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VALUING STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS RACE AND ETHNICITY:

AN EXPLORATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE INTERGROUP

CONTACT IN A COLLEGE CLASSROOM

A Dissertation Presented

By

MARY MARTHA GANNON

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2000

School of Education
Social Justice Education

VALUING STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS RACE AND ETHNICITY: AN EXPLORATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE INTERGROUP CONTACT IN A COLLEGE CLASSROOM
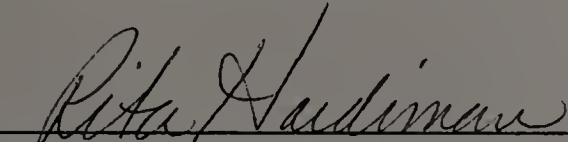
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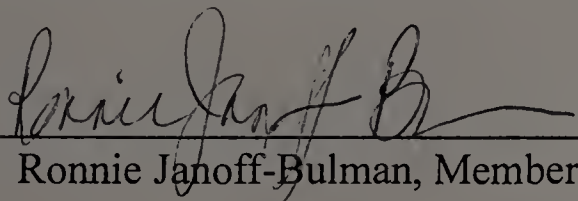
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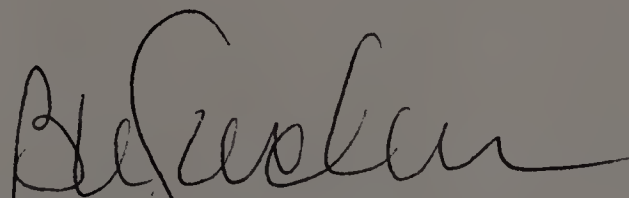
Maurianne Adams, Chair

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Rita Hardiman, Member

_____

Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, Member

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School of Education

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the student victims of the tragedy at Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado, on April 20, 1999. This tragic event is a reminder to educators, parents and others involved in school systems of the importance of knowing *who* our students are and insuring they are free from isolation and discrimination.

With this in mind, this dissertation is also dedicated to the possibility of a society that embraces truth, humanity, and justice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process of writing this dissertation has been an academic endeavor as well as a personal journey for me. There are numerous people who have assisted and supported me over the last seven years by encouraging me and believing in my ability to make a contribution to the field of social justice education. I am both touched and grateful to the many people who have inspired and support me throughout this process.

Working with a committee of successful women in academia has been a personally enriching experience. My advisor, Dr. Maurianne Adams, has been a wonderful mentor and friend. She has supported and guided me through this process with great commitment and care. Maurianne's insightful feedback, detail to style and her ability to synthesize the many issues of my research have helped to create a dissertation that I am proud of. I have appreciated your wisdom and willingness to nurture me academically and professionally.

I gratefully acknowledge Dr. Rita Hardiman, a committee member, for contributing her valuable time, extensive knowledge and encouragement to "finish!" You have gone beyond the call of duty with numerous readings of drafts and helpful feedback. Thank you for your friendship and support over the years. I enthusiastically thank Dr. Ronnie Janoff Bulman for contributing her valuable time and feedback to this body of work.

My thanks also to Dr. John Hunt for his kind words of encouragement as I passed through his kitchen many times for a meeting with my chair.

Many thanks and appreciation to the participants in this study who gave much time and energy to this research. They inspire us to work towards a greater

understanding of racial and ethnic differences as they revealed their own hopes and challenges. Special thanks to the instructor who provided me access to her classroom as the site for this study. Dr. Lisa Robinson and Madeline Peters were facilitators for the focus groups and I am grateful for their valuable time, energy and skills.

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This work would not have been possible without the support of my community of friends who have sustained me through the most difficult times of this process. Dr. Ange DiBenedetto started this journey with me ten years ago. Your belief in my ability has never wavered and your friendship and love continue to be invaluable to my own growth and development, thank you. Caroline Nina Rago has offered unconditional support and a quiet place to work, sleep and eat, which made doing this work from afar much easier. Many thanks to Vivian Ostrowski, for her willingness to edit final drafts under tight timelines. Mickie Conroy continues to be a wonderful friend – thank you for sharing your home, making numerous meals and providing laughs when I most needed them!

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work has been invaluable, along with your amazing ability to anticipate what I have needed during this process. I look forward to a "dissertation free" friendship!

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Hamlet and Sage provided many opportunities to take breaks from my writing and remember what is important – WALKS! Finally, my deepest thanks to my husband and soulmate, Paul Bogdonoff. You have sustained me spiritually through the most difficult times of this process. Your unconditional support, faith and nurturing are a gift in my life and have allowed me to accomplish what was most important to me. I look forward to our lives together and don't worry – the book will be easier!

ABSTRACT

VALUING STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS RACE AND ETHNICITY:

AN EXPLORATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

OF POSITIVE INTERGROUP CONTACT

MAY 2000

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This qualitative research inquiry explores the development of intergroup relationships across race and ethnicity in a college classroom. The study describes the conditions that support the development of positive intergroup contact among members of racially and ethnically diverse groups and identifies the factors that impede intergroup relationships.

College faculty are searching for effective ways to work with diverse racial and ethnic populations in college classrooms and for interventions when faced with challenging intergroup dynamics. Issues of differential status among students often impact their ability to develop intergroup relationships. The literature in the field of intergroup relations lacks an analysis of social inequality to balance the literature on intergroup difference. This study positions intergroup relations within a framework of social justice education that acknowledges issues of inequality as well as difference.

Focus groups were the primary methodological tool for this study, complemented by additional data sets drawn from field notes and student writing that was used as confirming data. The constant comparative analysis approach was useful for the emergent style of the data, as patterns and themes guided the process of analysis. Five significant themes emerged from student reports regarding their perceptions and experiences with racial and ethnic difference. Distinctions between the responses of White students and Students of Color reflected the impact of different lived experiences and perspectives shared by their racial and ethnic differences.

Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954), particularly his emphasis on equal status roles, was used as one of the frameworks for analysis, supplemented by social justice theory. The findings in this study suggest that equal status roles cannot be achieved between members of unequal social groups in a classroom but that positive intergroup relationships among students are achievable by the presence of a number of other environmental factors.

Participants identified conditions in the classroom setting and the role of the teacher as enabling factors that supported their ability to develop intergroup relationships. Educators can enhance the learning outcomes for their students when attention is given to the diverse racial and ethnic identities in the classroom population and the development of relationships among students.

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CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

"If we go after the truth about ourselves, we must go after the whole of it - not just that part which is congenial. Truth, we must assume, is ultimately the ally of better human relations."

Gordon Allport (1954)

Background and Statement of the Problem

This nation has witnessed radical changes in population demographics in the last two decades. As diverse racial, ethnic, religious and cultural groups become more visible in the United States, tensions between members of these social identity groups have increased and as a result, we have witnessed divisiveness in a variety of settings. This division has become particularly evident in classrooms across the country and has produced new challenges for students and educators (Schoem & Stevenson, 1990). College and university campuses, in particular, face the task of trying to create racial harmony between students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, who are not only pursuing academic endeavors together but are also living closely in residential settings. Not only is there an increase in tensions surrounding issues of difference and multiculturalism at institutions of higher education, but faculty are struggling to discover strategies for teaching on this subject matter, especially with the strong emphasis placed on the "multicultural university of the 21st century" (Schoem, 1990, p. 579). Institutions of higher education are at a historical turning point concerning issues of diversity. Aside from the interpersonal dynamics that can emerge because of increased

diversity on campuses, the institutional consequences are also evident. In a climate of widespread concern about Affirmative Action and other issues of diversity and inclusion, colleges and universities across the country are more vulnerable to accusations of racist policies and practices, ranging from curricular and pedagogical approaches to the admissions process. As a result, recruitment and retention of Students of Color have become major priorities for many higher education administrators, and these efforts have the potential to produce even more racially heterogeneous campus populations across the country.

With shifting demographics in institutions of higher education comes the potential for increased contact among faculty, staff and students who are from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Both faculty and students must deal effectively with the challenges of difference and inequity in their classrooms and everyday college lives. Many faculty and students who enter a college or university setting are likely to have lived in residentially segregated neighborhoods and have spent a considerable amount of time in segregated or tracked schools, community organizations and places of worship. These earlier mono-cultural experiences leave them ill prepared for a more culturally diverse setting at a college or university campus.

Peer relations during students' formative years are most likely to have been with others who were most like themselves, particularly for White students. This factor can have immeasurable significance for Whites regarding their ability to develop intergroup relationships. Students of European-North American descent (Whites), because they are members of the dominant social group, do not have to consider how to negotiate the hierarchical social system and most likely can be assured that other White people -

teachers and students - are in close proximity to them. However, this homogeneous socialization process neglects to prepare White students for the possibility of building relationships across racial and ethnic difference and as a result, they may experience more anxiety and hesitation at approaching these interactions (Gannon, 1999). Students of Color, however, are likely to have experienced more interactions with White people prior to college in all different aspects of their lives. They may also feel a sense of reluctance regarding these interactions, but they often understand that they must learn to adapt and survive in a society that perceives them as members of a subordinated group, socially and numerically.

It is important to note that some students do arrive on campus having had different experiences than the ones discussed here, and several of these students were represented in the participant sample for this study. There are Students of Color who have had more racially homogeneous experiences, and White students who came from more racially desegregated neighborhoods and schools, particularly if they grew up in an urban area. The findings in this study also describe some of the earlier experiences of these participants.

In general, as a result of early socialization, Students of Color and White students often arrive on campus with assumptions and stereotypes about the racial "Other." They struggle with this lack of accurate information about one another which hinders their ability, and sometimes their desire, to build relationships across racial and ethnic lines.

The limited information that each group has about the "Other" is further complicated by the presence of differential status. Students of Color will usually recognize that their membership in their particular racial group has assigned them a

subordinated social status. White students, however, are usually not aware that they have also experienced differential treatment based on their racial identity that affords them social acceptance and other privileges. This lack of understanding regarding racial inequality on the part of Whites often results in their inability to understand or acknowledge the daily reality for their peers who are Students of Color. This framework of domination and subordination as a result of differential status adds an important dimension to understanding the racial "Other," which White students generally have not considered prior to entering a racially heterogeneous setting. I have observed this lack of understanding on the part of White students as a major obstacle against initiating a relationship with another student who is racially different. Furthermore, the fact that individuals have different life experiences defined by their racial or ethnic identity only compounds a sense of ethnic or cultural difference.

