classroom and/or other credit-bearing experiences (e.g. CRIs among students who sit near each other in class).
Co-curricular	Educator initiated student CRIs among individual students or diverse student organizations (e. g. diversity dialogue groups, cross-racial leadership retreats, funding provided to encourage collaboration among specific racial groups).	Random or unplanned CRI opportunities that occur among individual students or diverse student organizations (e.g. CRIs that might occur through participation in a club, activity, study space, shuttle bus or other co-curricular forum).
Co-curricular Student-led	Student leader initiated CRIs among individual students or student organizations including lecture series, diversity celebrations or other social or educational events (e.g. programs, events, conferences, workshops or retreats that student leaders develop in an effort to help their peers of different racial background interact).	N/A

As Table 3 above details, there are five environments in which students in this

study experienced interracial interactions including purposeful and non-purposeful

curricular CRIs, purposeful and non-purposeful *co-curricular* CRIs and purposeful *co-

curricular student-led* CRIs. I begin the discussion of the campus environments where

participants experienced CRIs by exploring those CRIs that occurred within the

classroom environments, or purposeful and non-purposeful *curricular* interracial interactions, on both the Harbor State University (HSU) and Private Cooperative University (PCU) campuses. Second, I will share how students experienced purposeful and non-purposeful CRIs that occurred outside of the classroom within the co-curricular environment on campus, which were the primary ways that students interacted across racial boundaries on both campuses.

Curricular Cross-Racial Interactions

Participants did not experience curricular CRIs frequently. In fact, only two HSU students described curricular CRIs. As you will recall, curricular CRIs are those interracial interactions that occur within the classroom environment. As Table 3 detailed, there are two types of curricular CRIs including purposeful and non-purposeful curricular CRIs. Purposeful curricular CRIs are those interactions that a faculty member deliberately cultivates within the classroom environment, for example, through a faculty-initiated pedagogy designed to create racially diverse presentation groups, lab partners, study groups, or other working groups. Non-purposeful curricular CRIs are those interactions that occur as a result of simply interacting with diverse peers during a class. These interactions could occur simply by happenstance. For example, a non-purposeful curricular CRI may occur in a classroom in which students of different racial backgrounds happen to be seated next to each other. They may discuss a project or even decide to study together. A non-purposeful curricular CRI occurs within a classroom environment without the intervention of faculty. As noted in the literature review, most curricular CRIs are non-purposeful in nature (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Purposeful Curricular Cross-Racial Interactions. Among 25 participants, only Lisa and Edward, both from HSU, recalled purposeful curricular CRIs. Lisa, a White HSU student, believed that her faculty did try to facilitate CRIs:

> My professors usually try to mix up the groups so that not everyone would be flocking to what they were comfortable with, if they were uncomfortable to begin with. I know that whenever we would do group work, they would try to split us all up, because they wouldn't want a whole group of white kids like the white kids would usually do. So they would put us all with different races so we could all get different backgrounds in the project.

As her comment illustrates, Lisa felt that interracial interactions happened in some of her classes, because faculty were cognizant that some students avoided interactions with students they did not know. She felt that some of her faculty purposefully structured the classroom environment in ways that facilitated CRIs.

The only other student who reported experiencing purposeful curricular CRIs was Edward, an Asian American HSU student:

> Faculty in the Asian American Program do help students interact and most other classes don't … The Asian American Program teachers have class in a circle format, not rows. We break up by number, and the faculty are intentionally random. Outside of those, classes are often lecture style.

In fact, Edward reported having many purposeful CRIs during his Asian American Studies courses. He recalled that faculty often required students to sit in a circle and assigned group projects through the use of randomized teams. This enhanced the likelihood that students would interact with a variety of other students rather than only

with their close friends who might also be taking the course. By contrast, Edward mentioned that most of the rest of his Business and Mathematics courses were lecture-based and that he had few CRIs in those classes. Clearly, Edward appreciated the CRI opportunities that occurred during his Asian American Studies courses, but he also recognized that these were largely limited to those courses.

Although I conducted 25 interviews with students, no PCU students and only two HSU students felt that faculty purposefully developed curricular CRI opportunities. Instead, some students mentioned that faculty brought issues of diversity into the curriculum through assignments and projects, which then promoted diversity discussions during class. Sarah, a White PCU student shared that a project in her history course was helpful in generating conversations:

> In my history writing class, we actually did it on the Civil Rights movement, so we definitely worked on diversity a lot there in just learning about the struggles of others. We did have a research project, and everyone kind of picked their topics, and so we discussed them definitely. I think the main sentiment that people had in terms of the Civil Rights movement was that they just couldn't believe that such gross injustices people were getting away with. Like, we would read letters from the Army after World War II or just different memos and we were like, "people actually thought this and were okay with this?" It was so strange.

Despite Sarah's positive experience with a diversity-related topic in her U.S. history classroom, she felt that the conversation was not as vibrant due to the paucity of students of color in her major. Essentially, discussions about the history of discrimination in the

U.S. were productive but could have been more vibrant if the classroom environment were not composed of all White students.

Similarly, Leslie, an Asian American PCU student majoring in Health Sciences, mentioned that her major was not particularly diverse. She felt that there was a mix of White and Asian American students, but she said there were very few Latino, African American, international or other students in her classes. She noted that faculty rarely structured classes that would encourage CRIs between herself and her Asian American peers:

> My faculty would never be like, "Let's have a diversity topic." Our curriculum is very set, so we don't have any opportunity. And because our curriculum is so set, we don't have any leeway to do anything else. So in that aspect faculty wise, I would say there is zero.

Despite some racial diversity on campus, Leslie felt that she really did not engage with topics related to race and ethnicity either through her curriculum or through her classroom interactions -something that is particularly surprising given how a patient's race or ethnicity can help to shape some health outcomes. Similarly, Nate, a White PCU student, commented on the lack of diversity within his classroom environments:

> A lot of my classes in psychology are not very diverse at all. I was a little surprised in that the university talks about diversity and I went to a very urbanized school (high school), so to me that is diverse. So coming here, I was kind of surprised by it and taken aback.

Nate observed that students in both his major and minor were predominantly White. As a result, Nate thought that students of color might have been concentrated within certain

majors and, consequently, limited structural opportunities for purposeful curricular CRIs existed.

Similarly, Ilona, a White student attending PCU, stated she often participated in conversations in which some of her White peers made comments that were offensive:

The most interesting conversations I had was actually a Human Resource class, I think. It is the fact that it is amazing to see the type of people that don't know anything outside of their bubble. So those were kind of more heated arguments just because, when you bring the concept of race and people will be like, "You know, if I walk past Kennedy Avenue, I'm not racist or anything, but I see a Black person and I try to speed up or whatever." So, I think those kinds of conversations. Also, just the fact that there is not so much diversity within classes, too. It seems like we are targeting certain individuals, and how would those people feel in class?

Not only did Ilona identify that her classes had little diversity, but she also mentioned that discussions of race and diversity were difficult, particularly for the few students of color present in the classroom. She felt that the lack of racial diversity in her classes led many of her peers to have less complex impressions of the world around them. She mentioned that they simply were living in "their bubbles" in ways that left them ignorant of the experiences of others.

As the student comments above indicated, participants in this study experienced few purposeful curricular CRIs. In fact, only two HSU students described purposeful curricular CRIs, and no PCU students described purposeful curricular CRIs on their campus. Therefore, purposeful curricular CRIs were the least cited type of CRI among

participants in this study. As will be discussed in some detail in Chapter Eight, this paucity of purposeful curricular CRIs represents a missed opportunity even on campuses that possess a great deal of racial diversity.

Non-Purposeful Curricular Cross-Racial Interactions. Non-purposeful curricular CRIs were somewhat more common than purposeful curricular CRIs. As you may recall, non-purposeful curricular CRIs are those interracial interactions that occur within a classroom environment through happenstance and not as the result of a faculty member's directed efforts.

Kara, an Asian American student at HSU, noted that she experienced non-purposeful curricular CRIs quite frequently. Like many of her HSU classmates, she said, "It is just like every single classroom has so much diversity, so I don't think you could avoid it necessarily." For Kara, the heterogeneous demographic environment in her classes created frequent opportunities for non-purposeful curricular CRIs.

Similarly, Paula, a White HSU student majoring in Women's Studies, noted that the racial diversity in her classes augmented her learning, even when interactions were not purposefully structured by faculty members. She felt that non-purposeful curricular CRIs were quite common and that simply sharing opinions about important feminist themes was instructive:

> One thing that I've learned that in terms of my classes, and when they have you look back at things, I didn't probably notice racial differences until high school and that was very different for many of my classmates. There is usually a huge divide between the White female feminist issues, the Black female feminist issues, and the Asian American female feminist issues. So, I definitely notice it in

terms of those conversations. Where I say something and I think that must apply

to everyone, and then you find out that it doesn't apply. So, just hearing the

diverse opinions on feminist issues is helpful in class.

Given the racial diversity in Paula's classes, she felt that simple conversations created

important CRIs in which she learned from her peers of different racial backgrounds. She

felt it was common to have non-purposeful curricular interracial interactions with peers.

Like Paula, Terri, an Asian American student at HSU, felt that the opportunity to engage

in interracial interactions was part of her daily life. She mentioned that she felt

"surrounded by diversity every day on campus."

Victor, a White student at PCU, recalled a non-purposeful classroom interracial

interaction that he had with several peers:

In the social movements class, there was one or two girls in a study group we had

to do. It was me, this one girl (who I think she might have been African American

or Caribbean, I never asked), and there was another girl that was White (but I

think she was maybe Spanish, because she spoke Spanish pretty well), and then

there was this other kid who was White.

Victor felt that his small working group, which had two students of color, was not

purposefully assigned. Rather, he simply formed the group because he happened to be

sitting near those peers when the small group work was introduced in the course.

Institutional Differences. Interviews revealed important purposeful and non-

purposeful curricular differences between the HSU and PCU campuses. While only two

HSU students and no PCU students mentioned purposeful curricular CRIs, HSU students

frequently mentioned non-purposeful curricular CRIs. However, only a few PCU students

described non-purposeful curricular CRIs. More plainly put, purposeful curricular CRIs were rare among all participants in this study, while only HSU participants frequently discussed non-purposeful curricular CRIs. PCU participants rarely mentioned curricular CRIs of any type.

When asked about the paucity of curricular CRIs at their institution, several PCU students noted that their majors were overwhelmingly White. Some White PCU students felt that they simply could not interact purposefully or non-purposefully with students of color during classes because there were too few students of color in their classes. Thus, non-purposeful curricular CRIs were not likely to occur for PCU participants due to the homogeneity of many academic departments and classroom environments. Illustrating this perspective, Timothy, a White PCU student, mentioned that he had very few purposeful or non-purposeful CRIs within the classroom:

Very few. There are like five or six [students of color] in my entire program of 120 students. It has never really been a big deal though. You just never really– we don't think about it, I guess. In class, I would say, not really. Like it never really happens there.

For Timothy, and a number of other PCU students in this study, curricular CRIs, purposeful or non-purposeful, were rare. More importantly, Timothy felt that the lack of diversity in his classroom was accepted as normal within the PCU environment.

HSU students experienced non-purposeful curricular CRIs a bit differently. HSU has more structural racial diversity on campus. For this reason, it is more common for classes to be racially heterogeneous across a range of majors. As noted above, a number

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of Asian American and White HSU participants felt that non-purposeful curricular interactions with students of different racial backgrounds were common.

Co-Curricular Cross-Racial Interactions

As stated, co-curricular CRIs are those interracial interactions that occur outside the classroom environment. Additionally, a purposeful co-curricular CRI is a student interracial interaction that a faculty or staff member structured in some way outside the classroom. These types of CRIs often occur within leadership programs, diversity discussion groups, student diversity retreats, campus social and educational workshops, as well as through festivals and other social activities purposefully designed by faculty or staff to bring students of different racial or ethnic backgrounds together. A non-purposeful co-curricular CRI might be an interaction between students of different racial backgrounds occurring within an unstructured, non-classroom environment. For example, non-purposeful co-curricular CRIs could occur during a concert, campus shuttle ride, or even in study spaces where students of different racial backgrounds might share a table.

Purposeful Co-Curricular Cross-Racial Interactions

A number of students recalled interactions that they had as the result of the interventions of faculty and staff. These interventions were developed purposefully with student interracial interactions in mind. Often, purposeful co-curricular CRIs were the result of student affairs staff initiatives designed to bring diverse groups of students together around a particular goal. Within the context of this study, those initiatives primarily took the form of a diversity dialogue group, a cross-cultural student leadership

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retreat, as well as various opportunities for students to participate in programs designed to enhance their leadership skills and explore their multiple identities. The PCU cross-cultural leadership retreat was particularly interesting, because it was noted by many Asian American participants in this study as helping them interact with their peers of color. As salient as the retreat was for Asian American participants in this study, it is important to remember that the retreat was a new addition to the co-curriculum in the spring of 2011. Therefore, the lasting impact of the retreat remains to be seen.

Kevin, an Asian American PCU student, mentioned that a recent leadership retreat brought together many of the student officers from the cultural centers on campus:

> I don't think PCU has ever combined all the colors -Latino, all the Blacks, all the Asian Americans –and, encouraged them to collaborate with each other. I thought that was great. I've been on Pan-Asian American Council for the last year so – they really encourage collaboration. Like, last year, before the school year even started, the co-chairs kind of paired up all the groups and suggested that everyone collaborate on an event. And then every other Tuesday we have meetings where we just talk about some topic that brings everyone together and have a discussion. It brings everyone's ideas together.

Kevin asserted that the leadership retreat he attended was a unique opportunity to interact with other leaders from the cultural centers on campus. The cultural centers included the African American Center, Latino/a Cultural Center and the Asian American Center. Kevin also mentioned that all of the Asian American ethnic clubs collaborated regularly. Those collaborations included topic-based discussions particularly relevant to Asian American college students and, leadership retreats, as well as efforts to coordinate the

activities of the multiple Asian American ethnic groups on campus. Many of the students recognized that the planning largely occurred as the result of the efforts of key staff members, but the students readily welcomed these initiatives.

Regarding the cross-cultural leadership retreat for students from the campus cultural centers, Mia, an Asian American PCU student, felt it had an important impact on her activities:

All the cultural student groups have this retreat. I participated in that. And then came this year as well, which celebrates multicultural diversity. It was different because I knew that PCU really had students who were biracial and had parents that were African American and Spanish together, like the combination, and not just one single background, which is cool to see. I feel like we were always in a homogenous mix, like Asians from this place and Asians from that place. I definitely want to branch out more this year.

Mia was clearly enthusiastic about the retreat and felt that it had a lasting impact on how she viewed her work as a student leader. Specifically, it helped Mia think more broadly about planning social and academic events with a broader range of student groups, including Latino/a and African American student groups. When specifically asked what she thought was the lasting impact of the leadership retreat, Mia said:

I still talk to a lot of people that I was on the retreat with, which I didn't think was going to happen. But the environment was so like that that you were bound to know somebody else. Like, it was a conversation that you would have with somebody who was your friend for like ten years. These are like deep conversations that you are having regarding your racial and ethnic backgrounds.

So when I left the group, I didn't feel like they were [just] my friends anymore, they were like more than a friend, like close friends that I could share anything with, and that was really good.

Mia mentioned that, as a result of the retreat, she had begun reaching out to the leaders of other racial groups in an effort to collaborate on future events. As discussed in Chapter Two, the research regarding in-group orientation of students clarifies that it is often difficult for students to initiate intergroup interactions. I expand on this point in Chapter Eight, however, it is important to note that the purposeful planning and efforts of student affairs staff members developed the cross-cultural leadership retreat and the retreat positively enhanced Mia's ability to engage in intergroup contact.

Cheryl, an Asian American PCU student who attended the leadership retreat, felt similarly:

Student leaders are so focused on their own respective groups that they don't really branch out much cross-culturally or cross-racially. Asian American students know the Asian American students. Outside of what you know personally, outside of your personal friends, there is not a lot of mingling going on. So what the leadership retreat did was brought all of those other minority groups together under one roof, all student leaders, under one roof, and you get to see who they are finally. You get to finally meet their advisors, whereas I didn't know anyone until the retreat. So I think it would be really good. It's a stepping-stone, pretty much. There were presentations and workshops. A lot of icebreakers and group activities. They made sure to split everyone up. There were sessions on self-identity, community at large, and community on campus. The self-identity one

was narrow focuses. Like, what do you identify yourself as? Are you Asian? How old are you? Stuff like that.

The pan-Asian American student retreats and collaborations as well as the larger cross-cultural leadership retreat, provided powerful experiences for students. Importantly, these purposeful co-curricular interventions appeared to set the expectation that students should collaborate cross-racially with one another as well as to build a sense that, as leaders in the PCU cultural centers, they had a number of experiences in common.

Sarah, a White PCU student, felt similarly about a diversity dialogue group that she joined:

That was really interesting because there were a lot of different – people with different cultures. And it was mostly just talking about different issues, either social or sometimes it got into a little bit of the political, and just seeing where different people come from. We had a couple of people that were from China and so when we talked about some of the social issues and just ways that people act in public, they were like, "Oh, no, we don't do this, we do this instead." It was just really interesting to learn and see how stuff is. How different people perceive even small things.

For Sarah, the dialogue group offered her an opportunity to engage with peers who had very different experiences from her own. Sarah's participation in the group also built a sense of common ground:

I love learning about other cultures and hearing different experiences that other people have had, and just how different people can experience things differently. So I was really interested in it because you get to see how different people

interpret small events, and it just creates a kind of closeness because you realize,

even though you have all of these differences, you also have these things in

common. There are some people that grew up here, and some people are from

China, the West Coast, I was from the South.

As facilitators in the dialogue group brought topics up for consideration, Sarah enjoyed

hearing each person's different perspectives. As someone who attended a diverse high

school, but had not engaged in many CRIs in college, Sarah's participation in the

dialogue was very fulfilling.

With the exception of one or two participants, students at PCU reported having

frequent purposeful co-curricular CRIs. Essentially, PCU students predominantly

reported have CRIs during staff organized interactions that occurred outside the

classroom. Additionally, four students who experienced frequent purposeful co-curricular

CRIs proactively created their own opportunities for interaction. These students were

James, Ilona, Kevin, and Harrison. Their experiences were noteworthy, as they were able

to engage with peers in ways that did not require the intervention of a faculty or staff

member. As I will share later in this chapter, James, Ilona, Kevin and Harrison brought

some unique pre-college experiences with them to PCU. They were comfortable in

diverse environments and they appear to have specifically sought out environments that

were diverse. In this sense, they gravitated to interracial interactions.

Non-Purposeful Co-Curricular Cross-Racial Interactions

Non-purposeful co-curricular CRIs are those interracial interactions that take

place as the result of happenstance. In this sense, non-purposeful co-curricular

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interactions between students of different racial backgrounds might occur during study break events or career services workshops or other instances when racially diverse groups of students may have an interaction opportunity that is not specifically designed to encourage interracial interactions.

Lisa and Paula, both White students at HSU, discussed non-purposeful co-curricular CRIs as a significant source of interracial interactions. Lisa noted that their circle of friends in college was much more diverse compared to their high school friends:

At my work, two of my coworkers are African American–well, one is from Nigeria so she is just African. We also had a girl work here for a couple of weeks who is from India. So I definitely meet a lot of different people. In my group of friends, it is kind of funny because me and another one of my friends were like one of the only white people in our group. So it is different than my high school, there were four people of a different race, like everyone was White.

Through her on-campus work-study position as well as through social outlets, Lisa's circle of friends included many students of color as well as international students.

Similarly, Terri, an Asian American student at HSU, mentioned the wide array of diversity at her university:

The fact that we have nine permanent student centers over the campus center makes it even better. And not only are there centers dedicated to race, but they are dedicated to all different types of things. We have the LBGT Student Center, the Black Student Center, Casa Latina, Asian Student Center, and things like that, but they don't only accept specifically those ethnicities. They accept everybody, and that is what I feel makes it more culturally diverse in the environment, and it is

better here, the quality is better than, I would say, at any other college because seeing five or six Asian students walk through and all speaking a different language is normal to me. Or walking by somebody and hearing somebody with a Jamaican accent, Haitian accent, or speaking Creole or Patois? I love it and it is normal to me here. But again, if I was to hear that somewhere else, I'd be like, wait a minute, whoa.

For Terri, the wide array of diversity at HSU both attracted her to the university as well as allowed her to routinely engage in CRIs. Terri felt that most of her interracial interactions came through her work-study, student racial and ethnic oriented clubs, and other social outlets.

Institutional Differences in Non-Purposeful Co-Curricular Cross-Racial Interactions. Interactions occurring non-purposefully within the co-curriculum followed different patterns at PCU and HSU. Unlike their PCU peers, many HSU participants in this study felt that non-purposeful co-curricular CRIs were more common than purposeful co-curricular CRIs on their campus. That is, they felt that interracial interactions that happened in the course of their social lives on campus were much more common than co-curricular interactions that faculty or staff purposefully developed. Essentially, HSU students in this study, who generally were themselves very involved in the co-curriculum, recognized that the diverse campus environment provided many opportunities for students to interact with peers from many racial and nationality backgrounds. By contrast, PCU students, when specifically prompted to consider non-purposeful co-curricular opportunities for CRIs, frequently responded that they did not

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experience those interactions. Therefore, I have used quotations from HSU students to exemplify how students experienced non-purposeful co-curricular CRIs.