Despite well-intentioned efforts by various sources on university campuses to bring students together and create opportunities for contact, we continue to see racial friction and segregation (Zuniga & Sevig, 1997). This is not surprising, as social science research has shown that some racially desegregated environments have not necessarily resulted in the building of intergroup relationships (Schofield, 1995a). It is evident that attempts to build positive intergroup relationships are difficult and efforts at desegregating racial communities do not by themselves erase the prejudices and ill feelings that students of different racial backgrounds may harbor towards one another. The history of racial discrimination and exclusion in this country continues to exist for many and for White students and Students of Color, these are substantial obstacles that discourage them from building positive intergroup relations.

Creating a racially diverse campus is a desirable endeavor and has the potential to contribute to productive learning environments. However, in spite of efforts on the part of administrators to attend to issues of diversity, the campus climate continues to be unfavorable for necessary conversations across racial, ethnic and other social group boundaries to take place. This lack of dialogue increases the likelihood that students will not develop intergroup relationships. Schoem and Stevenson (1990) remark "to be part of a diverse student body but to have no experience with groups other than one's own certainly represents a severe limitation on students' education" (p. 579). It is this concern that brings me to this study.

Purpose of the Study

My interest in human relationships and how racial and ethnic identity differences shape interpersonal dynamics brought me to this area of research. Through numerous opportunities in my work as an educator and facilitator, I have observed how members of a group struggle to negotiate a particularly salient social group membership within an intergroup situation. I have been struck by the similarities that emerge in these different settings, usually in the behaviors of social group members.

My belief that intergroup relations are a critical component of social justice education also brings me to this area of research. Approaches to prejudice reduction and cultural awareness in the last fifty years have focused on raising individual awareness without an emphasis on the broader social dynamics of social inequality. Although several social scientists in the middle of the century did consider the notion of inequality among group members (Allport, 1954; Cook, 1950), there was limited attention to this concept in the context of a hierarchical social system. As a result, there was an absence

of awareness and understanding concerning the interpersonal dynamics that can emerge because of differential status among racial and ethnic differences.

The emphasis of social justice education upon the experiences of group members with differential status within the broader social context provides one of the major frameworks for this inquiry. This dissertation research developed from my desire to contribute a body of work that considers a critical analysis of intergroup relations across racial and ethnic difference within a social justice framework. It is also my intention to develop recommendations for educators, based on the findings of this study, that will better assist them in creating learning environments that support and value the diversity of the student population in their classrooms.

The field of social justice education is one of the major theoretical frameworks for this study. In the literature review in Chapter Two, I examine the historical relationship between the social science literature on intergroup relations and the intergroup education movement. I also discuss social identity theory from several different perspectives that seem relevant to the research. These theoretical perspectives are important to a discussion of intergroup relations, as they highlight the complexities of relationships across social identity differences. I believe these perspectives also locate intergroup relations within an analysis that contributes to the social sciences field.

This task of developing relationships across racial and ethnic lines is challenging; people are often not willing to take the risks that are necessary to break down barriers. The participants in this study confirm the difficulties, but their efforts also inspire us to work towards a greater understanding and respect of racial and ethnic differences, as they take risks in revealing their own struggles and hopes. This research provided an

opportunity for student participants to reflect on their experiences with racial and ethnic differences.

The purpose of this study is to explore the conditions that support or prevent the development of positive intergroup relationships between students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and differential status in a college classroom. The study is exploratory and descriptive, as it attempts to describe the experiences of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in a college classroom where the course content is devoted to issues of social diversity and social justice. These experiences are presented from the students' perspectives.

Research Questions

The problem is explored through the following research questions. The major research question has several sub-questions. My major research question is: What conditions and factors facilitate positive intergroup relationships between college students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, in a classroom where the course content is focused on diversity awareness? In this college-level course, social relationships are a primary but not the exclusive goal and there are students in the class who are members of either a dominant or subordinate racial group. This question involves several subquestions:

a. What is the definition of a positive intergroup relationship, from the students' perspective?

b. What are the facilitating conditions and/or factors that enable students to develop positive intergroup contact?

c. What are the obstacles that hinder intergroup relations?

d. What knowledge and/or skills do students need to create positive intergroup relations?

e. Do collaborative learning strategies in the classroom setting support positive intergroup contact?

Significance of the Study

This study is essential as we look at the current population trends in the United States. An increasingly diverse society suggests the potential for heterogeneous student demographics in classrooms, which demand particular attention. Diverse populations in classroom settings are often unfamiliar to teachers and students and difficult interpersonal dynamics can emerge as a result of a lack of appropriate understanding and awareness. For educators, it is not only necessary to "know our students" (Adams, Jones & Tatum, 1997) on the basis of social group membership, but it is essential to develop learning experiences that resonate for all students, across their racial and ethnic identity differences. This study will highlight the skills and knowledge necessary for students and teachers to work effectively and coexist in diverse classroom settings, as well as a multicultural society.

The use of focus groups as the primary data collection tool is significant in this research study. The focus group process emerged as a meaningful experience, providing many of the participants with an opportunity for self-reflection on their experiences with racial and ethnic issues. This was not an expected finding, but students reported having few structured opportunities to meet in racially and ethnically diverse groups where they feel safe enough to discuss their thoughts and experiences with race relations. The focus group experiences were valuable for the participants and these findings suggest that

creating settings where students can talk about these challenging issues is an important effort towards the development of intergroup relations.

The critique of Allport's Contact Theory in relationship to the findings of the study suggests an analysis of intergroup relations in a broader social context. Allport offers important considerations regarding the notion of equal status as a condition for positive intergroup contact. He suggests that creating numerical balance of group members will insure intergroup contact, and although this effort is necessary and important for the development of intergroup relations, this condition falls short of addressing differential status within the group. This study connects aspects of Allport's theory to the field of social justice education practice, which considers social structures of inequity and differential status within the current social context. The findings of this study suggest that it may not be possible to create equal status in a situation in which difference is compounded by inequality. The study concludes with recommendations for educators that have the potential to increase awareness and understanding of the issues that can emerge in a classroom as a result of differential and unequal status. Educational strategies for creating a sense of equality among group members are also outlined.

Overall, this study has both theoretical and practical significance. It will assist educators in understanding the conditions and factors that promote and hinder intergroup relations in the classroom by providing information based on student reports and observations. It will also allow educators to develop strategies for supporting positive intergroup relationships, and create more effective learning environments for all students. Supporting the development of intergroup relationships is a critical step in the effort to

work against racism and other forms of social oppression, and the findings from this study will hopefully have relevance for a variety of settings.

Clarification of Terms

Throughout this study, a number of terms are used that are known to have multiple interpretations. I will briefly describe each of these terms and provide the definition I will use for this study of intergroup relations.

Race and Ethnicity

Wijeyesinghe, Griffin and Love (1997) acknowledge the complexities of the terms race and ethnicity. There continues to be widespread debate concerning how these terms are defined. My use of this terminology is based on the perspective that race and ethnicity are socially constructed phenomena, in contrast to a biological or genetic explanation. Wijeyesinghe et al define race as:

> A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups (1997, p. 88).

Racial identity becomes salient in an intergroup relationship when particular meaning is attached to the specific racial categorization of an individual. Racial categories used in this study were White, Black, Native American, Latino/a and Asian.

Ethnicity can also be described as a social construct "which divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographic base" (Wijeyesinghe et al, 1997, p. 88). Examples of ethnic groups

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that are represented in the sample population in this study are Puerto Rican, Honduran (Latino); African American, Haitian, Ethiopian (Black); Irish, German, Jewish (White); Hassanamisco tribe (Native American) and Filipino (Asian). Historically, Jews have been categorized as both a racial and ethnic group. For the purposes of this study, I identified Jewish students as "White" primarily because the general understanding among college-aged students of race and race relations on a college campus is most often based on visible skin color. I am also aware of the dynamics of Jewish oppression and view this manifestation of oppression as having parallels as well as specific distinctions from the ways in which racial identification impacts the lives of Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans and Asians in the United States.

"White" and "Student of Color"

Participants in this study are referred to as "White" or "Students of Color." This broad terminology reflects the challenge of choosing language that appropriately describes preferred racial or ethnic designations for students of various racially and ethnically targeted groups. With this in mind, I recognize that other terms may be more preferable for members of specific racial groups but I have chosen this generic terminology for its practical use as an umbrella in this study. Words such as "majority" and "minority" are less desirable because of the misleading numerical implications.

"Student of Color" is, thus, an umbrella term that refers to students who identify as Black, Latino/a, Native American, or Asian. Students of Color in this study are viewed as members of specifically targeted racial groups.

The term "White" in this study refers to a racial identification of North American peoples originating from European descent. In this study, "Whites" are viewed as members of the dominant racial group.

Intergroup Relations

It is important to note that the term "intergroup relations" also has multiple meanings. Intergroup relations involve interactions between members of different social reference and social identity groups. This study looks at the relationships of members of diverse racial and ethnic identity groups and finds Young's definition useful: "A social group is a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life" (1990, p. 39). She continues on to suggest that social groups are a manifestation of social relations, and derive from recognition of the differences existing among collective group identification.

Moghaddam and Taylor describe intergroup relations as *"any aspect of human interaction that involves individuals perceiving themselves as members of a social category, or being perceived by others as belonging to a social category"* (1987, p.6, italics in original). This definition best supports the context of this study. An in-depth discussion of the terms "group" and "intergroup relations" is offered in Chapter Two.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter Two includes a historical overview of the intergroup relations field and a discussion of oppression theory as a second lens for considering the dynamics of intergroup relationships. Chapter Three introduces the methodology used for data collection and data analysis. In Chapter Four, the findings of the focus group data are

presented, using a thematic organization. The results of these findings are analyzed as answers to my original research questions in Chapter Five, along with a discussion of additional data sets as they confirm or contradict these findings. In Chapter Six, I return to Allport's Contact Hypothesis as a framework for suggesting recommendations to educators involved in classroom teaching. The chapter concludes with considerations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter (1) provides a brief historical overview of the relationship between the intergroup education movement and the social science field of intergroup relations, and (2) discusses perspectives on social identity theory and oppression theory as they inform a more critical analysis of the dynamics of intergroup relations. These bodies of literature position the notion of intergroup relations within a broader social context. A discussion of oppression theory provides a framework from which to examine the complex interpersonal dynamics of building relationships across racial and ethnic differences.

In the first section of this chapter, a historical overview of the field of intergroup relations is presented. This discussion considers the intersections of social-psychological inquiry concerning intergroup relations and the significance this research has had on efforts to improve traditional educational systems. Literature and research in the intergroup education field reflect an extensive relationship with various pedagogical foundations that have emerged over the last fifty years (Adams, 1997; Banks, 1995).

The second section of this chapter introduces oppression theory and its relationship to the field of intergroup relations. This includes a discussion of some of the socio-psychological processes that lead to the construction of 'self' and social group identity as they inform the nature of the relationships that are created between members

of different social groups. These theoretical frameworks of oppression enable us to consider the implications of differential status and social power.

A Historical Overview of the Intergroup Relations Field

James A. Banks, a prominent scholar in the field of multicultural education, suggests that "a historical perspective [on educational movements] is necessary to provide a context for understanding the contemporary developments and discourse in education" (1995). Current efforts at educational reform in the United States can benefit from understanding the failures and successes of earlier actions, such as the intergroup education movement. The findings of this study contribute to these current efforts by emphasizing the value of intergroup relationships across racial and ethnic identity in classroom settings. With this in mind, this section explores the relationship between the intergroup education movement and the social science field of intergroup relations.

Intergroup Education Movement

Evidence of increased interracial tensions at the end of World War II motivated well-known social scientists and scholars to formulate theoretical ideas and responses concerning intergroup relations in the early 1940's and 1950's (Banks, 1995). For the last fifty years, social scientists have conducted extensive studies to better understand the dynamics of intergroup relationships among diverse group members, and much of this research informed the development of several pedagogical traditions, including intergroup education.

The intergroup education movement can be described as an evolving phenomenon. Since its inception, the name of the movement has survived several

changes, from human relations training, to cross-cultural education, to intercultural sensitivity training. Despite these variations, the focus remained the same. Taba and Wilson (1946) identified the following key aspects: "concepts and understandings about groups and relations, sensitivity and goodwill, objective thinking, and experiences in democratic procedures" (Banks, 1995, p. 9). Taba, Brady and Robinson (1952) also described intergroup education "as an educational response to the racial and ethnic tension in the nation" (Banks, 1995).

The intergroup education movement emerged from the consequences of World War II. Post-war employment opportunities were created in the North and the West that were nonexistent in the South and as various ethnic minorities migrated to find work, racial tensions escalated. In the western part of the United States, Whites and Mexicans were competing for housing and employment, as were Blacks and Whites in cities in the northern states (Banks, 1995). Racial incidents and riots were a result of these tensions and approaches to intergroup education emerged as a response. Leaders and educators in the field were committed to prejudice reduction among individuals and groups and actively pursued and developed programs and curriculum for educating and improving intergroup relations in a variety of educational settings (Banks, 1995).

In school settings, the movement paved the way for educators to begin a process of critical thinking about their classroom environments. Administrators and teachers observed whether schools teaching traditional curriculums were inclusive in meeting the needs of all students and began to investigate other methods of school curriculum (Banks, 1995). Publications, projects and activities were developed by several national organizations, such as the Progressive Education Association, the National Council for

the Social Studies and the American Council on Education (Banks, 1995). The main goal of these groups was to reduce racial tension and prejudice in order to create intergroup understanding in various settings.

Theories of intergroup relations developed by social scientists such as Gordon Allport (1954) guided several of the writings in these publications. Other contributors to the literature included Alain Locke, an African American philosopher from Howard University, who co-edited a book on race and culture containing articles by other leading social scientists including John Dollard, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead (Banks, 1995). Allison Davis, a renowned African American anthropologist at the University of Chicago, authored, among other publications, a chapter for the National Council for the Social Studies' 16th yearbook entitled "Some Basic Concepts in the Education of Ethnic and Lower-Class Groups." This submission encouraged "social studies teachers to teach students 'a devotion to democratic values, and group disapproval of injustice, oppression, and exploitation'" (Taba & Van Til, 1945, cited in Banks, 1995, p. 8). These types of contributions to educational publications reflected an interest by social scientists to become more involved in the intergroup problems that were facing the nation's schools. This was an important breakthrough in establishing the relationship between the theoretical field of intergroup relations and the intergroup education movement. As researchers were developing theoretical models from which to consider prejudice reduction in intergroup settings, activists and educators were applying these models to settings where intergroup prejudice was problematic.

Various theoretical frameworks that focused on prejudice reduction were developed during the intergroup education era by other well-known social scientists

concerned with intergroup relations theory. A number of studies focused on children's racial attitudes by researchers such as E.L. Horowitz (1936), R.E. Horowitz (1939) and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, who sponsored a major study on prejudice and racial attitudes in 1952 (Banks, 1995).

Human Relations and Ethnic Studies

Another educational community that intergroup education was closely associated with was the human relations movement, which emerged in other settings where group relations were a concern, such as in industry (Pettigrew, 1986). The human relations movement of the 1940's and 50's developed as a response to Nazi anti-Semitism prior to and during World War II. Activists within the movement were primarily concerned with combating intergroup prejudice in its many forms - ethnic, racial and religious, with a focus on sensitivity training and consciousness raising. Organizations that exist today, such as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, were born out of this era (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). The field of social justice education is another strand that has evolved from the aspects of the intergroup education movement and part of its framework considers the formation of intergroup relationships as a component of social change and values interpersonal and individual change (Adams 1997). Its relationship to the field of intergroup relations will be discussed further in this chapter.

Other attempts at educational reform associated with the intergroup education movement included the Black and ethnic studies movements. Black and ethnic studies were largely a product of the Black separatist movement of the 60's, although African American scholars such as C.G. Woodson and G.W. Williams had accomplished initial research in ethnic studies earlier in the century. Along with W.E.B. DuBois, another

renowned Black studies scholar, they emphasized that African American students should study Black history and develop a commitment to learning about Black culture and empowering themselves and the Black community (Banks, 1995).

With this philosophical approach in mind, it is not surprising that ethnic studies scholars developed a strong critique of the intergroup education movement. They concluded there was the absence of regard for issues of differential status and social power in intergroup education, which significantly impacted the quality of everyday life for Black Americans. Scholars in ethnic studies also criticized the intergroup education movement for "promoting a weak form of diversity and the notion that 'we are different but the same'"(Banks, 1995, p.9). Those who opposed the movement criticized the curriculum's lack of content and analysis and did not support the approach of engaging students in discussions about their feelings and emotions.

The Multicultural Education Approach

Multicultural education first emerged in the 60's and 70's as a movement for school curriculum reform. The development of the field was heavily influenced by early ethnic studies scholars, and is not directly linked to the intergroup education movement (Banks, 1995). With this in mind, it is not surprising that multicultural scholars would also agree with the criticism of intergroup education by those in ethnic studies. Sleeter and Grant (1987) offer another version of this critique in their typology of approaches to multicultural education when they describe the *"Human Relations"* category. In this approach, they state that multicultural education is "a way to help students of different backgrounds communicate, get along better with each other, and feel good about themselves" (p. 426). Most of the literature and publications that were developed during

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the intergroup education movement can be classified as "human relations." Based on this description, the human relations approach and the intergroup education movement do not consider the issues of social power and institutional inequality that impact the experiences of oppressed people in the United States. Instead, the goal is for members from diverse social groups to "get along." This perspective also departs from the founding principles of ethnic studies, which strives to honor and give voice to subordinated racial and ethnic groups in this country that have been treated unjustly, historically and presently.

In Sleeter and Grant's (1987) analysis of the approaches to multicultural education, *The Human Relations* category was most closely linked to an intergroup education approach because of the emphasis on individual awareness and increased understanding of cultural differences as a way of improving relationships between members of diverse groups. These elements of intergroup relations are important. However, missing from this approach is consideration of the existing stratified social system. Sleeter and Grant state that "issues such as poverty, institutional discrimination, and powerlessness are addressed little or not at all in the human relations literature" (1987, p. 427). These outcomes of structural inequality are the basis of a social justice perspective that is reflected in Sleeter and Grant's final approach, *Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist* (1987). In this analysis, the focus is on preparing students to challenge the inequality of the social structure and promote social justice. There is also an emphasis on student relationships, which can develop as a result of increased understanding between students who are from diverse backgrounds.

The intergroup education and ethnic studies movements, despite their differences, were catalysts for other education reform movements. Multicultural education reform has specifically focused on changing the content and pedagogical approaches within schools, both "what" schools teach and "how" they teach it. It is evident that the success of the movement depends on implementation of approaches to institutional reform, including changes in the styles of teaching and learning; the culture, goals and norms in the setting; and the attitudes and behaviors of administrators and teachers (Banks, 1992; Bennett, 1990; Sleeter & Grant, 1988, in Banks, 1995).

Role of the Contact Hypothesis

The famous *Brown vs. Board of Education* case in 1954 brought about one of the most controversial changes in segregation laws and mandated that school systems across the country implement this desegregation policy (Hewstone and Brown, 1986). Social scientists had debated the potential impact of school desegregation on intergroup relations, and the notion that desegregation alone would reduce prejudice and support positive intergroup contact had been asserted in the social science literature. The belief that increased contact between members of racially different groups, particularly Blacks and Whites, would result in improved intergroup relations and less prejudice was a popular one in the field and increased the hope of interracial harmony (Hewstone and Brown, 1986).

Racial change efforts in the United States were fueled by contact research done by Deutsch and Collins (1951), which was considered useful in exploring social change strategies. These social scientists, along with others who were researching intergroup contact theory, formulated a statement for the Supreme Court hearing in 1954 that

heavily influenced the final decision. However, this landmark desegregation policy

began to show less positive effects than had been anticipated, leading researchers to

recognize that mere "contact" between members of racially different groups would not

solely guarantee a positive outcome (Hewstone and Brown, 1986). It became important

to consider what other conditions might be necessary if students from different racial

backgrounds were to do more than merely coexist.

Social scientists such as Allport (1954), Cook (1957) and Pettigrew (1971) began

to identify the precise conditions that are needed to develop positive intergroup relations.