   Student-Led Purposeful Co-Curricular Cross-Racial Interactions. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, an additional category of CRIs emerged from discussions with students. In some ways it is obvious, however, I did not anticipate that "student-led CRIs," or those interracial interactions that student leaders purposefully generate, would be a salient category in this study. Student-led purposeful CRIs differ from non-purposeful CRIs because non-purposeful CRIs are those interracial interactions that occur without any individual or groups of individuals instigating them. During four interviews, it became clear that some students brought their propensity for interracial interactions to their social and leadership positions on campus. Several students spoke about how they worked, sometimes systematically, to bridge differences between racial groups and help them interact with one another.

   Kara, an Asian American student at HSU, mentioned frequently during the interview that she valued diversity and being exposed to many different types of people. This was a sentiment that other participants in the study shared. What set Kara and three other participants in this study apart was the extent to which they purposefully engaged in interracial interactions. Kara, for example, interacted with peers of many different racial backgrounds, but she went a step further by trying to create broader opportunities for her peers to engage with one another as well:

   I spearheaded a project, a cultural awareness week that we do on campus. It is in

   November. We try to really celebrate the diversity on campus and hope to

   enlighten people about being culturally aware. Especially, in this day and age, it is

so pivotal. People who are migrating here and how study abroad is gaining such

momentum and what not, I think it is important to be culturally aware. So that is

what I started doing here on campus. You meet a range of people here, and one of

the things that we do is a huge globe and we ask people like –because I think it is

kind of like passive advertising– we ask students to put a sticker of how they

racially identify themselves. It is really interesting. There are a lot of Haitians

here on campus, but there are other students who take like five stickers and put

them around.

Kara's enthusiasm and skills as a student leader allowed her to involve many of her peers

in a conversation about racial identities among the student body. Normally, that would

not be an easy topic for students to engage in, but Kara's approach allowed many

students to join a conversation about their backgrounds.

Ilona, a White PCU student, also exemplified this category. From Ilona's list of

activities on and off of the PCU campus, it was clear that she purposefully created

opportunities for her peers of different racial backgrounds to engage with one another.

Ilona spoke at length about arriving in the US as a young child and moving into her

neighborhood in a large East Coast city. She mentioned that she was often the only White

student in classes. Initially, Ilona had a great deal of difficulty gaining the trust and

acceptance of her Latino/a and African American peers. Eventually, Ilona described

joining sports teams and being elected to leadership positions in high school. She

discussed the difficulty with which she built authenticity as a White peer who could be

trusted and who understood the dynamics of racism and discrimination. In some cases,

she was characterized by her peers of color as a "teacher's pet" or as "that White girl."

However, Ilona was eventually accepted as a peer who could be trusted, because she demonstrated credibility with her peers of color.

In college, Ilona described her initial impressions of the PCU campus as a bit disorienting. She was accustomed to being among peers of color and PCU was a great deal less diverse than her pre-college experiences. PCU staff and faculty selected her to participate in an elite scholarship program designed to support first-generation students. As a member of this racially diverse cohort of scholars, Ilona thrived and sought out additional diverse co-curricular environments. She described her passion for interracial and cross-cultural interactions by observing:

> Because I want to be exposed to everybody else -it is definitely beneficial. Especially when I do community service or reach out to people. If you don't know somebody else's culture, you won't be able to help them. So you have to understand their backgrounds, what they have gone through, where they come from, how their family does things. Because everything is different; friendships, relationships. For me, I feel like it is really important because you can't be blinded walking into this world. Just because, no matter what job you go to, whatever meeting, wherever you are going, you'll always be exposed to that, there are different people. I'm just passionate about that.

Ilona's ability to understand the backgrounds of other people was unique as she was one of the few participants in this study, on either campus, who seemed to be able to cross-racial borders so completely.

Ilona was passionate about cross-racial interactions, and her ability to interact successfully with students from many different racial groups allowed her to influence those groups in unique ways:

> A lot of times I find myself that I'm either with a bunch of White people or even if I'm with a bunch of African Americans and I'm the one –they kind of take me in as one of them just because of my background. But at the same time, if I go to the other side, it is the same thing. Many times if we have those types of conversations, I definitely speak up just because I feel like it is not right to talk about people behind their back. It does spark, I guess, a heated discussion and some people get upset, but at the same time, ignorance is not right either. So even with good friends of mine, we will go at it and just try to find facts and go back into examples or anything like that. But I definitely don't like to stay quiet. It doesn't feel right.

Ilona's credibility within numerous racial groups allowed her to influence those groups in ways that appeared to be uncommon. When she encountered bias or a lack of understanding, she often sought to engage her peers in a dialogue about a range of racial or cultural differences:

> I definitely like the fact that I am able to relate to everybody in a sense. That helps me. Sometimes I don't understand it. If I'm with a bunch of African American people and they are like, "Oh, you know, I can't stand those White girls or those White boys" or whatever. But technically I am White, too. "But you're hanging out with me." And they are like, "But you're different," and it's always the same

thing. "But no, you're Black." And the same thing if I'm hanging out with [White

kids] technically they are the same way. "They are like, "You're one of us."

Ilona's membership in multiple racial groups did create some stress for her as she

wondered whether she had an in-group. She definitely felt pressure to be loyal to multiple

racial groups and often simply went with what she defined as encouraging everyone

around her to treat one another with respect. In this sense, Ilona both helped to translate

between the groups and provided a counterbalance to stereotypes about one group or

another.

Summary

In this chapter, I have summarized the primary venues in which CRIs occurred on

both the PCU and HSU campuses. Among the five types of CRIs discussed in this

chapter, purposeful curricular CRIs were the least reported type of CRIs among

participants. As I described, some interesting differences emerged between the HSU and

PCU campuses. Students on the PCU campus primarily described purposeful co-

curricular CRIs as the environment in which most of their CRIs occurred. On the HSU

campus, students described non-purposeful curricular and co-curricular CRIs as the most

frequent types of interracial interactions. Finally, student-led purposeful CRIs appeared

as a salient category. It is clear that some students were passionate about engaging

interracially with their peers. These same students sought out ways to proactively engage

in CRIs and, most importantly, they helped their peers engage with one another in the

process. In Chapter Five, I explore how students described the campus racial climate as

the context in which CRIs occurred.

CHAPTER FIVE

FACTORS SHAPING STUDENT CROSS-RACIAL

INTERACTIONS IN COLLEGE

In this chapter, I present a discussion of how four salient factors shaped student cross-racial interaction (CRI) experiences in college. Those factors include (1) pre-college CRI experiences, (2) a student's perspectives toward race and cross-racial experiences, (3) the quality of the campus racial climate (CRC) as measured by feelings of common ground and salience of racial prejudice and stereotypes from their peers, and (4) interracial interaction anxiety, which students in this study described as a salient aspect of their experience with CRIs. In the course of describing their interracial interactions, most participants initially reflected on their pre-college CRI experiences, so I begin this chapter with how students described their pre-college CRI experiences as well as how those prior interactions informed their experience of CRIs in college.

Pre-College Cross-Racial Interactions

Students in this study who experienced CRIs in high school, middle school, and even elementary school appeared to reference pre-college interactions when experiencing CRIs in college. Those pre-college patterns often provided a sense of momentum that set participants on an interaction trajectory in college. The direction of that trajectory was

often defined by whether students described frequent positive or negative CRIs in their pre-college environments. Negative pre-college interracial interactions established a trajectory in college in which students avoided or simply did not engage in CRIs. By contrast, students who described positive pre-college CRIs proactively sought out those types of interactions in college environments. These patterns were not always the same for White and Asian American students. Asian American students in this study were more likely to experience negative pre-college CRIs and therefore more likely to experience a negative pre-college trajectory when entering PCU and HSU. Finally, participants reported that their pre-college interaction trajectory, whether positive or negative, was further shaped by the quality of their university's campus racial climate.

Positive Pre-College Interracial Interaction Trajectory

Participants who frequently engaged in CRIs in college also described having frequent positive interracial interactions during their pre-college years. To illustrate this theme, I share comments from Ilona, Harrison, and Clark that exemplify how positive pre-college CRIs promoted continued engagement with peers of different racial backgrounds in college.

Ilona, a White PCU student, discussed how she moved to the U.S. from Eastern Europe as a young child and subsequently grew up in a primarily African American and Latino neighborhood in New York City:

I'm from Eastern Europe and I moved to NYC, so automatically I was the only White person in my middle school and high school, but I think from that point on

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all of my best friends and everybody around me was either African American or

Hispanic.

Ilona's pre-college interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds were

obviously extensive. She attended a public high school in which she was one of

the few White students and she therefore developed friends and close

relationships with the African American and Hispanic students in her school.

The process of adjusting to her new school environment was not

particularly easy, but Ilona described ultimately being accepted by her peers.

Further, Ilona connected her pre-college interracial experiences with her

experiences in college:

> For me, the conversations, I guess, in high school were a little different because
>
> people would kind of look at you and in a sense stereotype you, just because oh,
>
> you must be the teacher's pet, you must be getting good grades because you are
>
> the only White person and that is why they love you so much. But I think that was
>
> overcame when I started becoming more involved in high school, playing
>
> basketball and doing student government and everything. And then having the
>
> friends that I had around me, and since I was so interested in other people's
>
> cultures and learning and I just wanted to experience, that they accepted me
>
> differently. But even that kind of transfers back into college, too, because if you
>
> look around, the only people close to my [sic] who I am –European– are people in
>
> my scholarship program and the rest of them are also Hispanics, who I live with,
>
> and African Americans.

For Ilona, the process of adjusting to her high school and gaining acceptance by her

African American and Latino/a peers was meaningful. She mentioned that those

interactions and the sensibilities that she developed through her immersion in the cultures

of her high school primed her to find and maintain similar relationships in college.

Harrison, also a White PCU student, who attended high school in the Boston area,

reflected on his interracial interactions in high school:

> I went to a very diverse high school, so I've kind of had similar interactions with
>
> diversity my whole life, the same relationships with people of other colors,
>
> especially Black kids. Again, going back to high school, I used to drive to high
>
> school when I was a senior. I drove to high school, I had a car, and I would leave
>
> my house. I would pick up a younger White kid, I'd pick up one of my best
>
> friends, an Irish kid, then down the street and pick up my buddy Edward who is
>
> Black, and then I'd pick up my buddy Ricardo who is the biggest Blackest guy
>
> you will ever find in the whole world. He is huge and he is ripped and he is Black.
>
> And then my motley crew would pull up to school in my car in the morning. It's
>
> the way it is. That is how I grew up.

Harrison mentioned that his pre-college interactions were very racially diverse

and that he interacted frequently with peers of color. Through sports, classes and

his neighborhood friendships, he constantly interacted with peers of many racial

and ethnic backgrounds. For Harrison, it would have been abnormal to attend

college and suddenly only associate with one racial group. He described his

college roommates as a mix of White, Black, and Hispanic friends and referred to

study groups that he participated in that were composed of Asian Americans,

Whites, African Americans and others. Harrison clearly felt that the commonplace nature of his interracial interactions in high school allowed him to more easily interact with students of many different races in college.

In fact, Harrison asserted that in his experience race played a smaller role than socio-economic circumstances in peer interactions:

> I've seen like preppy White kids. Being from the city, it's like, "Oh well, he is just a yuppie, he doesn't understand what he is talking about, just a dumb yuppie, leave him alone." You know? And it's like, I do it too. That comes more from class, economic background, than it does –I just assume that they don't know what is going on because they are not from the city, because they are not me. They didn't have to do what I did. They didn't have to do what my White friends or my Black friends did. They didn't have to do that. They got things handed to them. Looking back, is it fair for me to do that? No, it's not. But you do it. And again, that comes back, I think, more to class than race.

In this sense, Harrison described a sense of common experience with peers who came from urban environments, where many students struggled economically and attended schools that were rich in diversity. Clearly, Harrison felt that a shared socio-economic background was more salient than sharing the same racial background, and this shared bond helped him feel positively about interactions with students of color.

Clark, an Asian American student at HSU, spoke at length about his experiences in high school. He described being immersed in Spanish-speaking cultures from his elementary through high school years. He mentioned that, in high school, his closest friend was Dominican and, for a variety of family reasons, he often had dinner with his

Dominican friend's family. By high school, Clark spoke Spanish well and spent much of his time with Latino/a students:

> Well, when I went to middle school, it was a predominantly Black and Latino middle school and from there I learned more about the Latino culture and also just being in an environment where I was the only Asian American in my entire school, and it sort of just blurred the lines of race then and there.

Clark went on to mention that in high school and early in his college years, he was expected to act Asian American. Many peers expected that he would be involved in Asian American clubs and activities. He described his frustration with these outside expectations for how he should be acting:

> It was one of those things where I sort of pondered it and I wondered why, and I got angry, and almost in trouble in certain cases. But then I said, okay, and rather than whining about it, I proactively showed that this –I will show everyone else who I am. So in high school, I was vice president of the Latino Club, and – it's a partnership actually with HSU.

As the quotation illustrates, Clark charted his own path from a young age. His interactions with his Latino friends shaped his own expectations for how he should act in college. Clark's activities at HSU expanded to include student government and other groups, however he was proud of his continuing leadership role and friendships within the Latino/a student mentoring organization on campus. Clark's elementary, middle, and high school interracial experiences informed his co-curricular activities and CRIs in college.

As these three students exemplify, positive pre-college interactions created the expectation and trajectory for post-secondary experiences rich in interracial interactions. While this is very encouraging, most students experience racially segregated neighborhoods, which in turn, are replicated in secondary school systems that are often defined by those racially homogenous neighborhoods (Cashin, 2004). While the experiences of Ilona, Harrison, and Clark are encouraging, it is apparently difficult for many students to engage in CRIs in high school.

Negative Pre-College Interracial Interaction Trajectory

Negative CRIs in pre-college environments often created a negative set of expectations regarding CRIs in college. To exemplify this point, I explore the experiences of Terri and Mia, two Asian American students who recalled particularly negative CRI experiences during their pre-college years. Interestingly, White students did not report negative CRI experiences in high school. Instead, with some important exceptions, most White students in this study attended predominantly White secondary schools and believed the racial climates of their high schools were positive. Terri and Mia described how their negative pre-college experiences powerfully shaped their interracial interactions in college.

Terri, an Asian American HSU student, shared that her pre-college experiences were defined by her elementary and middle school years and subsequently by her high school experiences. During her early schooling, Terri attended a predominantly White elementary and middle schools in rural New England. She described often being targeted by prejudicial comments and stereotypes during these years:

I've gotten Pocahontas references, I've gotten chinky eyes references, and things

like that, but it is just like, at the end of the day, it kind of makes me laugh

because you're making an ass out of yourself because I'm actually Pilipino so

what the hell are you talking about? Growing up, everyone would always be like,

"Oh, you eat dogs, you have tiny eyes," this and that. Well, first of all, I've lived

here practically my whole life. I've never eaten a dog ever in my life. And I'd like

to say that my eyes are pretty normal size. So where is all of this coming from?

Terri spoke about how ridiculous the racial taunts and insults were in elementary and

middle school. While she knew the comments were hateful and wrong, she still had to

attend the school where she was often ostracized.

During her interview, Terri placed a strong emphasis on finding friends who

could understand her experience:

But I have to say definitely even throughout high school and even to this day, the

majority of my friends are non-White. Granted, all of my best friends are African

American, Haitian, and also Jamaican, so I have that aspect. I would definitely

say that I am more partial to other cultures, Island cultures, that kind of stuff. But

as far as interactions, it is a lot easier to talk to them about it just because when

you're coming from a different culture than that of America, it gives you

something to talk about.

Terri was simply more comfortable with peers with whom she expected to share at least

some of her background. These perceptions have carried over into her college

interactions. She was involved on campus and had many interactions with her White

peers, but she clearly preferred and trusted students who came from cultures she felt were similar to her own.

For many participants, like Mia, the sudden access to a vibrant Asian American community became a central focus of their social life in college. Mia, an Asian American PCU student, spoke at length about her experiences in her primarily White high school. She said that she often heard negative comments about Asian Americans including model minority stereotypes and prejudice that she felt was simply part of any community where Whites were the majority. In college, Mia found a vibrant Asian American and South Asian American community. She readily connected with other South Asian American women, lived in a South Asian American residential community and participated regularly in larger pan-Asian American leadership groups:

> It's funny because I come from a high school that is predominantly White. They had a multicultural group, which I was a part of and I was a very active member, but my friend circle still associated around a White crowd. Here, it was like the first couple of months, as I said, I joined here and my friends have slowly diversely changed. I joined the Asian American Center groups and a South Asian sorority. I was happy with that. I was actually really happy that I'm changing myself. I guess it was kind of–I don't know. A bonding factor?

Upon her arrival in college, Mia quickly bonded with her Asian American and South Asian American peers. For the first time, she was included in a community of people who shared, celebrated and understood her background.

After three years in college, Mia felt that she had built a strong, stable, and supportive environment. Going into her fourth year of college, Mia mentioned

that she wanted to expand her network of friends to include groups and efforts

outside the Asian American Center. While she did not anticipate separating from

her Asian American connections on campus, she wanted to include more

"mainstream" activities including student government. Mai shared that she

believed that student government was a White dominated student environment:

> I'm definitely anxious because it's been a while since I've interacted with a
>
> predominantly White student group. Like, I know I grew up in that neighborhood,
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> but I've also been living here in the past two years, so my background has kind of
>
> left me. So it is definitely going to be a little bit hard, but I hope that my classes
>
> will help me with that. I don't know how this is going to be like, but I know it's
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> very like you have to be talkative and be out there and be outspoken, so I don't
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> think I'll lack the confidence to approach them. But there is definite anxiety for
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> maybe a negative comment or like maybe, oh, not now, or whatever.

Mia's pre-college experiences with her White peers shaped how she viewed CRIs with

White students in college. Based on her high school experiences, she expected her White

college peers to harbor stereotypes of and prejudice towards Asian Americans.

Furthermore, the presence of her Asian American peers in college and the Asian

American Center allowed Mia to gain confidence, as well as recuperate from some of her

prior negative CRI experiences. Entering her fourth year, Mia felt ready and anxious to

engage more broadly with her peers in college. Mia's comments are revealing in that she

described a negative pre-college environment in which she witnessed or was targeted by

Asian American stereotypes and prejudice. She also did not have the opportunity to

explore her own ethnicity or racial background in high school. Therefore, her ability in

college to delve deeper into the pan-Asian American experience, as well as to avoid prejudice that she expected from her White peers, dramatically shaped her post-secondary interracial interaction choices. While Mia clearly intended to expand her interracial interaction patterns, her pre-college interactions with White peers continued to shape her CRIs well into her third year of college.

Clearly, Mia and Terri's experiences illustrate how negative pre-college CRI experiences can shape the trajectory of student interaction experiences in college. Mia and Terri, confronted by large university environments sought out the safety of a large community of Asian American students. Consequently, among Asian American students who experienced prejudice and stereotypes within their secondary schooling, membership in a diverse Asian American college community presented opportunities to engage in interactions with other Asian Americans in ways that also limited their interactions with non-Asian American students.

Differences in Pre-College Effects by Racial Group

Some important pre-college differences must also be highlighted between White and Asian American participants. As you may have noticed from student comments in the previous two sections, the pre-college experiences of White and Asian American students were often divergent. In particular, most White students who experienced positive CRIs in pre-college environments described those experiences as shaping or informing their undergraduate interracial interactions in positive ways. As Ilona and Harrison's experiences illustrated, their frequent and largely positive pre-college CRIs led to similar types of experiences in college. By contrast, only one Asian American student in this

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study spoke about positive pre-college CRIs. As I have noted, Clark was an interesting exception to this pattern. Clark's experience was fascinating and unique in that he identified as racially Asian American and culturally as Latino. His positive CRIs in pre-college environments were the result of frequent and positive interactions with his Latino/a peers and not with White peers. Nearly all Asian American participants in this study attended schools where they experienced CRIs primarily with White peers. Unfortunately, most Asian American participants described experiencing frequent stereotypes and prejudice during their pre-college schooling.

Like Terri and Mia, many Asian American participants described how their negative pre-college CRIs informed their college interracial interaction decisions. Essentially, negative pre-college CRI experiences with their White peers motivated them, at least in part, to participate actively in the much larger Asian American community, in which they felt comfortable and largely shielded from stereotypes and prejudice. White participants like Harrison and Ilona, in contrast, shared that their positive pre-college experiences contributed to their ability to engage with peers from different racial backgrounds from their own. Positive pre-college CRI trajectories enhanced a student's ability to engage in CRIs in college, but few Asian Americans in this study experienced positive CRI trajectories.