Allport initially believed that contact was the major factor in eliminating barriers between

individuals who were member of diverse racial groups. After further investigation, he

eventually recognized that contact could increase prejudice as well as reduce it and he

emphasized that the "nature of contact" would depend on the individuals involved and

the characteristics of the contact. In his influential work, The Nature of Prejudice (1954),

Allport attempted to identify specific conditions for successful intergroup relations. His

own statement on contact theory is as follows:

> Prejudice...may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and
> minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if
> this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports...and if it is of a sort that leads
> to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members
> of the two groups (p. 281).

Although contact theory has been investigated and updated by Amir (1969), Hewstone &

Brown (1986), Pettigrew (1986) and several others, Allport's work has proven itself as

the most influential social science perspective on race relations for over forty years

(Slavin, 1995).

This research study utilized contact theory, also referred to as the Contact Hypothesis, as a framework for exploring the development of intergroup relations in a college classroom. In his work, he stated that numerical balance of members of each group among majority and minority group members would insure positive intergroup contact (Hewstone and Brown). Although efforts to create this balance are important and necessary, they are not sufficient to insure the existence of equal status within the setting. This study examined and challenged the presumed condition of equal status and as a result, provided a critical perspective that is reflected in the proposed recommendations. These recommendations suggest that efforts at creating equal status in the classroom setting can influence the learning experiences of all students in the classroom.

Allport's concern with numerical distribution of group members acknowledges the presence of inequality in a diverse group, but neglects the consideration of unequal status of majority and minority group members in the large societal context that has the potential to impact a contact situation. These larger issues of status and social stratification are not left behind when students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds enter a classroom. The interpersonal dynamics that are likely to emerge as a result of the existing inequalities among members of different social groups can interfere with the ability of group members to build positive contact.

Initially, the intergroup relations field based its work on the assumption that prejudice was an individual, interpersonal issue, and neglected to consider institutional and societal factors. The focus has been on issues of cultural awareness and prejudice reduction, and has overlooked the structural paradigm of domination and subordination that has historically existed and is currently operating in the United States. This

important consideration for the development of positive intergroup relations is not addressed sufficiently in the intergroup relations literature. This research inquiry suggests new directions for the field that include a critical analysis of the dynamics of social inequality on positive intergroup relationships.

Pettigrew's (1986) statement suggests that the field needs to advance in other directions:

> Just as the Movement's focus on sick bigots diverted attention from seeing the problem of prejudice in themselves, its focus on educational remedies (an original strategy) diverted attention from the difficult confrontation with the comfortable institutional arrangements that yield special privilege to the dominant group (p.5).

This strong critique slowly changed the direction of the intergroup education movement in the late 50's, as the notions of prejudice and discrimination were eventually understood as larger societal issues of access, survival and human dignity - not just individual bigotry. The need for educational approaches that integrated individual awareness with issues of social power and institutionalized systems of discrimination became evident. Multicultural education theorists have developed a body of literature that considers these issues, but many in the field currently are concerned about the widening gap between development of theory and practical application. Educational strategies that respond to issues of power and structural inequality need to be implemented if meaningful change is going to be achieved.

These are several of the basic assumptions the social justice education model is built on. This framework is discussed in the next section.

Social Identity Theory and Social Justice Education: Theoretical Frameworks that Broaden the Notion of Intergroup Relations

> The current status of race relations in America weakens the social fabric, undermines the nation's economy, poisons its politics, and denies the opportunity to learn from the richness of its racial and ethnic diversity (Hawley, 1995, p. xii).

Labor disputes between blue-collar workers and management, the Los Angeles riots in 1994, gender conflicts, the Christian Right and gay marriage, the rights of immigrants - these are disputes that continue to define the nature of intergroup relations in the United States. Despite the historical and present day evidence of the tensions that exist among members of diverse social identity groups, researchers in the area of intergroup relations have neglected to consider the interpersonal dynamics of inequality that are the result of a larger social context of systemic oppression. Hawley (1995) reminds us in the above quote that this lack of attention results in challenging consequences.

It seems that researchers and theorists involved in other fields that would benefit from a better understanding of intergroup relations have "essentially ignored" the interpersonal dynamics that emerge when members of diverse social identity groups interact (James & Khoo, 1991, p. 177). In the field of organizational development, for example, research on intergroup relations and intergroup behavior has primarily focused on relations between labor and management (Karlins and Hargis, 1987) as opposed to considering the implications of gender or race relations in the workplace, for example. Although a study by Alderfer, Tucker, Morgan and Drasgow (1983) did apply research from multicultural relations to an organization that was dealing with race issues, the research did not consider interventions for improving the intergroup dynamics in the

organization. The intergroup relations literature in social psychology has focused primarily on small, intact groups and much less on social identity groups, such as racial or ethnic groups, that have ascribed social group memberships (Moghaddam and Taylor, 1987).

These examples point to the distinct limitations in the intergroup relations literature. As I reviewed various theorists' writings, it was evident that a critical perspective is missing, one that includes an analysis of the broader social system and its oppressive practices that strive to maintain a paradigm of domination and subordination. There is an absence of attention to the structures that support the social dynamics of inequality, such as social stratification and differential status. Issues of differential status impact how individuals perceive themselves and one another in this larger societal context and are directly implicated in the development of positive intergroup relationships. The complex interweaving of these societal constructs is the basis for the theoretical framework of social justice education.

Three different theories inform my critique of Allport's notion of equal status contact: Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory; Iris Marion Young's conceptualization of "group;" and oppression theory in the field of social justice education. However, for the purposes of clarification, the next section begins with a brief discussion of the term "intergroup relations" as it is utilized in this study.

A Working Definition of "Intergroup Relations"

Exploring various bodies of literature in sociology and education that discussed intergroup relations revealed numerous definitions. The term intergroup relations is often used interchangeably in the literature with intergroup behavior or intergroup conflict. For

the purposes of this dissertation study, I specifically chose the term *intergroup relations* since I am most interested in exploring the broader interpersonal dynamics of intergroup relationships. This study does not consider issues pertaining to intergroup behavior or intergroup conflict.

Sherif and Sherif (1969) describe an aspect of intergroup relations as "the actions by one group and its members have an impact on another group and its members, regardless of whether the two groups are actually engaging in direct give-and-take at the time" (Moghaddam and Taylor, 1987, p. 5). This definition omits any mention of social group membership, unlike Moghaddam and Taylor's (1987) approach: *any aspect of human interaction that involves individuals perceiving themselves as members of a social category, or being perceived by others as belonging to a social category* (p.6, italics in original). This definition suggests that the psychological meaning of the interaction is what determines an instance of intergroup behavior. Moghaddam and Taylor (1987) qualify their definition by stating that intergroup relations do not have to include a sense of cohesion among group members; members do not need to know each other well or necessarily like one another. They also state that intergroup relations do not apply only to large groups of people.

Moghaddam and Taylor's description of an intergroup relationship best illustrates how the term is used for the purposes of this study, which considers the diverse racial and ethnic social group memberships of the participant group. This study explores how issues of social group membership impact the development of positive intergroup relationships among participant group members.

Defining Social Identity

The complexity and depth of the concept of social identity cannot be covered within the bounds of this chapter. Different fields in the social sciences have contributed to a general perspective on identity that includes concepts such character, personality, and roles within groups based on specific individual characteristics. Although this chapter focuses on social identity and social group membership as they pertain to intergroup relations, I first want to distinguish between personal identity and social identity.

Hardiman (1982) proposes that the concept of identity involves two dimensions, the personal and the social, although she recognizes the interaction of these distinct levels. She defines the personal level as the ways in which an individual recognizes aspects of her personhood, such as personality, character, and personal tastes. The social level refers to the role of others in society defining these aspects, particularly around the individual's participation in social group categories. This conceptualization of identity is helpful for understanding the role of social identity within the notion of intergroup relations, which assumes that others are defining an individual based on their perceptions of that individual. Turner defines social identity as denoting an individual's membership in social categories such as gender, ethnicity or religion (Tajfel, 1982b). He views personal identity as referring to specific attributes of a person, for example, intellectual concerns, psychological characteristics, and feelings of competence.

Tajfel (1972) defines social identity as the "individual's knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership" (p.2). According to this description, social identity is determined by a person's self-conception of membership in certain social groups or

categories. The social groups that a person belongs to gives him/her a sense of self in relationship to others, as well as a means of self-identification. For the purposes of this study, social identity is viewed as an ascribed group membership in various categories, such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.

Hardiman's (1982) statement on social identity is useful for understanding potential intergroup dynamics: "all the various social groups that an individual consciously and unconsciously has membership in and the conscious and unconscious use of a social frame of reference in self-perception, social perception or in social interaction" (p. 76). Social identity is the product of the meanings that individuals have been socialized to have regarding social categories of others and the awareness individuals have of their own social group membership. This influences the way a person perceives self and his/her interactions with others. These various group memberships, however, are socially constructed, which means that ultimately others define one's social identity. Hardiman's definition suggests that social identity is dynamic and part of an evolving social context, which is inherent in intergroup relationships.

Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory

Henri Tajfel and John Turner's development of social identity theory in the 1970's (Tajfel, 1978a, 1982; Turner, 1987) brought greater attention to the role of social identity and its affiliation with intergroup relations. Their notion of inequality among social groups was an important contribution to the social identity literature. As a result, social psychologists have taken more of a social identity approach to the field. Tajfel (1972a) views social identity "as the individual's knowledge that he belongs to a group coupled with some emotional and value significance to him regarding the group

membership" (in Tajfel, 1982b, p.18). The relevance of one's social identity becomes more prominent when he/she is included in one of the categories.

Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory suggests that although one's social identity cannot change, different aspects of identity may be more or less salient depending on certain circumstances. Social group identity can "vary in salience in time and as a function of a variety of social situations" (Tajfel, 1982b, p. 21). This variance in saliency depends on the individual's own cognition of her social group memberships. She could be involved in an intergroup conflict or be the target of discrimination but if she does not have a self-conception of that particular aspect of herself, then her social identity may not be as salient in these situations. In a review of intergroup research, Bochner (1982) concluded that when conflict is present, social group identity becomes meaningful (Austin & Worchel, 1979). Conflict or tension in an intergroup situation often facilitates an increased awareness in a person's social group membership, especially if group differences are creating division and out-group bias. All of this suggests that giving attention to issues of social identity within the context of intergroup relations can lead to a greater understanding of the potential interpersonal dynamics.

Social identity theory views individual and social group behavior as a function of social group membership. It also states that in order for an individual to feel positive about membership in his or her social identity group, there is a need to see the group in a positive light. The individual would perceive her social identity group as the in-group and the "other" group would be considered the out-group (Tajfel, 1982b). One's own group would be primarily valued based on the membership of that individual.

As the social science research continues to shift from individual to group, in its most general use, increased attention is being paid to the conditions that guide individuals in defining themselves and acting as members of a group rather than in their individual role. This perspective has particular relevance to field of intergroup relations. Turner (1978) speaks to this shift as he defines intergroup relations as "concerning the conditions which lead individuals to define themselves and act as members of a group rather than in their individual capacity" (cited in Tajfel, 1982b, p.4). Certain theoretical frameworks were developed to consider the interconnections of "individual" and "group." A continuum of sorts can be conceptualized as the individual moves from "acting in terms of self" to that same individual "acting in terms of group." The psychological conditions of the interaction move an individual from the interpersonal pole of the continuum to the intergroup pole. The interpersonal-intergroup continuum described here by Tajfel (1982b) represents the transition that social behavior passes through from interpersonal to intergroup:

> At one extreme...is the interaction between two or more individuals which is fully determined by their interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics and not at all affected by various social groups or categories to which they belong. The other extreme consists of interactions between two or more individuals (or groups of individuals) which are fully determined by their respective memberships of various social groups or categories, and not all affected by the interindividual personal relationships between the people involved... (p. 20).

Tajfel differentiates between intergroup and interpersonal relations using the concept of social identity. One's role in a social group setting can be viewed as an extension of one's identity as an individual. The shift of individual awareness from personal identity to social identity corresponds with this transition in the social behavior that operates as a

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function of the interaction. A particular social identity may become more salient in a group situation as the individual identifies with the group and not just as an individual.

Social identity theory has as its premise that people seek out a positive self-identity both objectively and in relation to others. This process involves a series of interrelated social psychological processes such as social categorization and social comparison. These aspects of the theory attempt to deal with a wide range of possible responses that out-group members might utilize to improve their social position (Moghaddam and Taylor, 1987). I will briefly discuss each of these processes, as they are relevant to intergroup relations.

Social Comparison

Social comparison across-groups is another process that is central to social identity theory and intergroup relations. "Social identity theory makes its unique contribution, however, in considering social comparison on a between-groups or intergroup basis, rather than on a within-groups or intrapersonal basis" (Goethals & Darley, 1978). Social comparison is the process by which individuals will seek out a positive self-identity by comparing one's self with the relevant out-group. Festinger's (1954) original theory stated that individuals have preferences for the groups they identify with. He argues that "individuals are attracted to groups in which the members have opinions similar to their own so that they can evaluate their own opinions with precision" (Goethals and Darley, 1987). Festinger postulated that the process of social comparison impacts group formation, as in the case of small, voluntary groups based on individuals of similar abilities and opinions. Within voluntary groups, people are regarded in other groups as "incomparable;" in other words "the opinions and abilities of

people in these incomparable groups will not be important for people's evaluations of their own abilities or opinions" (Goethals & Darley, 1987). Social reference groups are not voluntary groups, however, and this distinction is important for this study of intergroup relations.

The process of social comparison at the intergroup level influences the actions of individuals, which illustrates Tajfel's interpersonal-intergroup continuum mentioned earlier. It is nearly impossible to distinctly separate the individual and the group; we can see the implications of one entity for the other. According to social identity theory, the process of social comparison clarifies one's social identity and assists in creating a positive self-identity, but the comparison is usually based on the positive status of in-group or the negative status of out-group memberships (Tajfel, 1978a, 1982; Turner, 1987).

From a social justice perspective, this segmentation of people into groups is also a process inherent in a system of oppression to the extent that most social reference groups are unequal. As the dominant group, or in-group, decides what is valued regarding specific dimensions, they are also asserting what they consider to be the norm and expect that the target group, or out-group, will attain what they need in order to meet this norm. The out-group may try to meet up to these standards or they may rebel. Thus, social comparison has the potential to create obstacles for desirable intergroup relations to form.

Social Categorization and Stereotyping

It appears that human beings have been separating one another into groups based on similar or shared attributes or characteristics throughout recorded history. Not only do we group or categorize people based on perceived similarities, but we also seek out those

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who are most like us. This is one view of socially organized human nature and an unfortunate consequence of this age-old practice is how it has created barriers among diverse peoples by virtue of social groups. Built into our earlier development as children and adolescents, we have been socialized to seek out those people who look like us, speak the same language as we do, and even eat the same foods. This has resulted in a considerable lack of understanding about those who look different, speak different languages and eat what we may call "exotic" or "strange" cuisine. This absence of knowledge and understanding has resulted in the ignorance and fear that we witness today which has further emerged in the form of violence, hate crimes, and harassment between groups of different sexual orientations, racial, ethnic, religious and gender identities.

Social categorization, as described here, is a central cognitive process associated with Tajfel's social identity theory. Tajfel (1972) defines it as the process by which individuals are understood as belonging to distinct classes or categories which systematically includes others in the same categories and excludes people from different categories. This process of grouping is based on perceived similarity in appearance or function, which is generally what happens to people in the social categorization process - we are grouped along aspects of similarity. Individuals will identify themselves and others within a system of social categorization and if desirable, will form a social group that can be conceptualized as a number of individuals who have internalized the same social category membership as a component of their self-concept. They create and define the individual's place in society by identifying the self and others with social group labeling. This process is a comparative one, as an individual is trying to maintain a

positive self-identity by labeling others with either positive or negative connotations. Bruner (1956) also suggests "the main function of categorization is to reduce the complex object world to a more simple and manageable structure" (in Taylor, 1981, p. 83).

Stereotypes are a primary factor in shaping and organizing social reality and it is important to understand how stereotypes derive from social interaction (Taylor, 1981) and the effect they have on the formation of intergroup relations. Stereotyping occurs as a result of the cognitive processes of homogenization and depersonalization of out-group members. The individuals are perceived in terms of shared category characteristics and not individual or personal qualities. The in-group will seek out a favorable comparison of itself against the out-group that affords it high status or prestige. As a result, this system perpetuates the low image of the out-group.

According to Tajfel & Billig (1973), the process of social categorization in creating in-group and out-group categories heightens the perception of similarities within categories and sharpens the perception of differences between categories (Taylor, 1981). Individuals have a stereotype about their own group as 'good' and positive, and consider the out-group to be 'bad' and undeserving. The result of the categorization of an in-group and an out-group is generally discrimination against the out-group and favoritism toward the in-group. Also, there is less focus on differences within each of the groups but an exaggerated focus on differences between groups (Taylor, 1981). To illustrate this, Whites, the in-group, view members of a group of Mexican Americans, the out-group, as similar to each other but can make distinctions as to what makes this social group different from themselves. Members of dominant in-groups tend to generalize the qualities of members of the targeted group, assuming that all out-group members are the

same. However, in reference to the in-group, they will usually attribute individual characteristics to the in-group members or the agent group. Distinctions are made easily between in-group members in terms of qualities and characteristics of people (Taylor, 1981).

Members of the dominant group are able to impose a worldview that decides how other people are defined. Thus, those who are at the center where the power resides are seen as individuals and need not be defined in relation to their group memberships. Those who are the target or disadvantaged group are defined by the assigned characteristics of that social category. Deschamps (1978) considers "the achievement of the construction for oneself of full individuality...the privilege of social power" (Tajfel, 1982b, p. 5). He critiques earlier research on social categorization, saying it ignores the important distinctions between dominant and dominated groups. In regards to the impact of this notion on intergroup relations, Tajfel (1982) notes that a people's "conception of their individuality" is clearly impacted by how they perceive the dynamics of power between groups.

Tajfel (1972) has noted that "stereotypes represent not only some perceived group difference, but some value judgment regarding that difference" (Taylor, 1981, p.97). It is important again to mention that although each group may hold stereotypes about one another, the impact on the out-group is comparatively different from that on the in-group, particularly from an institutional perspective. The social realities for the Mexican Americans mentioned earlier, with their subordinate social status, for example, are quite the opposite from the White American, who has dominant social status. A Mexican American trying to attain a position of employment may have to work harder to prove

himself as worthy of the job, knowing that the potential employer is most likely wondering if he is "lazy, using drugs or maybe doesn't know English" and any other possible stereotypes.

Numerous studies have shown that the mere categorization of persons as in-group and out-group is sufficient to trigger in-group favoritism and out-group bias (Allen & Wilder, 1975; Billig, 1973; Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel & Billig, 1974; Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971; Wilder & Allen, 1974, in Rose, 1981). The process of social categorization has different degrees of dehumanization but for the purposes of my research, I consider it as functioning to perpetuate an oppressive system that continues to place tension and strain on intergroup relations.

A Social Identity Approach to Intergroup Relations

Social identity theory states that an individual's identity is "highly differentiated" and has "emotional and value significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978). This is a much more realistic approach to social identity and intergroup relations as it assumes a connection between individual cognition of one's social identity and how that is acted upon in an intergroup situation. Tajfel (1978) goes on further to discuss the intersections of what he describes as the "objective" and "subjective" conditions that impact an individual's experience in society and reinforce the existence of inequality. He defends what I believe to be the essence of the argument for a social identity approach to intergroup relations:

The study of the relations between social groups within any society must first take into account the objective conditions of the existence: economic, political, social and historical circumstances which impact the differences between the groups in standards of living, access to opportunities such as employment, education or the treatment they receive from those who wield power and authority. These are the subjective conditions which exist in the form of stereotypes, belief systems and value systems (p. 8).

When Tajfel speaks about the "objective" and "subjective" conditions of the society, this includes recognizing that each individual has a particular life experience impacted by the social conditions as a result of their social group membership. This life experience includes a personal history that intersects with the daily reality of social conditions and as a result, influences an individual's attitudes and worldview. We all have a particular belief system based on our location in the world, and it is influenced by the ascribed social status that positions us. The resulting instances of intergroup behavior are directly impacted by these differences in positions and social status and contribute to the present and future relationships between groups.

For a discussion of intergroup relations, it is essential to understand social identity in the larger societal context. Issues of inequality are intricately connected with the concept of social identity; in each social identity category, one group is privileged while the other is disadvantaged. An individual has access or doesn't have access to resources depending on the identities she has and how others perceive those identities. How an individual is impacted by the social power that institutions wield is an analysis that is absent in the intergroup relations literature. This imbalance of power is a major thrust of intergroup relations issues and will be discussed in relationship to the social justice theoretical framework in the following sections. In the next section, a brief

conceptualization of "group" is discussed to further expand the notion of intergroup relations.