Campus Racial Climate's Influence on Pre-College Interaction Trajectory

When prompted to consider their levels of pre-college CRIs, participants often related their pre-college CRIs to their experiences in college. Positive or negative pre-college experiences often informed how students approached postsecondary CRI

opportunities. However, students communicated that their university's racial climate further shaped their CRI trajectories. Some students who had positive pre-college CRIs expected to engage in CRIs in college, but did not do so. Similarly, some students who had negative pre-college CRIs did not anticipate having frequent CRIs in college. Reflecting on why these incongruities existed, participants noted that their campus' racial climate had augmented or diminished interracial interaction opportunities such that a pre-college negative CRI trajectory could be improved and a positive pre-college CRI trajectory could be diminished.

Positive Pre-College Trajectory Interrupted. Sarah, a White PCU student, highlighted pre-college and postsecondary CRI differences. Sarah commented that she grew up in a suburban environment that included many Korean American families. She mentioned that a number of her close friends were Korean American and that she enjoyed those friendships. She even shared that her Korean American friends called her an "honorary Korean" because she had developed an appreciation for and understanding of Korean culture.

Despite these fulfilling interracial friendships during her pre-college years, Sarah shared that she had been searching for ways to make more connections at PCU with peers of color in general and Korean American peers in particular. She joined a diversity dialogue group, attended cultural events, and was hesitant but interested in joining the Korean American student club on campus. Sarah mentioned that she really missed the connections she had in high school with her Korean American friends:

So I really just wanted to go sign up and be like, "I know," but I felt like if I did

that, they would be like, "Why is this White girl here? This is weird." It's just one

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of those things where you're just like, "Oh, I don't know if it would be my place necessarily, especially being a White female." I don't know if it would be weird if I just sat at a table, for example, of all Latin Americans, and be like "Hey, guys, what's up?" Would that be weird? For the most part, people are generally pretty welcoming. I've been to all kinds of things, but just getting over the fear initially.

Sarah was interested in developing friendships with Korean American students on campus, but she was hesitant to do so because she was worried that she would not be welcomed or accepted. Despite her hesitance to take some risks, Sarah continued to challenge herself to make interracial connections in college.

While Sarah challenged herself to interact with peers of different racial backgrounds, as she had in her pre-college years, she found it difficult at PCU. Sarah explained that "It is hard, especially when you are taking classes and that takes up a lot of your time. So the only people that you really do get to interact with are people that are in your classes." Sarah noted that within her history major there were few students of color and she, therefore, found it difficult to make time to engage in CRIs. Sarah observed that PCU was supportive of different racial and ethnic clubs and centers, but she felt that those same centers concentrated many students of color in one place:

> That can also make it harder because that means that people are spending time with people from the same background as them and that is who they are going to be friends with. And it makes it harder for someone that is not of the same background to approach them and be like, "Hi, how are you?" A lot of my friends at home are Korean and they always tell me that I am Asian-friendly. While there is not a lot of mixing [at PCU], there is some, but it's not because people can't

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mix. It's just people that have similar experiences you are comfortable with and

you know you can relate to.

Sarah believed that the lack of racial diversity on campus and the presence of centers for

students of color meant that it was exceedingly difficult to engage in CRIs.

Commenting on the quality of the PCU campus racial climate, Sarah observed

that it was difficult to form friendships or connections with students of color:

I think that in terms of racial backgrounds, I definitely have more friends from

home that are of different racial backgrounds. Here it is more –I am not sure if

ethnic is the right term –but regional backgrounds. Even though a lot of my

friends are White, they are still just from different areas so it's not just like

everyone grew up in the same place.

As Sarah's comment illustrates, frequent positive CRIs in high school may make a

student more likely to seek out those similar types of CRI experiences in college, but the

campus climate can either facilitate further CRIs or, as in the case of Sarah's experience

at PCU, diminish postsecondary CRIs. Even though Sarah seemed particularly savvy

about finding purposeful co-curricular CRI opportunities, she still found it difficult to

engage in non-purposeful co-curricular CRIs at PCU.

Negative Pre-College Trajectory Interrupted. At HSU, both White and Asian

American participants reported having more CRIs in college than in high school. HSU

students reported that non-purposeful curricular and co-curricular CRIs were common.

Kara underscored this point, stating, "You couldn't avoid them if you wanted to." For

HSU students, the frequency of non-purposeful curricular and co-curricular CRIs

enhanced the ability of students to have more CRIs in college when compared to their

level of pre-college CRIs. Accordingly, HSU students who experienced positive CRIs in pre-college environments appear to have had more interracial interactions in college. In fact, even students who demonstrated a negative pre-college CRI trajectory, found it easier to engage in non-purposeful CRIs at HSU. For example, Lisa, a White HSU student who experienced few pre-college CRIs, noted that the few pre-college CRIs she did have were negative. Despite these circumstances, Lisa said that she frequently interacted with peers of color in the environment at HSU:

> When I first came to HSU – I lived on campus. My roommates were both White because we came from high school together. This year I have one of the same roommates and also our other two friends who we are living with who are Asian. At my work, two of my coworkers are African American –well, one is from Nigeria, so she is African. In my group of friends, it is kind of funny because me and another one of my friends were like one of the only White people in our group. So it is different than my high school where except for the four people of a different race, like everyone was White.

Sarah seemed a little surprised that her circle of friends was so diverse. She could not recall a program or other structured opportunity that helped her establish a diverse group of friends. She felt that her relationships occurred non-purposefully.

It is instructive to compare Lisa's story with that of Sarah, the White PCU student who had many Korean American friends in high school. Lisa, who did not experience many CRIs in high school, found it easier to develop a diverse group of friends than Sarah, who arguably had a strong CRI trajectory heading into college. At PCU, Sarah spent some significant energy finding ways to engage in purposeful co-curricular CRI

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opportunities, however, the lack of non-purposeful curricular and co-curricular CRIs on the PCU campus threatened to overwhelm Sarah's pre-college CRI trajectory. This illustrates the dynamic interplay of the CRC and pre-college CRIs. While a student with a positive pre-college CRI trajectory may be pre-disposed to develop those types of relationships in college, the CRC can still diminish his or her ability to do so. Conversely, a CRC in which frequent non-purposeful curricular and non-curricular CRIs are possible can help students like Lisa, who did not have an established pattern of CRIs in high school, engage in post-secondary CRIs with some frequency. Lisa and Sarah demonstrate the ways in which a negative pre-college CRI trajectory can be improved and how a positive pre-college trajectory can be interrupted.

Perspectives on Race and Cross-Racial Experiences

In this section, I explore the racial identities of White and Asian American participants. Among the 11 White and 14 Asian American participants, I identified themes around which cohorts of students, depending on their perspectives regarding race and ethnicity (e.g. both their own and that of others), seemed to coalesce. The perspective of participants regarding race and ethnicity often framed how they thought about opportunities for interracial interactions.

White Perspectives on Race and Cross-Racial Experiences

In this section, I discuss White participants' perspectives regarding their dispositions toward interacting across race in college. My analysis generated three themes regarding those perspectives: (1) Intellectualized Focus, (2) Internal Focus, and (3)

Interracial Focus. First, I share comments from students who demonstrated an intellectualize focus. Specifically, White students who expressed an intellectualized focus were committed to racial equality and often spoke about the importance of treating people equally, but who may not have taken practical steps towards fulfilling that goal. Second, I will discuss two participants in the internal focus theme who engaged with peers of different racial backgrounds regularly, but for whom some self-doubt and anxiety constantly diminished the extent to which they engaged in CRIs. Finally, I will explore comments from two students in the interracial focus theme who described themselves as fully integrated within the diverse racial groups.

   Intellectualized Focus. Students who expressed an intellectualized focus were individuals who had been exposed to some issues of diversity and racial equality, but who did not actively think about these dynamics in their daily lives. During interviews, Timothy and Lisa expressed that they valued diversity and friendships with peers of many different backgrounds. In addition, they both held beliefs that they must treat everyone equally, as well as see them for their individual nature rather than any larger racial group to which they may belong.

   For example, comparing the level of diversity on the PCU campus to his high school experience, Timothy sought to look beyond race and treat each peer as an individual. He noted that PCU was more racially and ethnically diverse than his high school but mentioned that the increased demographic diversity did not bother him:

   It's definitely more diverse, but I would say that it really didn't affect me. I didn't really care. I don't know. I guess, just through my interactions with people, that I have worked with in the past all through my childhood and growing up. My

teacher in high school was very focused on looking beyond race. I think it's very

superficial to look at somebody, see their color, and treat them any way, whether

it is better or worse. I'd rather just see the person. So it didn't bug me. I didn't

care one way or the other that there was more diversity here.

Timothy valued diversity and shared that he cared deeply about his peers and people in

general. During his college search, Timothy noted that the level of diversity at PCU was

not a big concern for him. In this sense, other factors defined the type of college

environment he was seeking and diversity was an added bonus. Timothy went on to

explain that he did not have many interactions with students of color in college:

In class, I would say, not really. Like it never really happens there. As far as

outside of class, I don't know. I feel like I don't do anything outside of class. The

groups I get involved in occasionally, that's usually weekend, but it's never really

people my age, it's always kind of younger than.

Given the racial homogeneity of his major, Timothy felt there were few opportunities for

him to interact with a student of color during classes. His roommates were all White, and

the academic rigor of his health profession major kept him intensely busy. While

Timothy did experience purposeful CRIs in college, they were relatively few. Despite the

sparse nature of his experiences with purposeful CRIs, Timothy's interview was valuable

in terms of illustrating how a White student can be accepting in terms of the extent to

which they valued diversity, but still had few interracial interactions in college.

Lisa, a White student attending HSU, had many of the same opinions as Timothy,

although her university experience featured greater racial heterogeneity in curricular and

co-curricular environments. Lisa's classes were very racially diverse and she interacted

frequently with students of color through her work-study positions and co-curricular activities. In this respect, Lisa constantly engaged with students of color and often spoke with peers about race, racism, and diversity in general. Lisa's perspective on race and racism was similar to Timothy's perspective on those issues:

It is inappropriate to single someone out because of their race. I'm fine with it. Like, I'm not uncomfortable. I act the same. I will ask the same questions. I don't feel like there is any kind of restriction really. My interactions are the same. I feel some people are uncomfortable and they change. But I knew that coming here would be a lot different than my high school. When I came and toured, I saw some of the students here, so I knew that it wouldn't be the same, it wouldn't be like everybody was White. I knew that it was culturally different so I was kind of ready for it. So when I came, I was comfortable.

Lisa's perspective was interesting, because she felt that HSU was very different from her predominantly White suburban high school. Despite that, she mentioned that she acted the same and that her interactions were the same as they were in high school. In some ways, Lisa tried to minimize the significance of attending a university with so many students of color, and she did not rank the demographic diversity of HSU highly among her criteria for selecting an undergraduate institution. Essentially, it appears that the presence of racial diversity in her work-study positions, classes, and co-curricular activities positively shaped her readiness to engage in CRIs, even though she did not specifically seek out that particular outcome. Later in the interview, Lisa acknowledged that she did have some interaction anxiety with students of color and that she sometimes worried that she might express her thoughts in an offensive manner.

The primary experience that Timothy and Lisa expressed in common was that everyone should be treated the same. They both felt that diversity was a good thing, but not something that they particularly would seek out. They showed a lack of mental and physical engagement with students of different racial backgrounds that other students in this study displayed. For Lisa, this was tempered by the fact that HSU was a very diverse institution and that she frequently interacted with students of color in classes and co-curricular activities. Therefore, students in this theme did not seek out interracial interactions, but they were open to them when they occurred in non-purposeful curricular or co-curricular environments.

Internal Focus. To describe White students who demonstrated greater continuity between their values and actions, I developed the internal focus perspective. Internal focus characterizes a perspective in which White students struggle to make their practices regarding race and ethnicity congruent with their beliefs and opinions. Students displaying internal focus sought opportunities to engage in interracial interactions with peers. Their attempts can be characterized as sometimes tentative, due at least in part to low perceptions of common ground. Sarah, a White PCU student, enjoyed many friendships with Korean American peers in her pre-college neighborhood and high school, and she expressed that she wanted more exposure to her peers of color on campus. She remarked that she missed the connections with students of color that she had in high school:

> I love learning about other cultures and hearing different experiences that other people have had, and just how different people can experience things differently. So I was really interested in it because you get to see how different people

interpret small events, and it just creates a kind of closeness, because you realize even though you have all of these differences, you also have these things in common.

In part to challenge herself to move beyond intellectualizing race and diversity, Sarah participated in an interracial dialogue group, leadership programs, and contemplated joining the Korean American student group, something she planned to do the following semester. Sarah actively challenged herself to move beyond a color-blind, intellectualized connection to diversity by participating in a diversity dialogue group:

> I honestly wasn't really sure what to expect coming into it because they were just kind of like, "It's a good way to bring people together." And I was like, "This could be interesting." But you never know how those things are going to go, because it could be people that don't really want to talk or people that don't feel comfortable. But I think it was a really good experience, because it makes you focus on how other people perceive things and just being more conscious of your actions and the way you treat people. I think it was really good as far as expectations go. I think it definitely went above just getting together and meeting, because you did create this kind of bond where you were like, "I've learned these things about this person," and you kind of understand the way people think a little bit more and just the way that different things affect them.

Sarah was certainly looking for ways to put her values and interests into practice. This process of clarifying one's values and finding ways to put those values into practice characterized students with an internal focus.

Interracial Focus. The interracial focus theme illustrates the perspectives of White participants who were actively committed to racial equality. Rather than simply being theoretically committed to racial equality, they incorporated this commitment into their daily interactions. From an interracial interaction perspective, students whose perspectives are characterized by this theme expressed an ability to move in and out of multiple racial groups with ease. The White students in this theme often were able to achieve this level of interracial interaction only as a result of long periods of pre-college involvement in the culture and experiences of other racial groups. Erik and Ilona exemplify this theme well.

Ilona, a White PCU student, attended the university primarily because she received a full scholarship. Ilona attended a very diverse high school in New York City where she was one of only a few White students in the entire school. As a result, her friends and peers were mostly Hispanic and African American. Arriving at PCU, Ilona sought out these same environments. She mentioned that she was often the only White person in various situations on campus and that she sometimes "hangs out" with White friends as well. Ilona constantly adjusted to her surroundings in ways that allowed her to claim membership in numerous racial groups:

> I definitely like the fact that I am able to relate to everybody in a sense. That helps me. Sometimes I don't understand it. If I'm with a bunch of African American people and they are like "Oh, you know, I can't stand those White girls or those White boys" or whatever. "But technically I am White, too, but you're hanging out with me." And they are like, "But you're different," and it's always the same

thing. "But no, you're Black." And the same thing if I'm hanging out [with White friends], technically they are the same way. They are like, "You're one of us."

Ilona described moving in and out of highly diverse environments as well as monoracial Latino/a, African American, and White groups:

It is two different worlds, I guess, when you see people interacting. White people come together, and then you see the difference of—I just love when different cultures come together, not necessarily when they split complete down, like, "We're going to stick to ourselves." And I think that is why I hang around with other scholarship recipients or even if I go to the leadership group or other places, just because of the people that come in that one place. It's everybody, it's from different cultures, but everybody is there for the same purpose.

Ilona valued environments that were not strictly monoracial, and she described herself as actively seeking out those types of multiracial environments. It was not happenstance that Ilona engaged in frequent interracial interactions.

Of note was Ilona's use of the phrase "I treat everyone the same." When Ilona explained this statement she meant that she wanted to treat everyone with respect, but she felt that equity in how you treat people necessitated treating people differently:

I think what I tend to do a lot of times, especially with my friends, is you get to know the culture a lot of times. If they are close friends and you go over to their families and you spent the time, or if I travel and say, like I went to the Dominican Republic and I spent the whole week with their family, it is more so understanding what goes on down there. If I know they are doing something, maybe I could help them. I know that they prepare something all the time, like a

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style of food. Just being able to understand kind of, and not just assume things

from stereotypes.

Ilona's priority was to gain knowledge about a culture or group of people and keep that knowledge available in case it proved relevant to an interaction. If it were relevant, then she would apply that cultural knowledge to the situation. She did not look to treat everyone the same, but instead was aware of their differences. How Ilona interacted with one person when compared to another changed based on his or her background. Partly because Ilona was so well connected to many different groups, she often found herself debating a peer on particular issues:

A lot of times I find that I'm either with a bunch of White people or even if I'm with a bunch of African Americans and I'm the one—they kind of take me in as one of them just because of my background. But at the same time, if I go to the other side, it is the same thing. Many times if we have those types of conversations, I definitely speak up just because I feel like it is not right to talk about people behind their back. It does spark, I guess, a heated discussion, and some people get upset, but at the same time, ignorance is not right either. So even with good friends of mine, we will go at it and just try to find facts and go back into examples or anything like that.

Ilona's membership in multiple groups placed pressure on her to help bridge differences in how different racial groups understood one another. Ilona was clearly committed to a ensuring a sense of fairness in how her peers treated one another, and she found ways to engage her peers in conversations about diversity and fairness.

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Similarly to Ilona, Erik, a White HSU student, engaged with many peers of different racial backgrounds. Also similar to Ilona, Erik's pre-college experiences were in a very diverse neighborhood and high school. Erik declined to apply to several universities because they appeared too homogenous in either political persuasion or racial backgrounds or both. Erik also displayed a deep understanding of race and diversity and the value he placed on respecting other cultures and racial groups:

> And that comes from—it's like people are good, [and] I want them to feel respected because I know how good that makes me feel. I think there are lots of cultural things that go into conversations with people, but there are also things that are cross-cultural. One of them is respect. If you show someone respect, you're going to have a much more pleasant and much more honest interaction with them than if you start with contempt.

Erik felt he could show respect for other people by trying to understand how their backgrounds might influence their interactions with him.

When Erik ran for a student government leadership position, he recalled being challenged regarding his racial background. Specifically, a student asked whether he could represent students of color. Many White students would have had a difficult time answering this question, but Erik responded by asking his own question. Erik recalled asking the student of color, "Where have you been? What have you done to represent students who actually look like you? I've done a lot for students who don't actually look like me. That is also something that you can do with your time too." Erik felt that he often considered race and diversity in general, because he felt race was relevant to issues like dropout rates, healthcare, and financial aid, among others:

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That goes right to the point of why do you care. It's easy to have a conversation about race with people of color when it is apparent how much that has affected people. And I think [it] is something White people don't understand: that race, being of color, is not something you forget about. It's not something you can ignore if you are of color, because it constantly hits you over the head in the way that people treat you and the way you are looked at by strangers, in the way that teachers deal with you and in your experiences.

This is an interesting alternative perspective to sentiments among some White participants who held the perspective that everyone should be treated equally, which also reduced the importance of race in a person's experience.

Ilona and Erik gravitated to situations and environments in which they were likely to engage with many peers of color. From the selection of the university they would attend to the types of activities that they participated in, interracial interactions, and CRIs in general, were very important for them personally. Not only were CRIs important to them, but they often contributed to the creation of environments that were rich in those types of interactions.

Asian American Perspectives on Race and Cross-Racial Experiences

During my analysis of the data, I found that the perspectives of Asian American students in this study generally coalesced around three broad themes: (1) Asian American Focus, (2) Internal Ethnic Focus, and (3) Interracial Focus. In each of the sub-sections related to these three themes, I describe how I have defined these themes related to the

relevant RID theories within which they are grounded. Subsequently, I comment on connections between each of the three themes and the interracial interactions of students.

Asian American Focus. Students with Asian American focus are likely to concentrate their energies on Asian American peoples and cultures. Asian American students with this perspective pursue a growing interest in and appreciation for Asian American culture and communities. Ten of the Asian American students with whom I spoke shared this perspective. Cheryl and Monica illustrate this perspective particularly well.

Cheryl, an Asian American student at PCU, commented that she had not really explored her identity as an Asian American prior to college:

> When I was younger, definitely not because you grow up, you watch all of these cartoons and movies, and the leading character is always White, and you see so many more faces that aren't similar to yours. And you do experience prejudice and racism outside of shelter, home, or whatever. You do come to the harsh reality that not everyone is accepting. There will be ignorance. So growing up, to be honest, I hated being Asian American, because of all of these prejudices.

Cheryl grew up in an urban environment where demographic diversity was high, but she found few role models and saw many negative messages about being Asian American.

When she arrived at PCU, Cheryl was surprised at how many White students were on campus. During our interview, she commented that she initially came to the Asian American Center with a friend and had not planned to become very involved. Over time however, Cheryl assumed several leadership roles and valued the collaborative atmosphere among the many Asian American ethnic student groups:

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Back in high school, I was never involved in anything. There wasn't any Asian American group or anything. Then I never really was in touch with my identity, that side of my identity. So, I get to college and I wasn't planning to join the Asian American Center or come here at all. It wasn't until one of my friends decided to come and visit, you know, and then I tagged along. Afterwards, I got involved. Now that I had gotten a little bit more aware of student organizations and how students can get involved, I decided to get involved with the Asian American community, get in touch with that identity that I have, by going back to the beginning, working the with Chicago Asian community.

The presence of an Asian American Center at PCU became a component in her exploration of what it meant to be Asian American and allowed her to focus on her own racial background more easily. As time progressed, Cheryl expanded her role as a confident leader and mentioned wanting to move from a more internal focus towards a more external focus:

Next year, I'm going to be a mentor for Asian American students, just to help guide along a freshman or a transfer student and go from there. I'm just so comfortable. That's when it went from being very racially mixed to all of a sudden, "Hey, I'm now more affiliated with this."