Defining the Notion of "Group" for Intergroup Relations

In the past, the intergroup relations literature has focused more on the individual and her role in groups and less on the group itself. There have been differences of opinion about what is the "appropriate unit of analysis" for group behavior - the individual or the group (Mullen, 1987, p.2). The debate is over which aspect is more valuable as the object of analysis to explain what is happening in a group situation. There are various interpretations of the term "group" as there are many different kinds of groups: work groups, formal groups, voluntary groups, to name a few. It is important here to distinguish the meaning of the term "group" as it is relevant to this study on intergroup relations.

We are all members of different social identity groups that represent different aspects of ourselves. We may receive some degree of satisfaction in these group memberships or we may not be cognizant of certain groups that we belong to. Several definitions of "group" in the intergroup literature discuss various components of one's social identity or mention the importance of social identity. Austin and Worchel (1979) define a group as:

> a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social categories, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it (p. 19).

Turner (1982) suggests, "a social group can be defined as two or more individuals who share a common social identification to themselves or perceive themselves to be

members of the same social category" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 15). Turner stresses that the common attribute is what brings the group together and although they know nothing about one another, they still consider themselves to be a group.

Mullen (1987), in his review of the literature, offers a variety of definitions for the term "group" as it has been defined in the social psychological literature: "a set of individuals who share a common fate" (Fiedler, 1967); "a collection of individuals whose existence as a collective is rewarding to the individuals" (Bass, 1960); and Reicher's (1982) definition which states that a group is "two or more people who share a common identification of themselves, or, which is really the same thing, perceive themselves to be members of the same social category" (p.2). This last definition is most useful for an intergroup perspective, as the focus is on the identity that members of a group share as a common denominator. In this study, I use the term "social identity group" when I am naming a *social group* that is based on *social identity*, such as gender, race, ethnicity or religion. This is an example of an *ascribed group*, whose members are assigned to a social group on the basis of an ascribed social identity, such as race or ethnicity. Members of an ascribed social identity group do not have to associate with other group members but are generally viewed as an affiliated member regardless of the individual's cognition of that aspect of herself.

Iris Marion Young's discussion of "social group" in her well-known chapter "The Five Faces of Oppression" (1990) attempts to conceptualize "social group" in a broader social context, which is useful for this study. She views a social group as differentiated by an identity, such as gender, religion, age, and race. These social groups are highly influenced by how the members of the group perceive themselves and one

another. This general description is similar to Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, but Young suggests that there is not a clear and developed understanding of the notion of "social group" in social science theory or philosophy.

Young's theoretical framework for her discussion of the term group positions it within the notion of oppression as a social construct. She refers to Marilyn Frye's (1983a) description of oppression, "an enclosing structure of forces and barriers which tends to the immobilization and reduction of a group or category of people" (1990, p.41). This describes the structural and institutionalized qualities of oppression that result in the various forms of injustices that subordinated social groups face. It is from this awareness of the systemic nature of oppression that a more critical understanding and approach to intergroup relations can be developed.

There is a great deal about Young's conceptualization of a "social group" that parallels social identity theory. However, what is most compelling about her analysis and what differentiates it from Tajfel and Turner is her examination of the interplay between the broader social dynamics of inequality and the various social identity groups that exist in society. According to her discussion, when people are categorized into unequal social groups, the result of this classification is oppression. Manifestations of prejudice, stereotyping and other forms of injustice are a result of arbitrarily assigned attributes in the process of social group identification. However, Young believes that if intergroup tension, inequity of resources, violence and other forms of oppression are going to be eliminated, this does not mean that social groups per se should no longer exist. This notion of group identification as limiting the possibility of social change is a popular one in the United States, and supports the 'melting pot' ideology that states we should "ignore

differences." In order for substantial social change to take place, she suggests a more critical approach: "Social justice requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression" (1990, p. 47).

The complexities of intergroup relations are highlighted in Young's analysis of social identity groups. She considers the broader social context of oppression that creates and maintains issues of differential status among diverse social groups. This perspective informs a more critical approach to understanding the interpersonal dynamics of intergroup relations. Her work guides us to a final theoretical framework for expanding the notion of intergroup relations, the social justice perspective.

The Concept of Social Identity in a Social Justice Framework

The usefulness of social justice theory for investigating intergroup relations lies in its consideration of social identity within the broader societal dynamics of inequality. A definition of oppression will be presented first to clarify the context of this discussion. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) state that:

> Social oppression exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit. Social oppression is distinct from a situation of simple brute force in that it is an interlocking system that involves ideological control as well as domination and control of the social institutions and resources of the society, resulting in a condition of privilege for the agent group relative to the disenfranchisement and exploitation of the target group (p. 17).

This definition is grounded in a social justice model that views individuals as playing multiple roles located within complex structures of domination and subordination. This hierarchical system of domination of one social group over another results in inequity of resources and differential treatment based on the selective status of one's social group.

As mentioned in the previous discussion on the notion of "social groups," the system of oppression needs to be understood not only in individual terms, for social group status determines if people are privileged or oppressed (Bell, 1997). Dominant, or agent group status affords one the privilege of being seen as an individual, while subordinate, or target group status often only defines its members as belonging to that particular social group (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 20). For example, a heterosexual person is not usually defined by sexual orientation, and is described by individual characteristics. A lesbian, on the other hand, is most often faced with being viewed only as a member of her social group and cannot escape the assumptions about her identity as a homosexual, and as a result is usually not acknowledged for her personal attributes and abilities.

An ascribed social group identity also has an affiliated social status. Social group identities such as male, heterosexual and White have assigned dominant or agent status, which means these identities share characteristics that are viewed by society as "normal" and desirable. Subordinate status, also referred to as target status, is assigned to individuals in social identity groups such as women, gay people, and Mexican Americans. These social group memberships afford their members limited access to social resources and these group memberships are considered less than desirable.

Social group membership is not chosen but assigned. Hardiman & Jackson (1997) position the notion of assigned social identity within the oppressive system:

> Part of the method of establishing dominance in the system of oppression is the naming of the target group by the agent group. The ability to name reflects who has power (p.17).

According to Hardiman and Jackson, this enables the agent group to define and maintain what is "normal" or "correct."

For the purposes of developing a critical analysis of the development of intergroup relationships, the interactions between agents and targets must be considered. There are multiple aspects of the relationship between members of target and agent groups that are considered in the social justice framework (Adams et al, 1997). For the purposes of this study, a model developed by Hardiman and Jackson (1997) best describes the potential interpersonal dynamics that can emerge in an intergroup relationship, as it has been defined in this chapter. They establish the relationship between target and agent as having a "one-up and one-down pattern" (p. 22). These horizontal and vertical relationships maintain the hierarchical system of oppression, "with agents operating out of internalized privilege, in a manner oppressive to targets, who simultaneously collude to some degree out of their own internalized subordination" (p. 23).

Vertical interactions involve members from different social groups who are unequal in status, such as Whites and Asian Americans. Horizontal relationships involve members of the same social group who are equal in status and these relationships can be described as either "target-target" or "agent-agent." African Americans who accuse other African Americans of assimilating or "acting White" are exhibiting a "target-target" form of a horizontal interaction. An example of an "agent-agent" dimension is Whites harassing other Whites for their friendships with People of Color, or those same Whites receiving affirmation for behavior that perpetuates the oppressive belief system. This model reflects the complexity of social oppression as a multi-layered system with specific

model reflects the complexity of social oppression as a multi-layered system with specific assigned social group roles that interact to maintain the hierarchical relationship between targets and agents.

With this theoretical framework of oppression and social justice in mind, it is essential to consider these various interpersonal dynamics of social group identity as they are implicated in the development of intergroup relationships. In any given intergroup situation, individuals enter with preconceptions about the social group memberships present in the group. Decisions are made regarding how to interact with the other group based on information about that social group identity and the saliency of these social group memberships for the group members at that given moment. Factors such as these can have a notable influence on the nature of that particular intergroup interaction.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the historical relationship of the social psychological field of intergroup relations to the intergroup education movement. Several theoretical perspectives on the notion of social identity were also presented with the intention of broadening the discussion concerning the complex interpersonal dynamics of building relationships across racial and ethnic differences.

The intergroup relations field has historically focused on issues of cultural awareness and prejudice reduction. Most of the social psychological literature on intergroup relations that I reviewed revealed the assumption that prejudice reduction can occur if individuals have more contact with people who are different from themselves. Several social scientists of intergroup relations, such as Pettigrew (1978) and Allport (1954), attempted to expand this premise and did consider the notion of inequality among

diverse groups. However, they neglected to consider the societal issues of social stratification and differential status, as they shape intergroup relations across race and ethnicity. This research study hopes to address this particular lack of analysis as it challenges Allport's limited discussion of "equal status" as a condition for positive intergroup relationships.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Patton (1990) describes qualitative inquiries as providing data that has "depth, detail and meaning at a very personal level of the experience" (p. 17). This study applied a qualitative research approach to explore the conditions that support the development of positive intergroup relations among students from different racial and ethnic identities in a college classroom. A qualitative approach also supported my interest in collecting data that would investigate in-depth experiences of the participants, also referred to as "participant perspectives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). It was my intention to conduct research that would give voice to the experiences and perspectives of this diverse group of participants concerning intergroup relations.

This chapter begins with a description of the pilot study that informed the design for this study. I will describe the research methodology in the following sections: participants, methodology, data analysis, limitations and role of the researcher.

Pilot Study

In the semester prior to the design of this study was conducted, I facilitated a pilot study with my own section of *Social Diversity in Education*, the same course used as the setting for my research. In the pilot study, I set out to explore my initial thinking about the topic of intergroup relationships in a college classroom. I field tested my focus group protocol and became familiar with this particular methodological approach.

The pilot study was structured as a focus group, with initial caucus group meetings. Two racially homogeneous caucus groups met separately before the two groups joined together as a focus group. Each homogeneous group, White students and Students of Color, was given a set of questions to discuss for one hour and fifteen minutes (Appendix A). A tape recorder was operating in each room and since I was the only facilitator, I moved between the two rooms to check on equipment and the progress of the groups. However, I did work more with the White student caucus group, who struggled with their set of questions and the interpersonal dynamics in the group. The Students of Color, in contrast, needed little facilitation and appeared enthusiastic about the opportunity to discuss issues they face as members of subordinated social groups.