Cheryl enjoyed PCU and the Asian American community in particular. She found a home, and grew a great deal personally and intellectually in the process. As a result, Cheryl wanted to give back to her community by mentoring Asian Americans who were new to PCU.

Monica, an HSU Asian American student who also grew up in an urban environment, was often targeted by stereotypes and prejudice during her pre-college schooling. She attended a primarily African American middle school and then moved to a high school that was approximately half White and half Asian American. She enjoyed opportunities in college to take courses that explored the Asian American experience and she was involved in a number of activities, clubs, and initiatives designed to improve the climate at HSU for Asian Americans:

> One of my projects was how to promote the understanding of Asian Americans, just being more exposed in the campus. Because I remember one of my fellow classmates, they made a YouTube video about what is African American month, but when it came to the Exclusion Act, they were like, "What?"… Or the Chinese New Year or the South East Asian New Year, they're just like "What?" We want more of that to be known. It is never in the textbooks. It is always through word of mouth. We wanted to do an event thing. Food was a topic to bring everyone together and then we could talk.

Monica was passionate about helping others better understand and simply be more knowledgeable about Asian Americans in general.

For the first time in their lives, college presented many opportunities for Cheryl and Monica to engage with other Asian American peers, faculty, and staff. Both of these students were actively involved in educating themselves as well as others about the Asian American experience in the U.S. While Cheryl and Monica had friends from other racial groups, their focus was primarily on the Asian American community. Interestingly, Cheryl and Monica both shared that they were considering ways to engage with peers of

different racial and ethnic backgrounds during the next academic year. Cheryl and Monica felt fulfilled in this respect, and opportunities to interact within a vibrant Asian American community in their early college years appeared to have set them on a path towards broader engagement with peers of other racial and ethnic groups. Reflecting on why she initially joined the Asian American Center, Cheryl observed, "My initial goal was just to understand my world and my identity. Once I got a better understanding of that, my goal went from internal to external." It is possible that they are both in transition towards an interracial focus, which I explore in more detail later in this section.

Internal Ethnic Focus. Asian American students who exemplified an internal ethnic focus preferred to engage, although not exclusively, with peers of the same Asian American ethnic group. An internal ethnic focus, therefore, represents a particular interest in interactions with peers who share the same or similar ethnic, cultural, and historical backgrounds. As I mentioned, upon entering college, many Asian American students had access for the first time in their lives to a vibrant Asian American community. In particular, six Asian American participants said they were particularly drawn to purposeful and non-purposeful co-curricular opportunities to connect with peers who shared their particular ethnic background. Three of the six participants who exemplified this dynamic were Pilipino American, one was Korean American, and two were Chinese American. Specifically, for these six individuals, their primary identity was their ethnic identity and they focused much of their energy on exploring and celebrating that identity.

To illustrate the internal ethnic focus, I share several comments from Terri, an HSU Filipina American student, and Thomas, a PCU Korean American student, whose comments reflect this stage. Terri, an active student leader at HSU, spoke at length about

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the discrimination she faced during her elementary and middle school years. She mentioned that her mother's marriage to a White man also led to a home environment in which her Pilipino culture did not play a major role. After Terri's mother divorced her first husband, she and her mother moved to a different, much more diverse town. Subsequently, her mother remarried a Pilipino man, which provided Terri with a greater sense of comfort at home:

I was with my mother and my adoptive father, and he was White, and that kind of made it harder for me to learn the language or even be immersed in my culture, all because he was White and the home had nothing to do with the Philippines. So that made it difficult for me. But, as soon as we got out of there, my mom embraced the culture so much more because we actually lived with one of my mother's best friends for a year. And she was Pilipino and her husband was White, but there was more of a Pilipino feel in the house, and I loved it. I love my culture. I love being Pilipino, I'm proud to be Pilipino, so that was a good experience for me. And now being in a home where both parents are Pilipino, it just definitely brings it all together, all the Pilipino, and this is all within me.

Clearly Terri's mother's marriage to a Pilipino man, and the related move to a new and more diverse town and school, proved to be a turning point. Terri was thankful that, during the remainder of her high school years, she was able to celebrate her own culture at home and in school.

In college, Terri enjoyed meeting other Pilipino people and she further embraced her culture and identity. This experience was powerful for Terri because much of her secondary schooling was in environments where she was lonely and often unwelcome:

I have to say definitely, even throughout high school and even to this day, the majority of my friends are non-White. I think for me, it is easier to talk to students of a different background than a White student, I don't know why, but maybe it is just because of the fact that they have different cultures at home. I feel like there is a traditional American culture where that is the family and you have to sit and eat dinner together and you watch some TV and that is about it.

Terri also spoke extensively about racial and ethnic background:

I'm Pilipino, but I can relate more to people, say, of Spanish descent than I can to someone who is Chinese because of the simple fact of how my culture is. We are considered Asian American or Pacific American, whatever, but at the same time, my culture mirrors a lot more in Spanish cultures than it does in any other oriental culture. So it just makes it a lot more difficult and different to just try to categorize everybody, you know?

Terri was proud of her own identity, but she was aware that she did not fit neatly into many people's expectations regarding Asian Americans. She noted that she "would definitely say that I am more partial to other cultures, Island cultures, that kind of stuff." Terri was aware that her experience was somewhat different from other Asian Americans and she appeared to be negotiating where she was most comfortable. In this respect, she spoke about whether her ethnic background was more similar to Spanish-speaking peoples or, as the quote above mentioned, "island cultures." In any event, based on her numerous experiences with prejudice from White high school peers, Terri had a strong suspicion of Whites as she negotiated her place within the racial climate on campus.

Despite this, Terri described herself as not generally limiting her interactions with people. She said, "I really don't have, like, a specific people that I talk to. There is not, 'Oh I talk to Black people more, I talk to Pilipino people more.' It's never been like that for me." Terri emphasized the importance of seeing people as individuals and stated that she was open to connecting with her peers regardless of their racial background. These perspectives appeared to be in conflict with some of her other beliefs. In this respect, Terri was working through her past (and likely present) experiences with discrimination as well as trying to better understand her place as a Pilipina within the Asian American community.

Thomas, a Korean American student at PCU, also spoke at length about experiences related to his ethnicity. He mentioned that before college, he was very involved with his church group, which was primarily Korean. In his high school, however, he was one of only a few Korean American students, and he prioritized connecting with his White peers. The result was that he was well connected to Korean adults outside of high school but not well connected to Korean peers in high school. At PCU, as illustrated by the following comments, Thomas wanted to change his circumstances:

> So I felt like, I'm at college now. It's the first thing I need to do. So, once second semester hit my freshman year, I decided to join clubs and try to see if I could get a higher position so I could actually do something. I kind of had set goals when I got to college. I knew we had a Korean group here, and obviously I'm Korean, so I wanted to have a more cultural aspect. I feel like in high school you don't really get to it since you are so tied down to one community or one group.

Thomas wanted to get involved in college and joined the Korean club as a way to gain leadership skills, as well as explore his culture a bit more.

Thomas mentioned that he thought of himself as Korean American first, and enjoyed helping others learn more about his culture:

I feel like a person should definitely know about their specific race or ethnicity first. So I feel like just knowing where I'm coming from, knowing the types of culture that we do have can definitely set the tone for being Asian American as a whole. I feel like it makes me—I just feel like I become a rep for the whole Korean culture, to kind of spread that type of awareness to everyone else, even though, like a I said, pretty much we are all trying to spread that awareness.

In becoming a student leader in the Korean club, Thomas said that he was automatically part of the Asian American Center leadership group. Thomas certainly saw a great deal of value in coming together as Asian Americans, but his primary focus was the Korean club. Thomas also mentioned that he was most comfortable with other Korean American students:

Well, I know in terms of—in all honesty, I will probably always feel most comfortable talking with someone who is Korean or at least Asian, that would be the first initial thing. I feel like if you go to a classroom or if you go to an event, normally I would probably just somehow, maybe subconsciously, I can pin point who is Korean, I can just tell who is Korean and Asian, and that could be my more comfortable side.

Similar to Terri's comments, Thomas' perspective was not exclusive of other people and groups on campus. However, his focus was primarily on the Korean club and culture

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rather than on the broader Asian American community. Thomas additionally had a number of other volunteer and academic activities related to his major, but his focus was primarily on his ethnic identity and group.

Students in the internal ethnic focus stage were certainly somewhat less likely to benefit from Asian American interethnic interactions, because they were more likely to gravitate towards interactions with peers who shared their ethnic background. Thus, an internal ethnic focus may substantially limit their interethnic and interracial interactions.

Interracial Focus. Asian American students who exhibited an interracial focus were those students who felt a strong sense of pride in their ethnic and racial identities and confidently sought out connections with peers of backgrounds different from their own. An interracial focus, therefore, seemed concurrent with a certain confidence in their own background, a sense of curiosity about the backgrounds of others, and an enthusiasm for engaging interracially with peers. Two Asian American participants fulfilled the definition provided above, and I will use comments from Kara, an Asian American HSU student, to exemplify this theme.

Kara was an active student leader on the HSU campus and felt strongly about the quality of the campus environment for all students. She worked in numerous offices, contributed to the welfare of new students, and showed a strong appreciation for her own background as well as a clear connection to other Asian Americans:

But there are just so many differences between us. Of course, I identify myself as an Asian American, but even more breaking it down, like I'm a Pilipino American. I don't know what my experience is like to a Chinese American who

has immigrated here. There are just so many different constructs to the matter and different factors and circumstances.

Kara also noted that she was active on campus in terms of promoting a broad appreciation for and celebration of multiculturalism:

And it is really exciting on that note. I spearheaded a project, a cultural awareness week that we do on campus. It is in November. We try to really celebrate the diversity on campus and hope to enlighten people about being culturally aware. Especially, in this day and age, it is so pivotal.

Kara clearly felt passionate about learning from and about people outside of her racial and ethnic groups.

Kara expressed a certain fascination with learning about other cultures as well as a sense of impatience to gain more knowledge about other peoples and cultures:

I think it is very enlightening. I actually try to pursue those connections with people. Like I said, it is just because I really, really love getting to know one another and what not, and that is part of my line of work, so I think it is just that I have to be well versed in that sort of thing. It just makes me feel like super enlightened, and it also gives me that sort of perspective that I think a lot of people hope to gain eventually, but I really want it right now.

Shortly after our interview, Kara left for a one-semester study-abroad program. Her interest and passion for understanding the world around her applied not only to her campus setting but to a more global perspective as well. Kara clearly valued multicultural perspectives and challenged others to broaden their perspectives. Rather than focusing on the in-group, Kara broadened her perspectives and learned about the ethnic backgrounds

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of others as a way to further connect with her peers. It was clear that Kara created many opportunities for her peers to engage interracially and inter-ethnically. Her identity was fused with her role as a leader and the educational programs, activities, and social events that she developed were designed to engage students from across many racial and ethnic groups.

Campus Racial Climate and Cross-Racial Interactions

As important as students' pre-college CRI experiences were, participants also spoke about how the quality of the campus racial climate (CRC) shaped their interracial interactions. Participants in this study often evaluated the quality of the campus racial climate through their perceptions of and experiences with interracial common ground and whether or not Asian Americans experienced or perceived prejudice in the form of racial stereotypes.

Common Ground for Cross-Racial Interactions

When prompted to consider the quality of the CRC, students often focused on whether they perceived a sense of common ground between themselves and peers of different racial backgrounds, or what I refer to as common ground for CRIs. In this section, I explore how students at PCU and HSU spoke about the importance of common ground for interracial interaction. Subsequently, I discuss how perceptions of common ground were somewhat divergent between the PCU and HSU campus settings.

As I noted, in response to opportunities for interracial interactions, many participants described evaluating whether they shared common ground with peers of

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different racial backgrounds. In particular, the idea of common ground was prevalent whenever students spoke about relationships between their racial group and other racial groups. For example, Susan, an Asian American student at PCU, spoke about how she thought about common ground and CRIs:

> Well, it sounds really weird and I don't know if this is—it's probably normal—but I feel like a lot of time when I interact with people of my own race, I feel like I can approach them quicker. This is so weird. Not to be mean at all, but I have noticed that. I like to talk to people and I'm not against talking to people, so I'm very open with other people, but I feel like sometimes when I talk to people of my own race and if I mention something like, "Oh, did you see that movie that this actor made?" And they'd be like, "Yeah." But if I say that to somebody of a different race, they will be like, "What?" So I feel like I'm open to interacting with everyone and I love to interact with everyone, but I feel like there is a greater sense of comfort with people of my own race because they know what I am talking about.

Susan shared that she was open to and enjoyed interacting with peers of different racial backgrounds, however, she felt that interacting with someone from the same racial background might simply be easier. Put differently, Susan felt that interacting with a peer of a different racial or ethnic background might take more time and be difficult.

Lisa, a White student at HSU, shared Susan's perspective around the relative ease and comfort of interacting with those from similar racial backgrounds:

> Yes. It's just kind of like, I feel that people think they have to be that way, they have to stick to their race, and I don't think it matters. Sometimes it's just more

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comfortable, I think, to be around people like you. Because you instantly have

that thing in common and you don't have to start kind of from scratch.

Lisa clearly expected that sharing a similar racial background, and presumably similar

experiences, with a new peer had the potential to ease initial interactions. In this sense, a

peer's racial background, if different from her own, was an obvious marker for Lisa, as

well as other students, that she might lack common ground with that peer. For this reason,

she approached CRIs with the assumption that those interactions could be more time

consuming and difficult.

HSU Common Ground for Cross-Racial Interaction. HSU students spoke with a

similar voice regarding the concept of common ground and the CRC. Most HSU students

expressed feelings that the immense racial, ethnic, national, socio-economic, and age

diversity among the student body was something to truly value. HSU participants often

felt that the campus' high level of diversity was unique and a key element, ironically, that

enhanced feelings of common ground across racial groups. In this section, I will share

some of the comments from Erik and Kara, who spoke about their expectations that peers

of different racial backgrounds at HSU shared similar experiences in terms of socio-

economic backgrounds as well as experiences with CRIs on the diverse HSU campus.

Erik, a White student in his fourth year, chose to attend HSU precisely because

the campus was so diverse:

There is some great pride that is associated with going here. I think it's a little

easier to talk about it because we have this underlying premise here of we are all

here, no one is better than anyone here. We are all HSU students. We all come

here for a plethora of reasons from a variety of backgrounds and have a common

purpose.

Erik's comment represented a sentiment that was shared by many HSU

participants. As an out of state student at HSU, Erik chose to attend the university

precisely because of the diversity represented in the study body. Erik's

perspective on the campus racial climate was very positive. He felt that the

campus was diverse and that the dominant campus culture celebrated and

embraced the vibrant diversity present on campus.

Similarly, Kara, an Asian American student at HSU, mentioned that she chose

HSU precisely because of the demographic diversity represented on campus:

Like I said, I am a very culturally in tuned sort of person, so I wanted to know

what our statistics are for how many people, like how diverse our student body is,

because that is one of the things that really attracted me to this campus.

Attending a diverse university was important to Kara, because she wanted to be able to

meet students from many different races, nationalities, and other backgrounds. She

described the campus racial climate as "very harmonious" and that the presence of

faculty and staff who "are advocates for diversity" was important to her.

Interestingly, Kara echoed Erik's sentiments regarding level of common ground

that students of any racial background bring to HSU:

That is one of their selling points. And another thing is the affordability level. One

big commonality is affordability. I think especially one thing that triggers racial

tension even more so is economic inequities and what not. So once you take that

out, it kind of sort of dispels those things that one race is better than the other, like

we are all on an equal playing field.

Clearly, HSU participants felt that the faculty and staff cared about diversity, that

students were often from similar socio-economic backgrounds, and that the demographic

diversity represented on campus made their experience unique, noteworthy, and desirable

for them personally. In short, these facets of their experience as HSU students formed the

basis for common ground. These similarities formed a bond, whether real or simply

perceived, between and among HSU participants that appeared to ease non-purposeful

curricular and co-curricular CRIs.

PCU Common Ground and Cross-Racial Interactions. In contrast to HSU,

participants described the PCU campus environment with less unanimity. Several PCU

participants felt that the campus was a positive place, while others felt that the campus

racial climate was more segregated and that students lacked a sense of common ground.

In this section, I will share several comments that illustrate these divergent opinions of

the quality of common ground among students on the PCU campus.

Leslie, an Asian American student, felt that the CRC was generally positive,

however, she also felt that real or perceived barriers prevented interracial interactions. In

particular, she felt that the presence of an Asian American Center was an indication that

the administration actively sought out ways to improve the CRC:

As an Asian American, I would say that it is very hard to find somewhere that you

belong, which is why I really appreciate the Asian American Center being here.

Because as an Asian American, you don't really know which criteria you fall into.

Am I American? Am I Asian? No. I'm in the middle.

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For Leslie, the fact that the campus supported a vibrant Asian American Center provided her with the opportunity to work within a community of Asian American peers who shared parts of her identity. The common set of experiences that she identified among her Asian American peers provided a home for her within the larger community.

Leslie additionally felt that interracial interactions presented exciting opportunities to learn about others, but she was also concerned that those interactions would be difficult. Specifically, she felt that a lack of common ground might lead to negative interactions:

> You aren't really as aware of what they are doing there. … You kind of want to go experience to see what they are like, but you also have the difficulty of, what if they don't like me? What if my ethnicity is something that they can't handle or I can't handle their ethnicity?

On a basic level, Leslie felt a distinct separation from other students of color on the PCU campus as well as from White students on campus. She wondered whether interracial interactions would be characterized by a lack of understanding, and she approached the CRIs with hesitation because she thought about how those interactions could go poorly.

Similar to Leslie's experiences, Sarah, a White student at PCU, spoke about common ground as well:

> And one of the things that you don't really think about, I guess, is that they probably do feel the exact same way as you. But sometimes if someone is of a different color, you don't think that they would know exactly what I mean if I say this, like, you just don't expect them to be able to relate necessarily, and that can be just as wrong sometimes.

Sarah's comment highlights that she often assumed that a peer of a different racial background would not be able to understand her references. In fact, she felt that interracial communication could be complicated and potentially fraught with misunderstandings due to a lack of a common language or set of experiences. Sarah did mention that her assumption about not having much in common with her peers of color was most likely wrong. However, the comment, which highlighted her perception of a lack of common ground between racial groups on the PCU campus, was indicative of how many of her peers felt as well.

In fact, few PCU students spoke about a broad sense of common ground on their campus. Instead, PCU participants' racial groups shaped their perceptions of common ground. Many Asian American PCU students commented about the strength and enjoyment they gained from the pan-Asian American community at PCU. Specifically, they enjoyed building collaborations among and across the various ethnic groups that comprise the Asian American Center. Similarly, many White PCU participants felt most comfortable interacting with other White students and commented on the lack of common ground among racial groups on campus.

While approximately 25% of PCU students identify as students of color, participants often described the campus as segregated, even if they themselves engaged in many CRIs. Given the level of structural demographic diversity on the PCU campus, one might expect more CRIs among participants. However, a perception of a lack of common ground among students appears to have diminished interracial interactions at PCU. Certainly the presence of cultural centers was important to Leslie, like many other Asian American participants, as she identified the centers as places in which she could find

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common ground with similar peers. The centers clearly fulfilled an important role on campus, however, it appeared that broader non-purposeful curricular and co-curricular interracial interactions were still elusive.

Stereotypes and Cross-Racial Interactions

As important as perceptions and experiences of common ground were for participants, students who believed the CRC was negative often mentioned that stereotypes were partly to blame for that negative assessment. A number of Asian American participants at PCU and HSU commented that they were frequently stereotyped as being academically talented, foreign exchange students, unsociable, or submissive. As a result, Asian American students often felt anxiety when confronted by these stereotypes. In this section, I share what several students said about the use of Asian American stereotypes as well as how they reacted to those stereotypes. In particular, the presence of Asian American stereotypes, according to participants, diminished the quality of the CRC for them and often, but not always, led to withdrawal behaviors.

Leslie, an Asian American student at PCU, mentioned that she was often targeted by multiple stereotypes at once:

> I mean, I don't have the best grades. You don't know that, but you're still judging me for who I am or what I look like. I think the worst is the fact that some people think I'm Asian and, therefore, I can't speak English well. They are like, "Okay. You look Asian. Oh, you speak English very well." [And I'm like] "Oh, no way! I grew up in California. I was born here."

Leslie's frustration was palpable, and the fact that peers often expected her to have the highest grades on exams was almost as annoying as the surprise of some peers that she was American and from California.

Cheryl, an Asian American student at PCU, commented that others often stereotyped her as a submissive Asian American woman:

> I can understand the immigrant, non-educated, like older generation Asian women. Like I have family members, women, who will never dare to disobey their husband because that is what they grew up with. They never really had a sense of independence that you see in, in first instance, [in] American women where women work, women do this, women do that. So, I can understand where that stereotype has come from, but I can't say the same for the friends that I have who are Asian American women. Like, no—they are angry, very independent women.

Cheryl explained further that when she presented in class, she often considered whether her peers were expecting her to be soft spoken, less confident, and deferential. Despite her awareness that some peers had these misconceptions, she remarked that she reacted to these individual situations by just being herself. While she tried simply to be herself during classroom or other individual situations, the prevalence of Asian American stereotypes motivated Cheryl to try and engage the broader campus community through her work with the Asian American Center as well.

Kelly, an Asian American student at PCU, spoke about the use of stereotypes by her White peers. She described them as painful experiences, and she therefore has come to expect this from many of her White peers. Specifically,

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she felt that her White peers were largely ignorant of her culture and background. Referring to her White roommates during her first year at PCU, Kelly talked about her efforts to educate them:

> And that was really shocking to me. I would take them out to Chinese restaurants and expose them. It was always really fun because most of my roommates have been Caucasian, so therefore I was like, "Hey. I'll cook an Asian dish. You want to try it?"

Ironically, the use of stereotypes by her White peers might have persuaded Kelly to take action. Kelly's awareness of the ignorance on the part of most of her White peers might have motivated her to try and educate them regarding Asian American cultures. Rather than simply disengaging, Kelly wanted to dispel her White roommates' stereotypes by engaging them actively in her culture.

Similarly, Clark, an Asian American student at HSU, spoke about how expectations for his behavior were often defined by his racial background. Clark commented that in high school and now in college he was expected to spend significant time with other Asian Americans:

> It was one of those things where I sort of pondered it and I wondered why, and I got angry and almost in trouble in certain cases. But then I said, okay, and rather than whining about it, I proactively showed that this—I will show everyone else who I am. So, so in high school, I was vice president of the Latino Club, and it's a partnership actually with HSU. So, I have been with them for seven years, with the organization. They are like my second family. It is just like by example, just

showing how my racial background does not necessarily determine my cultural

background.

Clark responded to these expectations by engaging interracially in ways that

would not be expected. By assuming a leadership role in a non-Asian American

mentoring group, Clark felt that he was able to shatter expectations regarding

where he spent his co-curricular time. As outlined in the literature review, Asian

Americans are often stereotyped as being a closely-knit community or even

antisocial to some extent. Clark responded by reaching out in a significant way

and assuming a leadership role in an organization designed to support and mentor

Latino high school students.

In the next section, I describe how experiences with and perceptions of

stereotypes and a lack of interracial common ground often shaped participants'

CRI experiences through influencing the extent to which participants experienced

interracial interaction anxiety.

Interracial Interaction Anxiety

Several students in this study, both White and Asian American, experienced

anxiety before, during, and after interracial interactions. Students described their anxiety

in a number of ways as well as how that anxiety affected their subsequent choices about

whether they would interact with a peer of a different racial background. The roots of

anxiety appear to coalesce around several key concepts. First, among White participants

who experienced interaction anxiety, there seemed to be a deeply held fear that they

would inadvertently say something offensive or racist. Second, among Asian American

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participants, there was a fear that interacting with Whites would lead to experiences with prejudice; something they had previously experienced from their White peers. Some Asian Americans also described feeling anxiety during interactions with members of their own ethnic group and/or with other Asian Americans in general. Finally, both Asian American and White students frequently feared that members of out-groups would not accept them. Specifically, they feared that they would not have something in common with members of the out-group and felt they had received, or feared they would receive, overt or covert messages questioning why they were seeking membership in another group.

Interracial Interaction Anxiety and Cross-Racial Interactions

As noted above, a number of White participants in this study revealed that they were uncomfortable during CRIs. This lack of comfort was often described as anxiety. Consistent with this description, Victor, a White PCU student, described similar feelings:

> I think everyone is frustrated because they are trying to prove their point, and in doing so they are trying to prove that they are not racist or they are very open and whatever. And then someone else speaks up, and then they suddenly feel like they are on the defensive, they are getting accused of being a racist when that is really not the case. You know? Everyone is trying to have the same goal to appear a certain way versus how they really feel. No one wants to come off as an asshole.

Victor noted that he was frustrated, because he often worried that what he said would be misinterpreted in ways that cast him in a negative light, or worse, as a racist. He continued by explaining, "I think a lot of it probably has to do with tension, thinking that

something bad might happen to you if you interact when 99.9% of the time nothing is going to happen." Thus, Victor noted that his worries of being or appearing racist during CRIs were associated with expectations that something bad might happen.

Worries about being or appearing racist and expectations that something bad might transpire were also associated with anxiety around engaging in CRIs. Lisa, a White student from HSU, echoed Victor's sentiments:

> I feel that it is that you're afraid to say certain things about people. I feel like people get really nervous and they don't want to say certain things. I think the anxiety comes from the idea that I don't want to offend them. And it's not that I think they are going to say anything to me, because it does not really matter, but some questions I ask come off as offensive when I just mean them as purely curiosity.

Lisa was also concerned that she might appear racist, especially when she felt she was really just being curious. Lisa seemed to be worried that she might not be sophisticated enough to ask questions in ways that were simply curious without straying into territory where she might be considered insensitive or even racist. Lisa seemed to have developed some coping mechanisms for her anxiety:

> I just don't really know what to say. I will smile a lot. I will have in the back of my mind, like, don't say anything, but if I'm talking with someone who is the same race as me, I obviously wouldn't be like, don't mention that. Or sometimes I will say something and I will be like, "Oh, should I have said that?" But most of the time it doesn't matter. So I have found that it is easier if I just remind myself that it doesn't really make a big difference, and then it's easier.

In her own way, Lisa tried to give visual cues that she was earnest and not acting in prejudicial ways. In this sense, Lisa was aware that she might come across as insensitive and, consequently, she acted in ways designed to communicate non-verbally that she was well intentioned. She often smiled during interactions and sometimes asked whether her questions were appropriate.

Unfortunately, White participants like Victor who experienced interracial interaction anxiety often described taking steps that reduced the likelihood of CRIs:

I don't think it has led to—you know what, after thinking about that for a second, I think because of those, it does make me not want to talk about race as much, because I know it could be difficult.

After first denying that he would limit his interactions, he did make a connection between his anxiety about appearing prejudiced and possibly avoiding situations where this could happen.

Similarly, Lisa mentioned that her fears about being accepted by out-group members diminished her intentions to educate herself by enrolling in certain classes:

I wanted to take African Studies for my diversity class, but I don't want to be the only White person in the class. And I know that kind of goes against some of the things that I said or whatever, but I don't want to be that only White person in there and they'd be like, "Oh, why is she here?"

Again, the feeling that she might be the only White person at an event was intimidating for Lisa and led her to limit circumstances where she might be uncomfortable.

As a result of anxiety about being isolated in social situations, some White students withdrew from situations in which they might engage in interracial interactions.

In this respect, White participants in this study were aware that interacting across racial groups seemed to take additional mental energy than simply interacting with an in-group. Sarah made a thoughtful observation when commenting on the mental energy that she perceived was necessary to "hang out" with people of different racial backgrounds:

> I think that it can be easier if you know someone. I try and I've been trying to push myself a lot more to be open to other people, to try new things and meet people of different backgrounds, but it can be daunting. I know sometimes I am just like—I'd just rather—like this can be too hard almost. It's too hard. I just want to hang out with people that I don't have to worry about saying things that will offend them and I just know that I get along with. When I say that, it sounds bad, but I don't mean it in a bad way.

Sarah noted that she might simply interact with peers of the same racial background because those interactions were just less emotionally taxing. She seemed to perceive that cross-racial communication might simply take more energy and might be laced with dangers like misperceptions that could be attributed to prejudice, ignorance, or other negative sources. For this reason, Sarah was aware that she was more likely to connect with White peers. Despite this awareness, she continued to challenge herself to engage with racially different peers.

Some Asian American students also commented that they experienced anxiety during CRIs. First, a number of Asian Americans commented that they often anticipated that White peers would be prejudiced or use stereotypes of Asian Americans during CRIs. Additionally, several Asian American students in this study also regarded interactions with other Asian Americans with some anxiety. That is, some Asian

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American students experienced anxiety when interacting with Asian Americans who were not from their ethnic group, and others experienced anxiety when interacting with Asian Americans from the same ethnic group.

Mia experienced significant prejudice in her primary and secondary schooling. She attended a predominantly White K-12 environment where she had few opportunities to interact with other Asian Americans or other students of color. When she came to PCU, she chose to build strong connections with her Asian American and South Asian American peers:

> I have always interacted with all of the cultural groups. They were very welcoming for different backgrounds and diversity. So I never felt the pressure of discrimination. I have never put myself in that kind of environment where I would be discriminated. Like I said, I was never involved in a very predominantly White student group yet. I want to experience what that is like. I want to see what student government is going to be like.

Mia's comments were quite revealing. She had developed a strong community of South Asian American women at PCU. In addition, she felt that she was ready to take on broader leadership roles at the university. She anticipated this would bring her in contact with more White peers and she clearly expected that this could lead to experiences with stereotypes and prejudice. Mia shielded herself from these experiences as much as possible by immersing herself in Asian American leadership roles and activities. A history of being discriminated against by White peers in her earlier educational experiences primed her to expect the same from her White peers in college; these

experiences and expectations produced anxiety for Mia and continued to shape the college level choices she was making regarding CRIs.

Kara, an Asian American student at HSU, also highlighted her concerns with stereotypes from her White peers. Despite this, she knew that when students only associated with people of the same race, certain barriers could develop:

But then when you're all in-group, it's like Asian people versus White people. Like we don't want to branch out. We don't want to go out because you don't want to have those moments where it gets difficult and those—I think there is the fear of the unknown coming from Asian people to White people.

In this sense, Kara wanted to reach out and connect with others, but it was somewhat uncommon, in her experience, to see CRIs between her White and Asian American peers. Additionally, she was aware that interactions with other racial groups, Whites in particular, might expose her to stereotypes of Asian Americans.

Interracial interactions were not the only source of anxiety for Asian Americans in this study. As I noted earlier, some Asian American participants felt anxiety when they interacted with other Asian Americans. Reflecting on this conundrum, Kara, an Asian American student at HSU, spoke about her own anxiety:

It's just a huge combination of emotions that I feel in interacting with Asian students. And even taking, for example, Asian Americans who live here. Like there are a lot of Pilipino Americans on campus, and I'm like, okay, I try to identify on that level because we are all Pilipino, but there are a lot of Pilipino Americans who have never been to the Philippines, who only know the culture within their own family settings, and they only want to hang out with one another.

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But I try to talk to them, and they don't speak Pilipino, you know? Their bonding

point is that Pilipino Americans really like Pilipino Americans. So it's like, okay.

And they are very elitist, too. They are like, "Why do [you] have White friends?"

And I'm like, "You grew up in America. Why are you asking me why I have

White friends?" It's like really, really weird. I'm like a real Asian person who

came from, like, the Philippines and who grew up in America, but then I'm not

really allowed into their group because I'm not one of them. I'm not looking for

my identity. I know what my identity is, you know? It's weird.

Kara stated that she was a Pilipina American who had spent significant time in the

Philippines and who had experienced the culture and language firsthand. Yet, she did not

feel comfortable in the Pilipino student group at her institution. Kara suggested that the

Pilipino student group at her institution was for students whose connection was that they

were Pilipino and American. She suggested that they shared a bond in wanting to know

more about their culture. In this sense, Kara felt that she possessed what many Pilipino

American students wanted, that is, a strong connection to her culture and nationality. She

suggested that other Pilipino American students shared the lack of firsthand connection to

their culture. While this was obviously complicated, Kara was clearly annoyed and

anxious that she did not feel welcome or comfortable in the Pilipino student group. Kara

continued to say that these dynamics caused her to "get really anxious when I talk to

Asian people because I feel like I'm not Asian American enough for them." Kara

suggested that she received messages that she was not the right type of Asian American,

and she was annoyed and anxious about this dynamic.

Terri disclosed that she sometimes perceived that other Asian Americans felt that she did not act Asian American enough. She wondered at their reasoning: "Because I wear different clothes? Because I have a different style? Because my family comes from a little bit more money? Is that why you are saying that I act White?" In this sense, Terri expressed annoyance that her status as an Asian American was doubted and that she sometimes had to prove that she was Asian American.

Mia, a South Asian American student at PCU, also noted that she experienced some anxiety interacting with other Asian Americans:

I definitely felt anxious to approach the Indian student group here, just because they have stigmatized my South Asian residential group for several reasons that are personal for some members and I can't change that for them. And in particular the E Board that has tried to reach out, and it is hard for me to approach them. The thing that is frightening is that we are both Indian and I should not be really scared to approach them, but I just feel like they have such an image of us and my student group that they wouldn't take us seriously and wouldn't really want to respect what we have to say. That's why I just shy away from them.

Mia was concerned about how she was perceived by other South Asian Americans and whether she fit the expected mold for South Asian American women and how South Asian American women were supposed to act. Given her concerns, she described limiting some of her interactions with her South Asian American peers.

Interracial Interaction Anxiety and Common Ground

The perception or experience that a student might not have something in common with a peer of a different racial background also produced anxiety among a number of participants. For example, Kelly, an Asian American student at PCU, observed that she was often more comfortable speaking with and hanging out with Asian Americans:

It definitely takes me longer, in terms of developing a friendship—it takes longer to get used to. I mean, that time has shortened a lot more since I have gotten to know more and more people, but at the same time, I do realize that it is a lot faster to hit it off with someone who is Asian versus someone who is Caucasian or African American just because there is a lot of —I'm not sure what I should talk to you about. Like I didn't grow up watching—I didn't know too much about— when I was younger I was only at home, so it's like all Asian. I didn't get to know those classic American movies and things like that.

Kelly mentioned that she expected to feel more comfortable talking with other Asian American students, because she felt they were more likely to understand her family's cultural background. On a basic level, Kelly felt that other Asian Americans were more likely to get her jokes, as well as understand her family dynamics. Kelly also observed that she might not understand the jokes and cultural references that an African American or White peer might make in simple conversation. Therefore, she expected interracial interactions with other students to be more difficult.

Cheryl, an Asian American student at PCU, observed, "I think that is what I am more nervous about than, 'Okay, you don't look like me, I'm nervous.' It's just a matter

of interests and personality." Cheryl seemed to suggest that she approached some interactions with people of different racial backgrounds with the expectation that they might lack similar interests and personalities. While she did fully rely on those negative assumptions, she was predisposed to believe that CRIs could be more difficult when compared to interactions with other Asian Americans. Cheryl felt that interactions with Asian Americans would be easier because she expected to have common interests. The idea that CRIs might take more time and be less comfortable was a sign that Cheryl experienced some additional anxiety when considering potential interracial interactions with her peers, particularly when she felt that there might be a lack of "things in common."

Lisa, a White student at HSU, felt similarly to Cheryl:

Obviously, it is more comfortable to interact with people like you, because I know, sometimes, if you look around on campus, it seems like the kids still stay in their own groups. Because you instantly have that thing in common and you don't have to start kind of from scratch.

Lisa's comment summarized the connection between perceptions of a lack of common ground and interaction anxiety. The idea that she would need to "start from scratch" was intimidating and overwhelming and in-group interactions appeared to be safer and simply less time consuming .

The perception of a lack of common ground was a salient experience for Asian and Whites alike. For some students in this study, the idea of interaction with a person or group of a different racial background, with whom they might have little in common, promoted feelings of anxiety and apprehension. The perception that common ground

existed between people of the same racial background and might not exist between people of different racial backgrounds seemed to be an underlying influence on the interaction decisions of some students. Specifically, participants spoke at length about why they were sometimes hesitant to join cultural student groups, i.e., ones outside of their own racial or ethnic group, and often felt that they were leaving the safety of their in-group when reaching out across racial boundaries.

Interracial Interaction Anxiety and Stereotypes. Similar to students who perceived of a lack of interracial common ground, students who experienced or perceived stereotypes often responded with feelings of anxiety. This was true for both White and Asian American students. White students, concerned that they might appear prejudiced when interacting with students of color, often experienced anxiety as a result. Similarly, Asian American students in this study were often well aware of the model minority, unsociable, and nationality stereotypes that their peers often harbored. Kelly, an Asian American PCU student, discussed experiencing many stereotypes throughout her early school years:

> Where I went to elementary school was pretty much all Caucasians. I was probably one of two Asians in the entire town. So it was very different. I was very introverted back then. I didn't really talk at all to people, unless we were very close friends. I guess because I really didn't like the stereotypes. They would say, "You didn't get a 100 on this math exam?" I didn't really like that. Because people don't know anything about [me], so I don't want people to get the wrong idea or have that stereotype.

Kelly reacted to these experiences by describing herself as shy and saying that she would avoid conversations with people. The salience of stereotypes in many of her interactions with White peers in pre-college environments produced anxiety, which then led to withdrawal behaviors.

As a college student, Kelly gained a great deal confidence from her involvement in the Asian American Center. Talking about her activities as a club leader, Kelly described her efforts to educate others regarding her culture:

I guess my events are more culture based, but there are stereotypes that probably are true. But I guess I want to break down the stereotypes, because I had a hard time growing up because of those stereotypes. People just think stupid things about you.

Kelly's negative experiences with stereotypes often led to anxiety and withdrawal behaviors in pre-college environments. In her fourth year at PCU, Kelly spoke more confidently about how she handled stereotypes as well as her efforts to dispel those stereotypes by educating her peers.

Summary

The factors that shaped the CRI experiences of students in this study emerged from my conversations with students at the two participating campuses. These findings highlight the dynamic nature of each student's CRI experiences. First, the pre-college experiences of the students framed how they thought about CRIs in college. For example, students who experienced numerous CRIs in pre-college environments often described higher levels of comfort when they experienced CRIs in college. Next, students'

perspectives about race and race-related interactions shaped the extent to which students balanced their preference for in-group and out-group interactions. Finally, impressions of the CRC shaped students' experiences with CRIs. Specifically, students often thought about the quality of the CRC through two main indicators: (1) whether they perceived or experienced common ground with peers of different racial groups and (2) whether prejudice, manifesting in racial stereotypes, was present on campus. The CRC indicators were important, because both Asian American and White students linked those factors to interracial interaction anxiety and that anxiety often shaped how students experienced CRIs. Indeed, students who perceived or experienced prejudice and stereotypes or little common ground often felt anxiety and disengaged from interracial interactions. Thus, among students in this study, interracial interaction anxiety played a major role in negatively shaping CRI experiences.

While I have explored each of these concepts separately, students often linked the concepts together in ways that more holistically explained how they experienced CRIs. As one might expect, pre-college opportunities for positive CRIs might lead to a more refined sense of RID as well as reduced levels of interaction anxiety through an improved expectation for interracial common ground. Next, in Chapter Six, I explore the ways in which students described learning from CRI experiences. In Chapter Seven, I present a discussion of these findings in relation to extant literature. And, I conclude with a discussion of implications in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER SIX

CROSS-RACIAL INTERACTION LEARNING OUTCOMES

During this investigation, participants discussed how they personally gained from interracial interactions with their college peers. The gains that participants described were consistent with quantitative research regarding the learning outcomes associated with CRIs. While these outcomes have been quantitatively outlined in Chapters One and Two, it is also instructive to hear specifically how students described those gains. Their descriptions provide context for the quantitative findings regarding the learning outcomes associated with CRIs.

In this chapter I outline the major areas of growth that students identified, as well as how the students felt this growth was attained as the result of CRIs. In the 25 interviews with White and Asian American participants, students identified five primary learning outcomes: (1) enhanced *self-confidence* during interracial interactions and in general, (2) increased *cultural competency*, including the attainment of skills necessary for success in a diverse workplace, (3) an improved *commitment to social justice*, (4) augmented skills related to increased *cognitive flexibility*, and (5) improved *leadership skills*. Where appropriate, I will also provide details regarding the learning outcomes differences that White and Asian American participants experienced.

Enhanced Interracial Interaction Self-Confidence

The notion that enhanced interracial interaction self-confidence resulted from CRIs emerged in many student interviews. Study participants described CRIs as providing important circumstances in which they could practice and further develop their self-confidence related to subsequent interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds. Students described opportunities for CRIs as often occurring during interactions with roommates, classmates, and peers in a variety of student clubs or as the result of elected leadership roles. As a result of these opportunities, students often spoke about their ability to participate in interracial situations with more self-assurance and less anxiety. Lisa, a White student from HSU, observed that she felt more confident during CRIs when compared with her high school experiences:

> I'm definitely more confident now because now I have more friends who are diverse and whatever. One of my best friends, like I said, she is Filipina, so I always had like one friend, but now I have a ton who are any different race and speak different languages and all that.

Just the reality that Lisa's diverse campus provided numerous opportunities to interact with peers from many different backgrounds appeared to normalize those interactions. She addressed this point when she stated the following:

> In the classroom, I'm more comfortable because now I know more, because we learn about different cultures and stuff. So I know more than I did in high school, which is better because I didn't know anything. It's kind of like a big downfall at my school.

In comparing her high school experiences with peers of racial backgrounds different from her own to her current interactions, Lisa felt that her college life provided more opportunities for interracial interactions as well as more opportunities to educate herself through assignments and discussions:

> I know that when we would be in my suburban town and a group of girls walked past any Black people, they would get really scared or something. I definitely don't anymore. I think I was kind of feeding off the energy of my friends; they were scared so I was scared.