When each caucus group was finished with its discussion, the students returned to the classroom and we created a circle as a large group. At this point, the White students were invited to sit together inside the circle and discuss their responses to the last two questions they talked about in their caucus group meeting. When the White student caucus group finished, the Student of Color caucus group moved into the circle and also responded to the same last two questions. These two questions focused on building positive intergroup relationships across racial and ethnic difference and shaped the focus group discussion. At the end of the focus group, students were handed a written protocol sheet to consider their personal experiences in the focus group. These were collected the following week and I read through the responses, looking for self-reflective or other interesting reactions from the students.

This pilot study generated a considerable amount of dialogue among the students on issues of racism, both in the caucus groups and in the focus group discussion.

However, the topic of intergroup relationships received little attention in either caucus group or in the focus group discussion. I assumed this circumstance was a result of the students' unfamiliarity with the term "intergroup relationship" because most young people do not refer to or think about their friendships with this language. However, I came to realize a more compelling reason. Most students could identify what an intergroup relationship was and reported having a few friends from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, but overall, most participants were more interested in focusing upon the issue of racism. When the caucus groups joined in the large group discussion and listened to each other report out, the discussion focused more on racism and less on building positive intergroup relationships across race and ethnicity. This was a strong finding that revealed the need for opportunities for students to talk with each other about issues of racism and personal experiences with racial difference prior to developing intergroup relationships. These issues, if left unresolved, have the potential to create challenging interpersonal dynamics, which do not support students in developing positive intergroup contact. These insights provided me with essential information about potential issues as I designed the dissertation study.

The pilot study provided a valuable opportunity to practice the process of managing focus groups, test out my questions and prepare for the dissertation study. I found it challenging and disruptive to move between two caucus groups and recognized that it would be important to have the assistance of a facilitator who is a Person of Color. It also confirmed my reasons for choosing a classroom setting where I was not teaching for the dissertation study. Playing two roles, as the researcher and the instructor, would have limited my effectiveness in either capacity.

This experience also provided me with insight into the students' experiences with topics of race and intergroup relations. It was apparent that they valued an opportunity to talk about personal experiences concerning issues of race and this affected their ability to focus on the topic of building intergroup relationships. This was an important finding that allowed me to modify the focus group questions to guide, with greater emphasis and clarity, the students' attention to the topic of intergroup relationships across racial and ethnic difference.

Site Selection and Participants

This research study took place at a large, public, land-grant and research-oriented university in the Northeast, that had a predominantly White student population. The setting is a social diversity awareness class, *Social Diversity in Education,* which fulfills a diversity requirement mandated by the University. This course is grounded in social justice education practice and theory, and considers five manifestations of social oppression. It has a reputation for its strong emphasis on an experiential and interactive learning approach and it is always overenrolled. The course draws on students from all disciplines across the campus, from education to engineering, and takes place during a fourteen week semester.

I had taught *Social Diversity in Education* for several years and so I was familiar with the curriculum and its relevance to my research study. I chose this particular course because of the subject matter and the emphasis it placed on the interpersonal dynamics that emerge as a result of interactions between individuals from diverse populations. With these factors in mind, there was a reasonable expectation that the topic of intergroup relations could be easily explored in this setting. I approached one of the instructors of

this multiple-sectioned course and we discussed the possibility of her classroom as my research setting. She was eager to experiment with new teaching strategies and the collaborative workgroup approach that I wanted to observe as a factor in developing intergroup relationships was interesting to her. She agreed to be involved and we developed guidelines concerning the classroom as the setting for the study. She also invited me to provide input regarding portion of the curriculum that focused on racism, as well as the journal questions that were posed to the students at the end of each class session. This instructor also agreed to be one of my peer debriefers. Overall, I had frequent contact with the instructor throughout the fourteen weeks of involvement with her section.

The registration process for this course included a recruitment effort from different student support offices on campus, including the Bilingual Collegiate Program (BCP) and the Committee for the Collegiate Education of Black and Other Minority Students (CCEBMS). This was done to support the enrollment of racially and ethnically diverse students in the class, which was essential for the study. Students self-selected into this section of the course and a total of twenty-three students enrolled, from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Twelve Students of Color and eleven White students were in the group, and of these twenty-three students, nine were male and fourteen were female. Specific demographic information concerning racial and ethnic identification is provided in Chapter Four.

At the first class of the semester, I introduced myself to the group and gave a description of the study. All of the students were invited to participate and I explained the different options for involvement. Participants could be involved in all data

collection sets, including the two focus group sessions, or they could choose not to participate in focus groups and be involved with only the classroom data collection. Students were offered five extra credit points if they participated in both rounds of focus groups, and two and a half points were given if they participated in only one focus group meeting. It was emphasized that a student's decision to participate had no bearing on their final grade for the course as determined by the instructor.

Students received a Participant Consent Form (Appendix B) that outlined how the data would be used and explained their rights as participants in the study. I encouraged students to approach me at the end of class to ask questions or to make changes on the form based on the student's individual needs. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were also discussed with the participants and were stated on the Participant Consent Form. Only one student, a White male, did not return his form, and subsequently, participated minimally in the course and the study overall. I approached him twice about his participation in the study to see if he had questions or concerns, but he declined to discuss them with me.

I also distributed Participant Information sheets (Appendix C) at the first class, and explained my purpose for inquiring about students' social group memberships and their experiences with racially and ethnically diverse groups of people. This demographic information also assisted the instructor in forming small collaborative workgroups that reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of the group. All of the students in the classroom agreed to participate in some aspect of the data collection, and fourteen students participated in both of the focus group sessions.

I encouraged them to consider their participation in the study as a learning experience, where they would have the opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding of race-related issues and build confidence in their ability to communicate about them.

Data Collection Methods

Several data collection methods were used in this study. My intention was to gather multiple perspectives, although I did not plan to report all of the data in this dissertation. Utilizing multiple data sources, also referred to as triangulation, provides evidence of data that is "either convergent, inconsistent or contradictory - such that the research can construct good explanations of the social phenomena for which they arise" (Morgan, 1988, p.15). The process of triangulation allows the researcher to correct for bias, which can emerge as a result of participants' and researcher's subjectivity. Multiple data sources also have the ability to illuminate one another, often suggesting alternative ways of thinking about an emerging theme or pattern in the findings (Bourne, 1995). Different data collection methods provided me with in-depth perspectives of the informants, who were given a range of strategies to express themselves. The data sources included:

- Focus groups – Caucus groups were used prior to Focus Group I only

- Fieldnotes from classroom observations

- Students' weekly journal entries

- Final reflective written assignment

The findings of this study, as reported in Chapter Four, draw primarily on the focus group data and other sets noted in Chapter Five were used mostly to confirm or contradict these

findings. Much more data is available than is actually reported here and will be used for future research and presentations.

In the following section, I describe each data collection method in detail.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were chosen because of their interactive and dialogical qualities. They did not take place during class time, but at another time and location on campus. They provided an invaluable opportunity to hear the participants discuss with each other their personal experiences and perspectives concerning intergroup relations across racial and ethnic differences (Morgan, 1988; Krueger, 1988). Focus groups also gave participants an opportunity to interact more informally with each other, and allowed me to observe these interactions outside of the classroom environment. Students were given extra credit points for their participation in the focus group sessions.

Two focus group sessions were organized: Focus Group I (FG I) at mid-semester, and Focus Group II (FG II) near the end of the term. This schedule for the focus groups was designed to explore changes that may have occurred for the participants over the course of the semester, specifically concerning factors that contributed to their ability to build relationships with across racial and ethnic differences. Two weeks prior to FG I, the instructor gave me a few minutes during class to announce the focus group activity and explain the participants' involvement in this method of data collection. A sign-up sheet was handed around the room and I encouraged students to talk to me individually if they had concerns about their involvement. At the next class session, the sign-up sheet was again passed around the room to give students another opportunity to get involved.

One major distinction between the two sessions was the use of racially homogeneous caucus groups prior to FG I. Caucus groups are a useful strategy in settings in which difficult subject matter is being discussed and there is the potential for challenging interpersonal dynamics. This approach can create a safe and comfortable environment where similarly identified people, for example White students and Students of Color, can discuss issues that impact them as a homogeneous social group prior to engaging in a larger and more inclusive heterogeneous intergroup discussion.

My intention for utilizing caucus groups prior to the focus group discussion in FG I was to insure that the participants, who identified from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, felt comfortable participating in the focus group discussion. Providing an opportunity to caucus first allowed the participants to discuss the questions provided by the researcher in relationship to their own shared experiences. Students from both caucus groups then reconvened as a focus group and each caucus group reported the major themes of their discussion.

Originally the study was designed to utilize caucus groups prior to both rounds of focus groups, but as I observed the students in the classroom throughout the semester, it became evident that forming caucus groups before the large group discussion in FG II was no longer necessary. A high level of interaction emerged over the course of the semester among White students and Students of Color, particularly in large group discussions in the classroom. Based on these observations, I felt it was reasonable to assume that students were developing a sense of trust and comfort with one another and would no longer need to caucus prior to the second focus group discussion.

Each focus group session was held in the early evening at a convenient location on campus. The sessions lasted ninety minutes to two hours, and a friend videotaped and audiotaped each session. He was introduced to the group, but did not participate in any of the discussions and did not interact with the participants. Each focus group had fourteen students of diverse racial and ethnic identities. Specific demographics are presented in Chapter Four. Following introductions, I thanked the students for their willingness to participate and explained the process. Each group agreed on maintaining confidentiality concerning the discussions within the session, and I gave them an opportunity to ask clarifying questions. I provided refreshments for each session.

For Focus Group I (FG I), questions concerning experiences with racial and ethnic difference and intergroup relationships were posed to the students in their homogeneous caucus groups (Appendix D). Each caucus group was given the same set of questions on newsprint and instructed to prepare a brief summary of their discussion to report to the large group. I facilitated the White student caucus group, and one of my peer debriefers, an African American woman, facilitated the Student of Color caucus group discussion. When the caucus groups were finished with their discussions, they came together as a large group and each group reported what they felt was most important for the other group to hear about their caucus group conversation.