Lisa was proud of the changes that she experienced in college. She felt that she was more confident in her own values she felt this helped her engage in interracial interactions. She observed that she was much less likely to be a passive bystander if a peer made a racial joke:

> In high school, I didn't want to rock the boat. I wouldn't say I would agree—I definitely wouldn't agree with them, but I wouldn't say anything. I would just kind of ignore it, like whatever. But if someone says anything [now], I'm like, "Excuse me, please don't, that's rude," or whatever.

As Lisa described it, for the first time in her life she was part of a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff who would challenge the use of stereotypes and prejudice. Lisa said that she had noticed through various social media that her former high school classmates' friendships in college were predominantly with White peers. She even engaged her former high school classmates in a discussion about why their friendship groups seem to be predominantly White.

Interestingly, she mentioned that, in high school, she "felt the energy" of her high school peers. That energy was focused on diminishing anyone who did not fit into their predominantly White community and this often took the form of prejudice towards peers of color. In contrast, the "energy" that she enjoyed at HSU was focused on acceptance and valuing diversity. As part of the HSU community, Lisa felt a greater sense of strength regarding her own values because the institution and people at HSU had similar values. Given this new found camaraderie, Lisa felt more confident about her own values and would challenge former high school and even college peers who seemed to be drawing on stereotypes or prejudice when interacting with one another.

Kevin, an Asian American student at PCU, described his experience of attending a university with far more racial diversity than his high school:

Well, I think it's interesting just because I came from all White and came to a really diverse school. I don't know it has really evolved. Maybe myself as a person has grown to be more social so it is easier for me to just approach anyone. For me, it was more of a personal growth, how I deal with relationships type of growth. Me as a whole evolved. Maybe when I came here as a freshman, I was a bit tentative, but as the years went on and I took on more leadership positions.

He perceived himself as being a bit nervous and "tentative" when he arrived at PCU, however, he described a process of interacting with different peers and eventually becoming more and more comfortable with those interactions.

Kevin mentioned that this experience was punctuated by incremental changes in which he became friendlier with peers from a variety of different backgrounds:

I make friends with one person and then make friends with five more people, and

then I see later, I've done that, I can do this. Maybe I started off as a leader, as the

president, and make friends with all of these people and then out of the

presidency. Like, you did it as president, you can do it not as president. It was a

growing confidence with every day, with each new person I meet. It really helps.

Kevin observed that he moved from being an inexperienced person to being the president

of his student group concerned with sharing his culture and encouraging students from

different ethnic and racial groups to participate in his group. Kevin's experience of

growing up in a predominantly White community offered him few opportunities to

interact with people who shared his racial background; he enjoyed these interactions in

college and even became a leader among his peers. Kevin drew strength from the large

Asian American community that he encountered at PCU. The large and diverse Asian

American PCU community signaled to Kevin that he could be himself and, as evidenced

by his election to a leadership position, that he was also a valued member of his

community. In turn, Kevin brought this newfound confidence to his interactions with

Asian American peers as well as students of different racial backgrounds.

Susan, an Asian American student at PCU, also felt that her experience

successfully running for a leadership position in an Asian American group, which

included numerous ethnic groups, enhanced her self-confidence:

Confidence is a big thing with me. I always have had low self-confidence so this

kind of helped me a little bit. I was so happy. I called my mom and my dad and

was like, "Guess what?" First, I was like, "Guess, I didn't win." And they were

like, "It's okay, don't worry." I was like, "Just kidding!" I was just really excited.

I just felt like people looked up to me or I don't know. I don't know if people

really think this, but in my head I'm always thinking that just because she doesn't

drink or party, she must be one of those goody goody Indian people. So that is

why I was kind of happy that people actually accepted me, I guess.

Clearly, Susan was very pleased with being elected to the student group. It appears that

she attributed her success, in part, to a realization that her peers might not view her

through a stereotypical lens of a "goody, goody" South Asian American student. Susan

definitely was sensitive to meta-stereotypes about her ethnicity and she was pleased to

find that her peers were not relying on these stereotypes.

Cultural Competency

As I noted in Chapter One, cultural competency is defined as the acquisition of

knowledge regarding the values, beliefs, and daily experiences of a variety of racial

groups and cultures, which can be particularly beneficial during interpersonal, academic,

or professional interactions (Jayakumar, 2008). Participants in this study felt a sense of

satisfaction and pride in their ability to understand the culture, values, and history of

many of their peers. Participants valued cultural competence, in part, because it eased

their access into racial groups outside of their own. Some students enjoyed moving

between different racial groups adeptly and additionally felt that their ability to do so

would benefit their social and professional lives. Of course, the term *cultural competence*

was not discussed during interviews. Rather, I often asked students why they felt that

knowledge and an appreciation for the experiences of other racial groups was important.

Their responses, detailed below, are consistent with what academics refer to as cultural competence.

Clark, an Asian American student at HSU, described his involvement in a community service group that works with Latino high school students. He observed, "From there I have learned so much about different culture and their morals, and just sort of absorbed what I could from that entire culture, and I everything to give in thanks for that." Throughout his interview, Clark described a strong connection to Latino culture and people and felt that he was a more well-informed and thoughtful person because he could speak Spanish and help inspire Latino high school students. Clark further described his experiences, saying "The first time learning about Hispanic culture, that was just like diving into another world. I guess it is an addiction now. I would say I just kept wanting to learn more about different cultures." Clark's experiences stepping outside of his own cultural background and diving into another culture were enormously compelling for him personally, and he appreciated viewing the world from multiple perspectives.

Leslie, an Asian American student at PCU, echoed Clark's sentiments:

I feel like college really allows you to have these interactions with students, because in high school you are kind of in this bubble and you don't really meet very many people. So coming to college, you meet so many people, and people know people. The whole seven degrees of separation kind of thing where you start meeting these people and you're like, "Oh, I didn't know that, I didn't know that." And you build on your knowledge, which is, I think, a very interesting thing

because every ethnic background or racial background has different customs and

things that you never really know until you experience it.

Leslie valued the experience of meeting peers from different racial groups or different

Asian American ethnic backgrounds, in part because she was able to learn about different

customs. She also felt that, once she started to meet new students, those new peers

allowed her to improve her knowledge about their cultures, beliefs, and generally how

they do things in their everyday life:

And learning their different customs is different as well. So you kind of pick up

things here and there, like what makes up their background and how they were

raised. You do see some similarities across this huge chunk of "Asian-ness," if

you can say that, but you also mingle with people from the African American

Center and the Latino Center.

Leslie shared that she genuinely enjoyed learning about other Asian cultures as

well as the cultures of other racial groups. She mentioned that she found it

interesting simply to share how everyday things were done in her culture as well

as other cultures.

Leslie discussed how she did not want to go through her life being

ignorant of other peoples' cultures:

I think the biggest thing in college for me was seeing all of these things and trying

to explore and become more culturally aware, just to be knowledgeable. Because

you don't want to go into the world being ignorant of these different cultures.

This quotation illustrates how Leslie felt that a lack of a broad knowledge of other cultures was an indication of an unacceptable level of ignorance about people and life in general.

Nate, a White student at PCU, observed that knowledge about another person's culture, norms, history, and practices helped build a relationship. He said, "It creates like a rapport. Like, if you're very ignorant about someone's culture, that attitude comes off as very standoffish and 'Why are you talking to me? You don't know where I'm coming from.'" Nate observed that he did not want to appear ignorant of another person's culture. He wanted to be educated about at least some of the other person's experience and start a friendship, project, or assignment with that person with the sense that he cared enough to know some of the other's background.

Kara, an Asian American student at HSU, felt strongly that cultural competence was a primary ingredient for being successful in life. Furthermore, she suggested that college was the easiest place to develop cultural competence:

> I don't know where else I could get this sort of thing. I mean, I know that what I experience here will mimic what I am going to experience in the real world. … So if you don't know how to cope with it right know or you don't gain the skills to find those kinds of interactions, then you're not going to survive in the real world.

Kara felt that college presented a unique opportunity to broaden one's horizons and gain experience interacting with peers of different backgrounds; experiences she felt would benefit her personal life and career.

Students also communicated that they believed possessing cultural competency was a necessary life skill. Clark, an Asian American student at PCU, felt strongly about the need for cultural competencies:

> Because there is so much to get from being culturally in depth with someone else. If I meet another person and they happen to be of Middle Eastern descent, another person might not even understand the difference between a Pakistani and Indian, but I know very well how that came to be and how the social constructions separated these two. And when you explain it by history and by culture, they are very, very similar. They have their differences, but those differences came over time just so that they can make themselves different.

Clark's student leadership role often brought him into contact with students from across his campus, and he prided himself on being able to rely on his knowledge of other students to help him navigate and even challenge social barriers.

Cultural Competency Across Race

While cultural competency was identified as a learning outcome for all participants, it is quite possible that Asian Americans in this study gained cultural competencies from interracial interactions in ways different from their White peers. For example, Asian American participants had ample pre-college opportunities to interact with White peers. In fact, only one Asian American student in this study attended a high school with few White peers. For this reason, Asian American students in this study were familiar with predominantly White environments. Some Asian American students, as I have noted previously, spoke at length about experiences with prejudice and

discrimination from their White peers in pre-college settings. Others described having many White friends in pre-college environments and feeling comfortable interacting with their White peers. Asian American students understood what it meant to function in predominantly White environments. Therefore, it can be assumed that most Asian American students in this study may not have further benefited from interracial interactions with other White peers. However, Asian American students did talk, as I have cited above, extensively about gaining cultural competencies through their college CRIs with other Asian American ethnic group and other students of color.

Indeed, college level gains in cultural competencies among Asian Americans were often discussed by Asian American students as being related to interactions with Asian Americans of different ethnic backgrounds and interactions with other students of color including Latino/a and African American peers. This is not to say that Asian Americans did not gain from interracial interactions with their White peers, however, Asian American participants were unable or chose not to explicitly identify gains in cultural competency through interactions with White peers.

Several Asian American students spoke about responding to ignorance of Asian American cultures and ethnic backgrounds among their White peers. These same Asian American students responded by providing opportunities for their White peers to gain an appreciation of Asian American cultures and ethnicities. Thus, it appears that Asian Americans benefited somewhat less from interracial interactions with Whites and instead provided opportunities for their White peers to gain cultural competencies.

By contrast, White students spoke about gaining cultural competencies through interactions with students of color in general. Many White participants did not have

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opportunities for these types of interactions in pre-college environments, due to low structural diversity in their neighborhoods and schools. Therefore, it can be assumed that college CRI opportunities with students of color, regardless of their racial background, generated gains in cultural competency among White participants.

Enhanced Commitment to Social Justice

As became obvious during interviews, a number of students noticed themselves becoming more accepting of others as a result of CRIs. It appears that cross-racial relationships in their lives contributed to their ability to better understand the perspectives of others in ways that made them more sympathetic to the ideas, opinions, and experiences of others. In this sense, interracial interactions personalized abstract political or social ideas in ways that allowed participants to more actively advocate for people with whom they previously did not feel a particular connection.

Kara, an Asian American student from PCU, reflected on how she changed as a result of her interracial interactions:

When you have those cross-cultural interactions or cross-racial interactions, you break that thing of oneness. You don't have one definition for one thing. It becomes broader, and you start accepting more people. That's the thing. It's not a thing like you're accepting people, it's like your definition has changed so you have to accept more people. It's like you're obligated to as opposed to. It's like a really cool thing.

Kara noted that, as a result of her CRIs, her definition of what was normal changed. Essentially, she found that she better understood the experiences of others, and this

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allowed her to identify more readily with their experiences. She even identified this change as an "obligation" in which she had no option but to accept the person.

Importantly, Kara took the conversation a step further. She noted that, once a definition of what was normal or acceptable had changed she felt a responsibility to act. As an example, she explained how some students put this responsibility into action:

> These are people who are relevant and zealous about what they are doing. So it is contagious and that starts affecting people, and then you start generating a lot of people who are varied. I mean, I have all of these White friends who are part of the Freedom for Palestine movement, and they are like fighting about this just because they have Palestinian friends who can't advocate as much because people would see it as a bias. So it is like a really interesting thing to see those kinds of domino effects.

Not only did Kara see people as obligated, but she also described her peers as experiencing a feeling of "contagious" behavior in which they began advocating for other peoples' issues. Kara felt that it was important to learn about the experiences of others and, where necessary, advocate on their behalf.

Kara also spoke about the enhanced commitment to social justice that she experienced as a result of CRIs. She described her own evolution towards a place where she developed more "tolerance" for differences:

> Tolerance. I think that is a huge thing. Respect for people's vantage points as well, too. Because you can't just be like … "I understand how you feel," like they are seeking for something that I already have. So there is that huge disconnect. But when you see that in school, too—and also people in my classrooms are

people who have emigrated from Albania and they have won it on a lottery, and

this is like their thing. There are people who are fighting, like illegal immigrants,

for education here, too. So it's those little kinds of things, those little personal

stories that really project onto their whole racial thing in a positive way.

Kara described the personalization of abstract issues by acknowledging that she knew the

"personal stories" of people with whom she previously did not have a connection.

Lisa, a White student at HSU, mentioned that she often felt uncomfortable with

some of the sentiments of her peers in high school. She felt some of her peers made

negative comments about people of color. While this made her uncomfortable, Lisa rarely

challenged this prejudiced behavior. By contrast, as a result of meeting so many people of

color in college, Lisa developed more of her own voice. She asserted that:

In high school, I didn't want to rock the boat. I wouldn't say I would agree—I

definitely wouldn't agree with them, but I wouldn't say anything. I would just

kind of ignore it, like whatever. But if someone says anything [now], I'm like,

"Excuse me, please don't, that's rude," or whatever.

Lisa's development of friendships and relationships with peers of color gave her the

necessary strength to challenge prejudiced comments that she heard in college. She felt

these experiences more personally and she was therefore more likely to act.

Cheryl, an Asian American student at PCU, met students from many different

racial backgrounds in college as well as during a multiracial student leadership retreat.

Cheryl felt more connected to her peers of different racial backgrounds:

You may be aware of the issue itself and you understand that people go through it,

but now seeing someone that you know, that you've just met this weekend or

you've become close to this weekend, this is what they went through, so you

develop that kind of deeper understanding.

For many students, including Cheryl and Lisa, understanding that discrimination and

prejudice existed was disappointing enough. However, personally knowing someone who

was targeted by prejudice and discrimination added impetus for them to act. Moving from

an abstract appreciation that discrimination and prejudice were wrong to understanding

how a friend was impacted by prejudice, for example, spurred them to action. Lisa, for

her part, commented that she was no longer a silent bystander when a peer said

something negative about another person's racial background. Kara was particularly

impressed by the ways in which personally understanding a peer's story, for example,

how someone she knew was affected by stereotypes, made her and many of her peers

activists in causes in which they did not directly benefit.

Making a connection and knowing someone's story appears to have moved

students in this study into a more active orientation in which they were more likely to

speak out against discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. More importantly, students

described an evolution between speaking out against discrimination when it appeared in

their daily experience and subsequently working proactively on behalf of people with

whom they might not have previously been connected. Again, Asian American

participants identified interactions with other Asian American ethnic groups, as well as

interactions with other peers of color, as contributing to their commitment to social

justice. Whites in this study seemed to improve their commitment to social justice issues

as a result of interracial interactions in general.

Increased Cognitive Skills

As I explained in Chapter Two, interacting with peers of different racial backgrounds often challenges students to think in more complex ways. This is primarily because students from different backgrounds often have varied ways of analyzing similar circumstances. The ability of a person to think critically about the perspectives of someone from a different racial or cultural group often enables an individual to think more critically about his or her own opinions, practices, and beliefs. Students in this study often attributed these types of outcomes to interracial interactions. Nate, a White student at PCU, described how he has learned from CRIs:

> I think there are always two sides to a story. One of the things I always try to do is consider where somebody else is coming from. And it is great when there is any conversation to see where the other person is coming from. I think if people just took a step back for a second and just like I said before, rather than just getting mad, trying to understand what they actually are getting mad at.

In his opinion, analysis of a situation or person's opinion often stopped when anger or frustration took over. While it was not always easy, Nate valued taking a step back and really thinking through another person's perspectives before or even while engaging with the person about those perspectives.

Kelly, an Asian American student at PCU, also spoke about her ability to take a step back and understand another person's perspective. For Kelly and Nate, there was not one correct opinion, but rather multiple ways to think about an issue:

> I guess I like to hear about experiences and I like to see how people deal with problems. Like if every person has a different approach, I might not necessarily

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solve a problem the right way, but usually people of different backgrounds have

ways of thinking of solving very differently, and it is always like, I guess, I would

never have thought of that, and that is actually a lot better.

For Kelly, there were multiple ways to look at and analyze a problem. Additionally, she

recognized that it was entirely possible that another person, trained in another discipline,

might provide a clue to a particular challenge. The perspective that there can be multiple

solutions to a problem underscored the nuanced experiences of Kelly and Nate. Kelly

continued by comparing how she understands problems from her own background and

the value of solving a problem with people who do not think like her:

I come from a very sciencey kind of background, like I'm very focused on, "Here

is the answer, must have a solution for this." Other people are very open-minded

about, well, it could be like this, like people think very far ahead. I've never been

that type of person, so I think it depends on what kind of background you come

from. You can learn a lot in terms of how to approach all sorts of problems. And

you always have a stereotype of a person until you meet.

Kelly knew that her approach to problems often came from one perspective that worked

for her more often than not. However, she also valued thinking through a problem with a

friend who might bring a more interdisciplinary approach that might have evaded Kelly.

Leadership Opportunities

Finally, many students discussed the degree to which opportunities to interact

with peers of different racial backgrounds constituted important leadership opportunities.

In fact, many students placed themselves in leadership roles within clubs and student

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government in the process of realizing their goals of encouraging peers to engage in interracial and interethnic interactions. Through workshops, social and educational events, and through student government positions, many students purposefully engaged in student-led co-curricular interactions. Nate and Mia exemplify these motivations through the leadership positions that they assumed, at least in part, because they wanted to help their peers engage with one another across ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Nate, a White student at PCU, stated that he had been asked several times to participate in diversity dialogue groups, which are supported by the campus leadership office. He observed that he benefited from those opportunities in several ways:

Being more comfortable in front of a group, [the] public speaking thing. Specifically with intergroup dialogues, I was just learning how to facilitate conversation, learning when it is appropriate to step in, when I should take a step back because they are on to something. Just little skills like that will benefit me in the future.

Nate clearly benefited from the many leadership opportunities related to CRIs and welcomed those interactions as providing important skills necessary for his personal and professional success.

Mia, a South Asian American student at PCU, described how her interest in collaborating across racial and ethnic groups led to her involvement in a multicultural sorority as well as her election to a Pan-Asian American council. In particular, Mia observed that the council was concerned with advancing connections and agenda shared between the major Asian American groups on campus. When asked what she saw as some of the benefits of her role in these student groups, Mia made the following remarks:

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I would say leadership skills. Learning different leadership skills. I don't really

see a difference between White students and Asian American students, but just

how we work. Some things come from an Asian background, like you just know

where they learned it and where they come from and how they work differently

than White student groups or White students. You definitely take that into your

own leadership skills and kind of improve yourself. One of the things I learned

was time management that I never learned before. That came from the Pan-Asian

leadership board and sorority, because I had to balance it. It is not … because of

any social or cultural norms. It was just because I was so involved in those groups

that it helped me to develop those skills.

Mia described the primary benefits of her work on the board and in the council as

presenting her opportunities to grow as a leader. In the process of helping to organize

events between ethnic and racial groups, Mia was able to develop her time management

and leadership skills.

Summary

In general, students found a great deal of value in simply learning about other

racial and ethnic groups, sharing similarities with members of other races and ethnicities,

and gaining an appreciation for the experiences of peers from different racial and ethnic

backgrounds. In many ways, the accumulation of knowledge of others' experiences,

stories, and histories was, for many participants, the antithesis of ignorance. Clearly,

participants in this study believed that their interracial interactions led to important

learning outcomes. Specifically, HSU and PCU students alike felt that, as a result of

CRIs, they experienced enhanced self-confidence, increased cultural competency, greater commitment to issues of social justice, and more flexible thought processes, while also developing their leadership skills. As noted, White student appeared to benefit from interracial interactions with all students of color, while Asian American participants appeared to benefit primarily from interactions with other Asian American ethnic groups and other students of color. Simply put, students in this study valued interracial interactions, in part, because they believed they gained skill sets that would benefit them both professionally and personally. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings of this study in the context of existing research and conclude with a final chapter that outlines the implications of this study for higher education research, policy, and practice.

Revised Conceptual Framework

In this section, I revisit the initial conceptual framework that was first presented in Figure 1 at the conclusion of the literature review and present a revised framework that incorporates the experiences of participants in this study. The revised framework clarifies how the previously discussed factors are related, summarizes how those factors interact to shape CRI experiences among participants, and offers a framework for more fully understanding how students in this study experience CRIs in college.

The initial conceptual framework of this study omitted reference to the positive and negative CRI trajectories described by students. Specifically, findings from interviews with participants in this study suggest that a student's interest in CRI experiences is shaped by numerous factors and those factors contribute to the quality and quantity of those interactions and associated learning outcomes. Figure 2 provides a

revised summary of how students in this study experienced CRIs. The model suggests that previous CRIs (e.g., pre-college CRIs) are linked to how students experience subsequent interracial interactions (e.g., postsecondary CRIs) because they appear to "prime" students for future interactions (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 27). Next, racial perspectives shape a student's interest in and experiences with CRIs. As an important environmental factor, the quality of the CRC serves as the context in which CRIs occur. Students identified interracial common ground as well as experiences with and perceptions of prejudice and stereotypes as additionally shaping their CRI experiences. Finally, students describe interracial interaction anxiety as a particularly salient and damaging factor that negatively shapes their CRI experiences.

The conceptual framework also posits that perceptions of the CRC and students' racial identity shape one another. A student's level of RID often frames how they interpret CRIs as well as the quality of the campus racial climate. Similarly, the quality of the CRC shapes the racial environment in which students exist, and consequently the way they make sense of their own racial identity in relation to that environment. Finally, the model posits that pre-college CRIs, RID, and the CRC all shape a student's level of interracial interaction anxiety, thereby indirectly influencing subsequent CRIs through their direct impact on experienced anxiety. The dynamic interplay of these factors influences a student's interest in subsequent CRIs as well as the quantity and quality of interracial interactions. Finally, the magnitude of learning outcomes is shaped by the quality and quantity of CRIs.

Figure 2. A Model of How Students' Experiences Shape CRIs in College
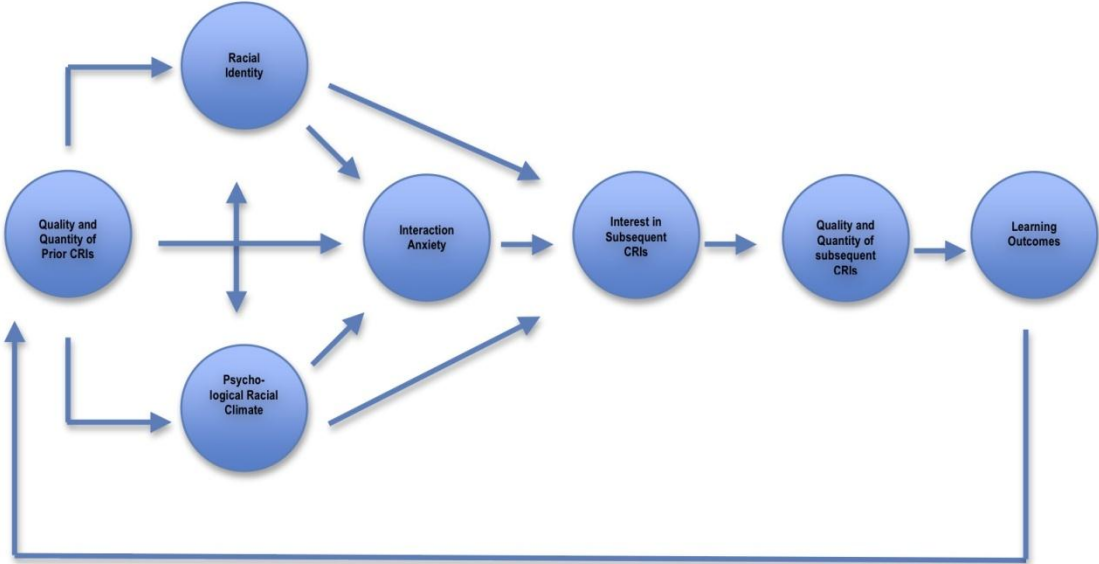
CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

In the course of this study, students revealed how they perceived and experienced CRIs and these insights have the potential to help faculty, staff, and student leaders purposefully cultivate campus environments that are rich in interracial interactions and encourage their associated learning outcomes. In this chapter, I place the findings of the current examination in the context of previous CRI research. While it is unconventional to separate the discussion chapter into multiple sections, given the length of the discussion, I divide this chapter into five different sections that focus on (1) types of cross-racial interactions, (2) pre-college interactions, (3) perspectives on race, (4) campus racial climate, and (5) anxiety. In each of these areas I discuss the extent to which the findings confirm, contradict, extend, or complicate the findings of prior studies.

Types of Cross-Racial Interactions

As I noted in Chapter Four, students in this study described five campus environments in which they experienced interracial interactions. In the process of discussing those interaction environments, I highlighted concepts that confirm, contradict, and add to previous research. To clearly display the environments that students described, I developed a typology of CRIs that is displayed in Table 4 below.

Consistent with existing literature (Chang, 2001; Harper and Hurtado, 2007), students in this study reported that few educators purposefully facilitated student interracial interactions in curricular environments. In fact, only two students on the PCU campus experienced purposeful co-curricular CRIs. Despite nearly ten years of research regarding the paucity of purposefully facilitated CRIs, few faculty and staff members appear to be structuring opportunities for students to interact with one another across their racial differences at PCU and HSU.

Table 4. Revised Cross-Racial Interaction Typology		
	Purposeful CRIs	**Non-purposeful CRIs**
Curricular	Educator-initiated student CRIs within the classroom and/or other credit-bearing experiences (e.g. presentation groups purposefully arranged to maximize the demographics of each group).	Random or unplanned CRI opportunities within the classroom and/or other credit-bearing experiences (e.g. CRIs among students who sit near each other in class).
Co-curricular	Educator-initiated student CRIs among individual students or diverse student organizations (e. g. diversity dialogue groups, cross-racial leadership retreats, funding provided to encourage collaboration among specific racial groups).	Random or unplanned CRI opportunities that occur among individual students or diverse student organizations (e.g. CRIs that might occur through participation in a club, activity, study space, shuttle bus or other co-curricular forum).
Co-curricular student-led	Student leader–initiated CRIs among individual students or student organizations including lecture series, diversity celebrations or other social or educational events (e.g. programs, events, conferences, workshops or retreats that student leaders develop in an effort to help their peers of different racial background interact).	N/A

While the paucity of purposeful curricular CRIs was obvious on both campuses and among nearly all students in this study, many PCU students reported experiencing purposeful co-curricular CRIs. In fact, nine of the eleven PCU participants reported experiencing purposeful co-curricular CRIs in the form of multiracial leadership retreats, workshops, and diversity dialogue groups. This finding contradicts existing research and instead suggests that some student affairs and student service staff members, at least at the two participating campuses, are engaging students purposefully in co-curricular experiences designed to cultivate CRIs. This demonstrates that some purposeful activities are occurring within the co-curriculum on at least one of the campuses in this study.

As gatekeepers at PCU explained, PCU participants in this study represent a unique sub-set of students on their campus, connected to specific staff members who maintained programs purposefully designed to cultivate co-curricular CRIs. Perhaps these purposeful co-curricular CRIs at PCU were limited in terms of their reach among the wider population of students on campus, but they still represent potential best practices from which many educators can learn.

While it may seem simplistic, the creation of a basic typology of CRIs was helpful in my analysis of how students experience CRIs because it provides specificity regarding the types of CRIs in which students engage. Within CRI literature there is agreement that both curricular and co-curricular CRIs exist (Chang, 2005; Saenz et al., 2007), but few researchers have outlined a consistent framework for understanding the types of CRIs that can occur within a campus environment.

HSU participants reported few purposeful curricular CRIs and no purposeful co-curricular CRIs. At the same time, HSU students reported experiencing numerous daily non-purposeful curricular and co-curricular CRIs. The nuances of these experiences demand a clearer typology if educators and researchers want to more accurately describe the types of CRI experiences prevalent on a particular campus. The typology presented in Table 5 synthesizes terminology within the body of CRI research and can be utilized by researchers to more consistently define the types of CRI experiences being studied. It is possible, for example, that learning outcomes may differ across the various types of CRIs. While this is a critical area for future research, it also underscores the need for differentiation among specific CRI types and understanding of how those different types might shape student CRIs in disparate ways.

In addition, I found that several students on both the HSU and PCU campuses engaged in their own student-led purposeful co-curricular CRIs. This phenomenon was unique and has not been highlighted in existing CRI literature. It appears that CRI researchers have overlooked this important and potentially rich source of cross-racial interactions. Student leaders, as the social psychology literature suggests, are likely to have the ability to influence other student leaders in a horizontal way (e.g., across student groups) as well as in a vertical way (e. g., within their own student groups) and this influence represents an untapped resource for educators concerned with purposefully facilitating CRIs (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970).

Pre-College Cross-Racial Interactions

The literature regarding pre-college CRIs highlights the idea that students who experience positive pre-college CRIs are more likely to engage in frequent postsecondary CRIs (Bowman & Denson, 2011; Chavous, 2005; Hall, Cabrera & Milem, 2011; Hurtado, Engberg, Ponjuan, & Landreman, 2002; Saenz et al., 2007). In this section, I briefly explore the ways in which findings regarding pre-college CRIs among participants are consistent with and augment the literature regarding the power of pre-college CRIs, or the lack thereof, to shape postsecondary CRIs.

Students in this study who experienced demographically diverse secondary schooling environments or lived in racially diverse neighborhoods before attending college were more likely to seek out interracial interactions with their peers in college. Consequently, the qualitative data generated through this study entirely supports prior research regarding the extent to which pre-college CRIs serve as a positive predictor of

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postsecondary interracial interactions. In fact, participants who experienced positive CRIs in pre-college environments exhibited a positive interracial interaction trajectory in college. Simply put, frequent and positive pre-college CRIs translated into the expectation that those types of interracial interactions would occur in college.

Findings in this study augment extant literature regarding the power of pre-college CRIs to "prime" students for postsecondary CRIs (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 28). Researchers (Chavous, 2005; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Locks et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Rankin & Reason, 2005) have studied the extent to which the quality of the CRC can augment or diminish student interracial interactions. However, no prior research comments on the ways in which a student's CRI trajectory can be shaped by the quality of the CRC. Participants shared that the quality of their campus' racial climate shaped their pre-college interaction trajectories. However, participants had divergent opinions of the quality of their campus' racial climate. PCU students were more likely to make negative evaluations of the CRC, while HSU students were more likely to make positive evaluations of their campus' CRC.

Accordingly, PCU students who had frequent and positive pre-college CRIs reported finding it difficult to maintain a positive CRI trajectory in college. Those same students expressed negative evaluations of the quality of PCU's racial climate and believed that the negative climate made it more difficult for them to continue having CRIs in college. Conversely, HSU students who experienced frequent positive CRIs in pre-college environments believed that the positive nature of HSU's racial climate allowed them to easily continue CRIs in college. Finally, HSU students who had a negative pre-college CRI trajectory commented that they were more likely to engage in

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CRIs at HSU. Given these findings, it appears that the quality of a campus' racial climate can shape the pre-college trajectories of students and this finding augments the literature on both pre-college CRIs and campus racial climate.

Perspectives on Race and Cross-Racial Interactions

This study simultaneously confirms existing RID literature by showing how the perspectives associated with different levels of RID shape students' interracial interactions and adds to that literature by illuminating the ways that RID and perspectives on race shape students' CRIs. Indeed, students' perspectives regarding race often shaped how they perceived and experienced CRI opportunities. As I mentioned in Chapter One, a large body of literature regarding racial identity development describes a series of stages through which individuals pass as they refine their own racial identity, as well as how they understand the identities of others (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1992; Phinney, 1990, 1992; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). While racial identity literature describes, among other things, a student's stage-dependent interest in CRIs, literature on CRIs in higher education that explicitly makes these linkages does not exist. Thus, this study contributes to existing research by explicitly illuminating the connections between RID, the perspectives that correspond with students' racial identity, and CRIs. Beyond simply illuminating the linkages between a student's racial identity and how they experience CRIs, these findings illustrate how different levels of RID differentially shape a student's experience of the CRIs.

The findings of this study offer a typology of White students' perspectives regarding race that shape CRIs in college and those findings can be situated within

Helms' (1985; 1995) WRID theory. The perspectives include an *Intellectualized Focus*, an *Internal Focus*, and an *Interracial Focus*; they correspond to Helms' pseudoindependence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy stages, respectively. Consistent with Helms' assertions regarding the enhanced capacity of White individuals in the autonomy stage to engage successfully with peers of different racial backgrounds, White students in this study who displayed perspectives consistent with an interracial focus were more likely to engage interracially with their peers. In contrast, White students who demonstrated an intellectualized focus, which is a perspective that corresponds with Helms' pseudoindependence stage, had difficulty initiating and maintaining CRIs. Again, the identity perspectives of White participants in this study were very similar to those envisioned by Helms as were expected levels of CRIs.

The findings of this inquiry also contribute to existing literature by offering a typology of Asian American students' perspectives regarding race that shape CRIs in college. Specifically, the findings of this study regarding Asian American perspectives on racial identity coalesce around three areas: *Internal Asian American Focus*, *Ethnic Focus*, and *Interracial Focus.* Kim's (2001) and Nadal's (2004) identity theories provide a lens through which the identity perspective findings of this study can be further understood. Indeed, the Internal Asian American Focus is a perspective that corresponds with Kim's "Asian American Affinity" stage and the Interracial Focus perspective corresponds with Kim's "Incorporation" stage (p. 24). In addition, the Ethnic Focus perspective corresponds with the ethnic identification stage of Nadal's identity model.

Within RID literature, numerous connections can be observed between identity development and CRIs. For example, students in the Asian American Affinity stage are

likely to limit their interactions with non-Asian American peers through their involvement in Asian American–related clubs, courses, activities, and friendships. Kim and others (Ibrahim, Ohnishi & Sandhu, 1997; Kim, 2001; Kodama, McEwen, Liang & Lee, 2002; Nadal, 2004; Yeh & Huang, 1996), acknowledge that students who focus on their own racial identity are likely to limit their interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds. This could occur simply through choices to engage with same-race peers or through overt decisions to disengage from opportunities for interracial interactions.

While not a focus of this study, some data suggested that differences existed between the PCU Asian American Center and the HSU Asian American Program. For example, while PCU student leaders like Kevin and Cheryl spoke about the difficulty they experienced getting non-Asian American students to attend their events, HSU Asian American students Kara and Edward both indicated that they were pleasantly surprised by the number of non-Asian Americans who enrolled in Asian American Program courses at HSU. Essentially, non-purposeful CRIs may have been more common within the Asian American Program at HSU than within the Asian American Center at PCU. This is not an indictment of the Asian American Center at PCU, but it may be a symptom of a larger problem at PCU. When compared to their HSU peers, White and Asian American students at PCU described heightened levels of prejudice and stereotypes as well as diminished perceptions of common ground; all causes of interracial interaction anxiety known to contribute to withdrawal (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Levin, van Laar, & Sidanius, 2003; Littleford et al., 2005; Park, Suliaman, Kim, Schwartz, Ham & Zamboagna, 2011).

The findings confirm the notion within RID theories that students will often move through stages of identity development in ways that promote a deeper appreciation for their own identity as well as the identities of others (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1992; Phinney, 1990, 1992; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). For example, Cheryl and Mia, both PCU Asian American students, were primarily focused on their Asian American identities and were genuinely interested in, and taking concrete steps toward, widening their interracial interactions on campus. Mia, for example, wanted to maintain her connections to her Asian American peers, but she discussed feeling secure and confident enough in her identity to plan to join student government on campus and re-engage with her White peers in ways that she had not done since high school. Mia's experience illustrated how the Asian American Center at PCU made it possible for her to gain confidence in her Asian American identity and this confidence motivated her intentions to engage more broadly with peers of different racial backgrounds. Essentially, Cheryl and Mia may be moving towards a more interracial focus.

As I noted earlier, the Asian American *Ethnic Focus* perspective in this study was salient for six Asian American participants. Specifically, these six participants seemed to identify more closely with their ethnicity than with the broader Asian American racial category. This finding is not consistent with Kim's (2001) model, as she posited that Asian American students would move directly from the Asian American Affinity stage to the Incorporation stage. However, the findings are congruent with Nadal's (2004) Filipino ethnic identity development model, which suggests that there is an additional stage of identity development called Ethnic Identity exploration. Nadal explained that, for a variety of reasons related to history, culture, language, and phenotype, Filipinos faced

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"marginalization" within the Asian American community (p. 57). Therefore, Nadal posited that Filipino individuals would first explore and then eschew their identity as an Asian American and instead focus on their Filipino ethnicity. Subsequently, Nadal asserted that Filipino individuals were likely to embrace their own unique ethnic identity while assuming a more interracial or multicultural racial identity. This seems to account for three of the six Asian American students in this identity stage who were, in fact, Filipino American.

While Nadal's (2004) Filipino ethnic identity model explains the internal ethnic identity focus of three of the six individuals that I identified within this theme, it does not account for three other non-Filipino Asian American students—one Korean American and two Chinese American participants—who also expressed a clear focus on their ethnic background. These three students expressed a strong affiliation with their own ethnic identities. They were not comfortable being labeled Asian Americans and spent much of their time as student leaders involved in clubs and activities related to their ethnicity. I am persuaded by Nadal's ethnic identity theory that existing Asian American RID theories are not sufficient to explain the major themes of Asian American identity development.

Given the limitations of this study, I cannot expand Nadal's (2004) Filipino/a identity development model to encompass the experiences of all of the Asian American students in this study who expressed an Ethnic Identity Focus. I do, however, underscore that some non-Filipino Asian American students in this study were focused primarily on their own ethnic backgrounds. Perhaps the diversity of the Asian American populations on both the HSU and PCU campuses provided opportunities for students to focus on their ethnic group rather than the larger Asian American experience.

It is also possible that the Korean American student and the two Chinese American students who were primarily focused on their ethnicity will emerge from this focus and adopt a more interracial focus in the future. It is also possible that some of the ideas in Nadal's (2004) model are applicable to other Asian American ethnic groups. As Nadal asserted, Filipino/a individuals have a unique set of cultural, historical, and political experiences that makes their membership within the pan-Asian American racial group more tenuous, but it is possible that members of other Asian American ethnic groups negotiate the relevancy of the Asian American label based on their own set of cultural, political, and historical experiences as well.

How a student experiences CRIs is powerfully shaped by their racial perspective. This revelation complicates prior research regarding student CRI experiences by emphasizing that cohorts of students (e.g. students in the Asian American Affinity focus cohort) may be more likely to share similar CRI experiences while students in different cohorts (e.g. Asian American Affinity perspective versus Asian American Interracial perspective) are likely to experience CRIs quite differently. For example, White students in the intellectualized perspective are likely to experience interracial interaction anxiety as a result of having less sophistication regarding CRI experiences (e.g. few prior experiences and diminished interracial interaction self-confidence). In contrast, White students identified with the interracial interaction perspective are likely to engage in frequent CRIs and have little anxiety related to those interracial interactions. Next, I explore findings related to how students subjectively evaluated the quality of the CRC as well as how those evaluations shaped their CRIs.

Extending Research on Campus Racial Climate and Cross-Racial Interactions

A large body of CRI research initially sought to demonstrate empirically that CRIs, as a measure of the importance of creating diverse college environments, were related to vital learning outcomes (Chang, 2001; Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998; Gurin et al., 2003, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002; Nelson-Laird et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Saenz et al., 2007; Zuniga, Williams & Berger, 2005) and an increase in overall sense of belonging and persistence with a student's college experience (Astin, 1993; Chang et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005, Locks et al., 2008). While this relationship has been established within the literature, less is known about how students experience CRIs; educators who are charged with purposefully facilitating curricular and co-curricular CRIs have little information regarding how students experience those interactions.

The findings of this study regarding perceptions of the CRC and how those perceptions shape CRIs are consistent with current social psychology literature and augment extant higher education CRI research. As I explored in some detail in Chapter Two, student perceptions of and experiences within the campus racial climate shape how they experience CRIs. As social psychology literature illustrates, people often consider interracial common ground and prejudice and stereotypes before engaging in CRIs (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Mallet, Wilson & Gilbert, 2008; Pettigrew, 2009; West, 2009). In fact, students who conclude that little interracial common ground exists or that one or more potential interaction partners may utilize stereotypes and prejudice are less likely to engage in CRIs.

In the current study, it became clear that the CRC was a salient factor that shaped participants' experiences. Students often evaluated the quality of the CRC through their

own perceptions of and experiences with interracial common ground and whether racial stereotypes were present; these evaluations often enhanced or diminished their level of CRIs. Specifically, during the initial moments of an interracial interaction, or even while considering engaging in CRIs, participants reported that they informally evaluated the extent to which interracial common ground existed between themselves and their interaction partner. This finding is consistent with prior research (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Mallet, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008; Pettigrew, 2009; West, 2009).

While findings regarding the manner in which perceptions of common ground within the CRC shape students' CRI experiences are consistent with social psychology literature (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Mallet, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008; Pettigrew, 2009; West, 2009), the relevance of common ground has not been addressed explicitly within the literature focused on CRIs in college. Therefore, the findings of the current investigation augment existing higher education research on CRIs by highlighting ways that perceptions of common ground across racial groups shape CRIs in college.

Students often evaluated the quality of the CRC through their impressions of whether or not racial stereotypes were present during interactions on campus. Consistent with existing literature (Ellis, 2004; Twenge & Crocker, 2002), Asian American students in this study were concerned about a range of negative reactions from their White peers as well as from other peers of color. While confronting stereotypes about whether they were U.S. citizens or foreign visitors or other pernicious stereotypes, Asian Americans in this study frequently adjusted their social portrayal of themselves (Chu & Kwan, 2007; Pinel, 1999; Pinel & Paulin, 2005; Son, & Shelton, 2011).

Campus Racial Climate and Interaction Trajectories

Students often evaluated the quality of the CRC through their perceptions of and experiences with interracial common ground and stereotypes; evaluations that, in turn, shaped their postsecondary CRIs in ways that could augment or interrupt their pre-college CRI trajectories. This finding complicates and extends prior quantitative research regarding the ability of pre-college CRIs to "prime" students for postsecondary interracial interactions (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 28). In fact, students like Sarah, a White PCU student who had frequently positive pre-college CRIs, commented that her negative perceptions of and experiences with a lack of interracial common ground within her campus' racial climate, negative shaped her expectations for CRIs in college.

Interracial Interaction Anxiety and Cross-Racial Interaction Experiences

The findings of this study with regard to student interracial interaction anxiety are consistent with social psychology research and augment higher education CRI research. Numerous social psychology researchers emphasize how interracial interaction anxiety can diminish the quality and frequency of CRIs (Finchilescu, 2010; Heinrich, Rapee, Alden, Bogels, Hofman, Oh & Sakano, 2006; Ho & Jackson, 2001; Littleford et al., 2005; Maddux et al. 2011; Page-Gould et al., 2008; Park et al., 2011; Saenz et al., 2007; Schrieff, Leigh, Tredoux, Finchilescu & Dixon, 2010; Son & Shelton, 2011; Shelton et al., 2010; West et al., 2009). This body of literature is primarily driven by social psychology researchers and highlights the connections between interracial interaction anxiety and CRIs. Higher education research into how students experience CRIs should

incorporate this research more thoroughly as anxiety negatively shapes students'

intentions to engage in CRIs.

Learning Outcomes and Cross-Racial Interactions

All of the learning outcomes that students identified related to CRIs are consistent

with the findings expressed in numerous quantitative CRI studies (Chavous, 2005;

Chang, 2001; Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998; Gurin et al., 2003; Hurtado,

Engberg, Ponjuan & Landreman, 2002; Hurtado & Gurin, 2002; Jayakumar, 2008;

Nelson-Laird et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Saenz et al., 2007; Zuniga, Williams

& Berger, 2005). Students expressed that they gained intellectually and personally from

CRIs in five ways. First, students felt that they gained *interracial interaction self-*

confidence as a result of having successful prior experiences interacting with someone

different from themselves. Second, students felt that their CRI experiences enhanced their

knowledge about other cultures and racial groups in ways that made them more *culturally*

competent. Third, participants felt that knowing someone from a different racial group

allowed them to personalize issues of intolerance, discrimination, and prejudice in ways

that deepened their *commitment to issues of social justice*. Fourth, some students spoke

about the importance of *analyzing problems from multiple perspectives* that are often

found in diverse working groups. Students valued the ability to shift perspectives in ways

that made problem solving more successful. Finally, many students appreciated the extent

to which they were able to engage in *opportunities to further develop leadership skills*

while collaborating across racial or ethnic lines.

While students spoke at length about these beneficial learning outcomes, it was helpful to hear their passion as well as how they defined topics which previously had only been quantified in levels of significance. However, it was the students' own descriptions that revealed that the concepts listed above were not only benefits of CRIs but also goals that motivated many students to seek out those interactions. Many students spoke about the importance of improving their skills related to interacting with people from many racial backgrounds. They believed that these skills were not only essential to their professional success but also an essential ingredient of a well-balanced, informed, and interesting life. Therefore, learning outcomes associated with CRIs moved beyond simply constituting "outcomes" and closer towards a philosophy of interaction that valued multiculturalism as an intrinsic good.

Among participants, there were important differences in the sources of learning outcomes. Specifically, Asian American participants identified learning outcomes associated with their interactions with Asian Americans of different ethnic backgrounds as well as with other students of color including Latino/a and African American peers. Regarding their interracial interactions with White peers, Asian Americans often responded to low levels of cultural competencies among White peers by providing opportunities for White peers to gain an appreciation for the histories, cultures, foods, ethnicities, geographies, and other elements of Asian American communities. The context of cultural competency development was not always a mutually beneficial relationship for Asian Americans, particularly when interacting with White peers. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggests that White students are more likely to benefit more from CRIs than their peers of color (Saenz et al., 2007).

Summary

This study contributes to existing research in several ways. First, it enhances our understanding of the types of campus-based CRIs that students experience, the extent to which racial identity shapes how students perceive and experience CRIs, as well as how students' perceptions and experiences within the campus racial climate additionally influences their CRI experiences. Second, the study highlights the complex relationships between multiple phenomena that can be better understood by combining knowledge from multiple disciplines. Third, this study augments existing CRI research by developing a better understanding of how students' identity development and corresponding perspectives toward race and cross-racial interactions are an integral part of their CRI experiences. The influence of RID is not currently highlighted within CRI research and further study is necessary in this area. Fourth, this study augments what CRI researchers know about the CRC's influence on student CRIs by illuminating the role of perceived common ground. Finally, this study highlights the ways in which interracial interaction anxiety can diminish CRIs. In the next chapter, I detail the potential implications of this study as well as provide concluding remarks.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

While exploring how participants in the current study experience interracial interactions, I have confirmed findings of previous studies of CRIs and augmented those existing findings by describing how students experienced those interactions. In previous chapters, I have identified how students in this study experienced CRIs. In this final chapter, I discuss how the current study serves as a basis for future research and summarize the implications of this study for policymakers and practitioners who seek to improve the student learning outcomes associated with CRIs.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of the current study have several implications for future research. First, the current study included only 25 students on two campuses located in the Northeast, and the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other campuses. Quantitative research is needed to determine whether relationships found herein are significant for larger populations of college students. For example, quantitative research could explore, test, and (in)validate the notion that a relationship exists between students' stage of RID and how they experience CRIs. Additionally, quantitative research would also be helpful in terms of establishing links between student perceptions of interracial

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common ground and their ability to engage in CRIs. Connections of these types might provide a better understanding regarding the importance of building a shared sense of community across racial groups on campuses as a method of promoting CRIs and their associated learning outcomes.

Finally, with the overall goal of developing CRI-related learning outcomes, it would be helpful if quantitative researchers examined the relationship between student racial perspectives and the types of CRIs most likely to encourage learning outcomes. Essentially, it is likely that certain types of CRIs may foster growth differently depending upon a student's perspectives regarding race. For example, students whom I categorized as exemplifying an interracial perspective may require few purposeful curricular or co-curricular interventions because they are likely to seek out numerous non-purposeful CRIs. Alternatively, students who exemplified the Asian American focus or White intellectualized focus perspectives may require purposeful curricular and co-curricular interventions to engage successfully with peers of racial different racial backgrounds.

From a qualitative perspective, researchers can build on the findings of this study in three ways. First, additional qualitative research regarding how Latino, African American, and Native American students experience CRIs must be conducted to determine whether and how the processes by which these students experience CRIs might be similar to or different from the students who participated in this inquiry. Indeed, the findings here suggest that there might be racial differences in the processes by which students experience CRIs, and it would be helpful to further explore the findings of this study with additional racial and ethnic groups.

Second, future research should also explore how men and women from each racial group experience CRIs. For example, body image came up in one interview with an Asian American woman who mentioned that she often experienced interaction anxiety with other Asian Americans because she felt that she did not fit established Asian American images of feminine beauty. For this reason and others, gender may play a role in CRIs in ways that have not been explored.

Third, there is a need to understand the processes by which international students experience CRIs. Indeed, when discussing the campus racial climate, many participants in the current study mentioned international students as segregated groups on their campus. Participants noted how culturally different Asian international students, in particular, are when compared to their U.S. counterparts, as well as the fact that they simply had the most challenges and problems when interacting with international students. Thus, it is important to think about how domestic students of various races and ethnicities cross-culturally interact with international students of varying racial and ethnic groups, particularly as U.S. campuses internationalize at a rapid pace. Both quantitative and qualitative studies that consider purposeful cross-cultural interactions are needed and enormous contributions can be made in this area.

Implications for Policy

With regard to higher education policy, and echoing the recommendations of other higher education researchers (e.g., Chang, 2005; Harper & Hurtado, 2007), it is critical that campus leaders develop purposeful co-curricular and curricular opportunities for students to interact interracially. Unfortunately, the least common type of CRI

experienced by participants in the current study was purposeful curricular interracial interactions. Indeed, few U.S. campuses purposefully structure CRI opportunities and this has diminished learning outcomes (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Therefore, campus leaders must assess their own campus racial climates, as well as what types of CRIs are or are not already prevalent on campus. Armed with this knowledge, those leaders can develop policies aimed at encouraging purposeful CRIs. For example, the findings herein demonstrate the significance of the lack of structural diversity within particular majors. If campuses conduct climate assessments, this information could influence admission, recruitment, and scholarship policies aimed at ensuring that structural diversity is supported across institutions' academic departments and programs.

On a practical level, most educators are not encouraged by executive level campus leaders (e.g., President, Provost, or other influential campus leaders) to develop purposeful curricular or co-curricular CRIs. In fact, PCU staff members who developed the cross-racial leadership retreat, a weekend event that had an enormous impact on participants in only its first year, planned that retreat using existing budgets and personnel. Since few campus leaders have identified purposeful CRIs as a priority, when faculty and staff members do structure those interactions, they tend to be the product of a department or cultural center. This has the effect of limiting the breadth and depth of these types of purposeful activities—a primary limitation of the effectiveness of the purposeful co-curricular activities. Indeed, those activities simply do not have the capacity to reach large cohorts of students. In addition, a lack of executive level university leadership may develop unsustainable patterns of purposeful CRIs. For example, when staff who are passionate about purposeful CRIs move on to other

positions, those activities, which are local and not encouraged broadly by the administration or faculty leaders, are likely to cease as well. Therefore, an important policy implication of this study is that university leaders should make resources available in the form of grants for programs, possibly community recognition through awards meant to recognize outstanding achievements related to creating purposeful curricular and co-curricular CRI opportunities as well as personnel who can help students leaders develop interracial interaction opportunities.

As I noted in the discussion of this study's findings, racial identity development emerged as a salient component of interracial interaction experiences among participants in this study. Students who have opportunities to reflect on their own racial identity, as well as the identities of others, are more likely to engage in CRIs. Unfortunately, despite the importance of RID to interracial CRIs, no students in this study reported having discussions about their racial identity. As a result of the importance of purposefully structured CRIs, university leaders might consider adopting comprehensive policies that encourage racial identity development and CRIs. I discuss what practices might be encouraged under such policies in the following section.

Finally, students in this study displayed a range of pre-college experiences and arrived in postsecondary environments with varying levels of preparation for CRIs. Regardless of their racial background, some students, as this study has demonstrated, were well-prepared for CRIs. Still other students arrived in postsecondary environments with few CRI experiences, or worse, with numerous negative prior interracial interactions. It is critical that educators recognize these differences in ways that accommodates students. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, educators should pursue

of policy of clearly understanding the range of pre-college experiences among their students and educators should be prepared to purposefully engage with students in ways that recognizes their pre-college trajectories.

Implications for Practice

With regard to implications for practice, institutional agents—including faculty, staff, and students—should create opportunities for purposeful curricular and co-curricular CRIs to occur. When I began this study, I used the term "educators" to broadly refer to those individuals whose responsibility it was to manage the curriculum and co-curriculum. In this sense, I viewed faculty and staff members as important partners who collaboratively managed the university's educational opportunities and did not include students as responsible "authorities" (Allport, 1954) in this broad definition of "educators." As a result of conversations with students, I have added the category "student-led purposeful co-curricular CRIs" to the taxonomy of CRIs occurring within college campus settings. In fact, a number of student leaders showed passion and perseverance as they encouraged their peers to interact with one another across racial lines. Partnering with student leaders in the creation of purposeful CRI opportunities for themselves and their peers is, therefore, a critical and practical step for educators.

Campus leaders should also work with the faculty senate or teaching centers on their campuses in ways that encourage faculty to consider how their pedagogical approaches may facilitate or diminish the likelihood that CRIs will occur within their classrooms. Faculty leaders may raise awareness that purposefully cultivating curricular CRIs can easily, and without significant burden, further institutional goals related to

improving learning outcomes, as well as student preparation for living and working in a diverse twenty-first century society.

While many cultural and multicultural centers provide opportunities for students of color to engage in multiracial settings, the obvious question remains: How can White students be purposefully engaged in conversations and environments designed to help them develop their own racial identities in ways consistent with an interracial focus? More opportunities for this type of interracial interaction must be explored and created on campuses. Educators, for example, could encourage White students to join leadership and diversity discussion groups in which they will engage in conversations about race and diversity in general. These opportunities are voluntary of course and consequently very limited in terms of their breadth and depth as well.

This study reinforces the notion that racial stereotypes and interracial interaction anxiety are critical considerations in structuring CRI opportunities (Chu & Kwan, 2007; Elliot, 2008; Pinel, 1999; Pinel & Paulin, 2005; Son, & Shelton, 2011). White and Asian American students in this study were well aware of Asian American stereotypes, and those stereotypes led to interracial interaction anxiety among both groups. Given the withdrawal behaviors that stereotypes can induce, educators should consider methods for discussing these realities. For example, exploring the model minority myth may allow White students to confront the validity of this myth and even gain insight into how their actions might be subconsciously fueled by these myths. For example, several Asian American participants in this study were annoyed that their White peers were surprised that they were not strong math students. Some research does suggest that surfacing a stereotype might have unintended negative effects (Goff, Steele & Davies, 2008).

Therefore, a delicate balance must be explored in which the fallacy of stereotypes is considered without reproducing stereotype threat. In many ways, a discussion of stereotypes could best be accomplished in monoracial groups. White students could explore the fallacy of stereotypes and students of color could potentially consider the effects of internalized stereotypes and their reactions to those stereotypes.

As mentioned in the previous section, college and university leaders might consider adopting policies that encourage practices that facilitate racial identity development and CRIs. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss three potential and promising practices that could be encouraged by such policies. Of course, if such policies are not adopted, faculty and staff can still engage in the following practices themselves. First, educators should make efforts to understand their own racial identity and perspectives regarding race, diversity, and multiculturalism. Therefore, educators should be familiar with the literature and engaged in ongoing discussions to help them understand RID before they incorporate RID into the curriculum or co-curriculum.

Second, with an understanding of how RID may shape student CRIs, educators should develop programs and interventions that are informed by RID theories and research. For example, staff members at the Asian American Center (AAC) at PCU engage their students in different levels of purposeful co-curricular CRIs. Those levels include opportunities for monoracial groups to interact with one another and for Asian American monoethnic groups to engage with one another. For example, the AAC has initiated the cross-racial leadership retreat with the Latino/a Cultural Center and the African American Center, and is therefore encouraging students along a range of RID stages to develop their identities in ways that move them toward an interracial focus.

Similarly, the AAC provides leadership retreats and meetings for monoethnic Asian American (e.g., primarily Korean and primarily Chinese) student clubs to collaboratively pursue a shared social, cultural, and political agenda.

Third, educators should introduce RID literature into small group discussions, classes, or other appropriate venues. Students can intellectually engage with RID theories and, in the process, consider their own identities in relation to the identities of others. Some students will reject the relevance of RID theories while others may gain an important lens through which they can reflect on their own daily experiences. As I mentioned, I shared Nadal's (2004) Filipino/a Ethnic Identity Development Model with a Filipina student at HSU. She thought the article was very powerful in terms of framing her experiences in secondary and post-secondary environments and she even planned to use it in a personal narrative assignment that she was completing for a class.

Finally, as the Asian American Center (AAC) at PCU demonstrated, a range of educational and academic efforts are necessary to meet students where they were in terms of their prior levels of CRIs. The PCU AAC provided opportunities for Asian American students to engage with peers from their own ethnic or Asian American background, collaborate across ethnic Asian American backgrounds as well as more fully engage with non-Asian American peers. These opportunities were provided simultaneously in ways that encouraged students to find comfort zones regarding their levels of CRIs as well as stretch themselves through interactions with peers of different ethnic or racial backgrounds. For practitioners, these efforts, although limited and still developing, represent a set of purposeful best practices for helping students refine their racial identities while concurrently engaging in interracial interactions.

Conclusion

As I reflect on my personal connection to this research, I am reminded of my evolution into a person who values diversity, difference, and interactions with people of racial and cultural backgrounds different from my own. As my personal statement in Chapter Three highlights, I have changed enormously over the course of my education. Simply put, I am in awe of the ability of higher education to transform individuals. I am convinced that campus leaders can do more to create opportunities for students to interact with one another in ways that further promote their intellectual growth. CRIs have the power to create opportunities for such growth, as well as understanding and trust among people who may have previously perceived little common ground.

While the legal and educational justifications for interracial interaction policies are important, I have been more concerned with how students experience those interactions. This information, in turn, provides important insights into how faculty, staff, and student leaders can cultivate CRIs more effectively. Certainly, admonishments aside about the need for purposeful CRIs, it is time to provide campus leaders with practical tools and suggestions that can be used to encourage CRIs on campus. It is my hope that this study made contributions in this regard and that, armed with more information, campus leaders can help students fulfill the promise of diversity by more purposefully nurturing those opportunities and the transformative outcomes that they generate.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Details:
Time of Interview_____
Date_____
Place_____
Interviewee Number: _____

Description of Project:
Thank you for participating in this study. As you know from the consent form, your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can end the interview at any time. As part of this study I am interviewing about 20 students at two Boston area Universities regarding their experiences interacting with peers of different racial backgrounds. While I am tape-recording this conversation, all of your comments will be anonymous, confidential, and will not be attributed to you in any way. I plan to look for common themes among participants in terms of their interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes, but can go a bit longer if you prefer. Please take a moment to review and sign the consent form.

The purpose of this study is to explore interactions between yourself and students of different racial backgrounds here at the University. Specifically, I am studying purposeful cross-racial interactions (CRIs) among college students. CRIs can be defined as interactions in college between yourself and peers of different racial backgrounds, particularly those occurring in some type of structured circumstance like interactions with a peer of a different racial background in a residence hall, lab, class, club, leadership group, or other extra-curricular activity. In addition, I am interested in exploring the extent to which your interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds have occurred during circumstances that faculty or staff have played a role in creating. This could be in the classroom, during a lab, a leadership discussion group, in a student club setting, residence hall, or otherwise.

To summarize, I'm interested in exploring interactions in which faculty or staff have created an opportunity for you to interact with peers of different racial backgrounds.

Demographic Survey:

1. Ask participant to complete survey and answer any questions from participants regarding the survey and interview process.

Ice-Breaking Questions:

1. So tell me about how you spend your time on campus?

2. What classes, student groups, athletics or other activities are you involved in?

Part I: CRI Experiences
A quick review of the student's survey responses will help me have a better understanding of the type, frequency, and venues within which a student has been engaged in CRIs. This will, in turn, help me tailor the questions below to each participant.

1. Can you describe the places or situations in which you have had interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds in college?

2. Have you ever been involved in faculty or staff-led interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds? If so, please describe the interaction and length of the interaction?

3. Again, during interactions that faculty or staff members may have helped to initiate, can you describe some positive experiences that you have had when interacting with peers of a different racial background?

4. Also, thinking about interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds that faculty or staff members have helped to initiate, can you describe some negative experiences that you have had?

5. Remembering back to when you started college, has your thinking about interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds changed over time?

Part 2: Reactions to CRI Opportunities

1. Can you describe how you feel during faculty or staff led interactions with students of different racial backgrounds?

2. Do you experience any anxiety when interacting with a peer of a different racial background? If so, please say a bit more.

3. Do you, in some circumstances, avoid interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds?

Part III: Learning Outcomes Associated with CRIs

1. 1. As you reflect on those experiences where faculty and/or staff have been involved, what have you learned from interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds?

2. Have any of your opinions about race, discrimination, or otherwise changed?

3. Have you personally experienced changes in how you feel or think about or anticipate interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds? Please explain.

Optional Part IV: Campus Racial Climate/Racial Identity Probing Questions

1. What are your perceptions of the racial environment at the University?

2. What do you think the racial environment is like for students of color?

3. What do you think the racial environment is like for white students?

4. Is there racial tension on campus? If so, please explain.

5. Do your perceptions of the University's racial environment influence your interactions with peers of different racial backgrounds? If so, how?

6. If I asked you what makes it difficult to interact with diverse peers at this University, what would you say?

7. If I asked you what makes it easy to interact with peers of a different racial background at this University, what would you say?

8. How do you think these difficulties with interactions with diverse peers in college can be overcome?

9. How would you describe your racial background?
   - What role, if any, does your race play in your daily life?
   - Does your identity as a White or Asian American person influence interactions that you have with peers who do not share your racial background? If so, how?

Part V: Closing Questions

1. If you had the money, time, and support with planning to create an opportunity for students at our college to interact with students from different racial backgrounds, what would you do? What kind of event/program or interaction would you create?

2. Is there anything else that you would like to add that we haven't already talked about?

Thank you for your participation and I will keep the transcript of this conversation anonymous and confidential.
[adapted from Asmussen & Creswell, 1995]

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