Focus Group II was organized without caucus groups, because of the preparation of participants in FG II to talk to each other across their differences. A different set of questions were developed for this session that gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in a racially and ethnically diverse classroom and other experiences that involved intergroup relationships (Appendix E).

Having someone audiotape and videotape both focus groups sessions gave me the ability to focus intently on the discussions and the focus group process. I occasionally took observation notes, but more often I gave my full attention to the participants and relied on the audiotapes and videotapes to provide me with my data.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations provided data from within the contexts of the classroom setting and the course curriculum. As a non-participant observer, I was able to gain an understanding of the specific aspects of the classroom environment and the curriculum that may have contributed to evidence of increased positive intergroup interaction among students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Non-participant observations also allowed me to observe on a regular basis how the students negotiated relationships with one another in their small collaborative workgroups and the large group over the course of the semester.

Observations of the classroom took place once a week for the entire fourteen-week course. All of the students, except for one, consented to their involvement in the classroom observations. I agreed not to take fieldnotes on observations that included him. My weekly presence in the classroom included taking fieldnotes of the classroom environment and process, including the small collaborative workgroups that students participated in each week. I was positioned in the back of the room for most of the observation time.

Students appeared to feel comfortable with my presence, but I did not interact with them during the class or when I would see them on campus. Occasionally, students would approach me to inquire about the progress of the study or my personal reaction to

an incident during class, but I would gently show my disinterest in order to maintain my neutrality. Although I did not interact with the students on a regular basis, as the semester progressed, I asked permission to move quietly around the room in order to have better access to the collaborative workgroup discussions.

The instructor for this course implemented small, diverse collaborative workgroups, which enabled me to explore one of my research questions: Do collaborative learning strategies in the classroom setting support positive intergroup contact? This strategy involved collaborative learning tools implemented in racially heterogeneous work groups. Slavin (1995) describes collaborative learning as "a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content." Students are expected to work together on a specific goal and are responsible for the success of each group member. Based on the findings from the pilot study (Gannon, 1996), and the literature I reviewed on collaborative learning and student relationships (Slavin, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1979; Sharan, 1994), I hypothesized that this intervention would have a strong impact on the students' ability to engage in the process of building intergroup relationships within a structured experience.

Each student, under the direction of the course instructor, was assigned to a racially and ethnically heterogeneous small group. This workgroup remained together for the entire course. Although this particular approach did not prove to be a major theme in the findings of this study, it created an opportunity for me to observe student interactions in small diverse groupings.

Student Journals

As part of their classroom participation, students submitted weekly journals at the end of each class to the instructor, based on assigned questions. One question usually concerned their reaction to and feedback about their experience in the specific class session, and a second question asked them to reflect on different aspects of their experience in the small collaborative workgroups. These journal submissions were anonymous, unless the student wished to identify him or herself. This data source was of particular value for my study, for it allowed students to disclose their personal thoughts, feelings and ideas about their experiences with intergroup relationships, whether in the workgroup, in the large classroom setting or in other contexts in their lives.

I had access to these journals and I also asked the instructor occasionally to pose a question that inquired about the students' perceptions and experiences of specific intergroup dynamics in the class. Each week, the instructor would bring to my attention specific journal entries that she thought may be of interest to me. I collected journal entries every three weeks and reviewed them for emerging themes.

Final Reflective Written Assignment

Students were required to write a final reflective paper concerning their experiences in their respective small collaborative workgroups. The question for the assignment read "What did your small group experience teach you about the ways in which social change can happen?" The instructor designed the question, with the hope that students would reflect on their personal experiences as members of diverse workgroups and the impact it had on their ability to respond to the various injustices they

had studied over the course of the semester. After the assignment had been graded, I was given the opportunity to make duplicate copies. This data source was useful for considering the progression of the students' experiences and perspectives on intergroup relationships as the semester came to a close. I was specifically interested in students' perspectives on their experiences of cross-racial or cross-ethnic interactions in the small group, as well any reflection they had on their understanding of the term "social change."

Data Management and Analysis

The data collected for this study included fieldnotes, audiotapes, videotapes, student journal submissions, and a final reflective written assignment. Participants also filled out a Participant Profile Sheet. Multiple data sets support an analysis approach such as the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where emerging themes and issues from the data can guide the process of analysis. According to Glaser (1987), the researcher works "with the data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and relationships" (Bogdan &Biklen, 1992, p. 74). The goal of this study was to explore the development of positive intergroup relationships among a racially and ethnically diverse group of college-aged students in a classroom setting. Utilizing the constant comparative method was appropriate because of the investigative and emergent nature of the study.

Data analysis of the focus group data set did not begin until after the fourteen-week course and the last data collection were completed. However, fieldnotes were informally reviewed after each observation to look for emerging themes and issues in the classroom, but were not formally coded and analyzed. Student journal submissions were duplicated every few weeks and read for insights from the participants' perspectives.

This process of examining the fieldnotes and the student journals preceded the first round of focus groups in the fifth week of the semester, and continued until the last round of focus groups near the end of the term. The reflective final exam question was duplicated after the instructor graded them, but was not reviewed until the focus group analysis was completed. These additional sets of data were used to supplement the findings from the focus group data, and specifically confirmed or contradicted these findings. Repeated readings of the student journals and fieldnotes provided insight into the emerging themes and patterns in the classroom setting, as well as direction for developing the focus group protocol.

The focus group data was transcribed from the audiotapes and videotapes. I transcribed all of the tapes in order to immerse myself in the data and observe the emergence of themes. This approach to data analysis is embedded in the notion of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which relies on the interpretation of the researcher but also values the voices and perspectives of the participants. From this point, I hand coded each transcript and noted recurring themes, phrases and topics as they emerged. These notable themes were based on participants' experiences, feelings and perspectives as reported in the focus groups. A qualitative analysis computer program, Ethnograph 4.01, was used to assist in developing a framework of code words and themes. This software coded the transcripts line by line, and a collection of coding themes was created.

A list of themes was developed from the examination of Focus Group I, and this was used to focus the analysis of Focus Group II. After coding the transcripts from both rounds of focus groups, I attempted to organize the data by research question, but a

number of notable themes consistently emerged from the students' responses regarding their experiences with racial and ethnic difference and perceptions of intergroup interactions. As a result, I developed five thematic categories and these categories became the organizers for the presentation of the focus group findings in Chapter Four. Once this was completed, I returned to the other data sets to see whether they confirmed or problematized the initial findings in the focus groups. These other data sources were reviewed several times but were not coded by hand or with Ethnograph, except for the fieldnotes, which were coded by hand with the thematic categories compiled from the focus group analysis as a guide. In Chapter Five, the research questions are answered and selections from these other data sets are presented as they confirm or contradict the findings from the focus group data.

Prior to the data collection for this study, I enlisted the support of two peer debriefers, who agreed to meet with me after each classroom observation and focus group session. I appreciated having the opportunity to talk with colleagues about my personal experiences with the research process, as well as confirming my findings and challenging me throughout the data collection.

One of the debriefers was the course instructor in the setting, who shared an interest in intergroup dynamics. She provided valuable feedback, as she was able to identify specific issues and explore any problems that she observed in the classroom. During these discussions, we often collaborated on certain aspects of her preparation for each class session. This experience proved to be valuable for her professional development as an educator as well as an opportunity to inform her own research interests.

My second peer debriefer was not linked to the sample, but was a friend and colleague whose experience in classroom settings was helpful. This person also agreed to read sections of transcripts to confirm several of my coding themes, and we had ongoing conversations about the focus group process. A further, unplanned peer debriefing took place with the facilitator for the Student of Color caucus group prior to Focus Group I. An African American woman, she provided helpful insights and feedback concerning the caucus group and large group discussion in FG I, which helped to shape my thinking about the experiences of Students of Color in relationship to the study.

My Role as the Researcher

Having worked as a White female instructor in college classrooms for several years prior to this study, with specific interests in issues of race relations and classroom teaching, I entered this research inquiry with several personal and professional biases. Peshkin (1988) speaks emphatically about the importance of meaningful attention to one's own subjectivity as a researcher. He argues "that subjectivity operates during the entire research process" and "researchers should systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research" (p.17). Reflecting upon the considerations of my role as the researcher was an issue I considered from the beginning of this study, and to assist me in tracking my own process, I wrote weekly in my personal process journal. This proved to be a useful tool for noting my own reactions to the experiences of the participants and other aspects of the data collection. As specific issues emerged, I was also able to discuss these with my peer debriefers. However, I am aware that my disclosure regarding where the 'self' and the 'subject' are joined (Peshkin, 1988) does not

insure that I can always be aware of the impact this subjectivity may have on the research process.

Exploring the area of intergroup relationships is a professional as well as personal endeavor for me. I have always been fascinated with human relationships and I believe strongly that positive intergroup relationships are desirable and a strong incentive towards social change. With this professional and personal connection to the topic in mind, I am aware that I bring a certain depth of knowledge, experience and passion to this inquiry. These biases impacted my sense of anticipation and attachment to the outcome of the study and to the experience of the participants.

Throughout the study, I was most aware of my White identity and how it impacted my work. I was concerned how I would be received by Students of Color and White students in the research setting. With Students of Color, I wondered what they thought about me as a White person, and my motivations for doing this research. I was also concerned that the White students would perceive me as a "race traitor" (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996; Gannon, 1999) in my efforts to remain neutral in the classroom setting and in the focus group sessions. This was a particular concern for me in FG I, where I facilitated the White caucus group prior to the focus group discussion. In order to cope with this particular bias, I implemented several strategies to maintain the integrity of the study and myself as the researcher. One important strategy was raising this issue with my peer debriefers when we met. This helped me to gain perspective on how I was feeling and reacting to the interaction of my White identity with the study. My peer debriefers were helpful and supportive during this process.

I remained keenly aware of how my White identity might affect my interpretation of the data because of my own biases and assumptions about White students and Students of Color. During data analysis, I kept a running list of issues I needed to pay attention to that included terms like "my racial identity" or "White researcher" as code words for myself. However, what has been most helpful is the personal reflective work that I have engaged in during the last ten years of professional social justice education practice concerning my White identity. This increased awareness and understanding of my "Whiteness" (McLaren, 1995, 1999; Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996; Gannon, 1999) has supported my ability to pay attention to this dimension of myself as an educator and now, a researcher. My racial and ethnic identity will always exist as a challenge in my role as a researcher and it is my responsibility to continue noticing where this identity intersects with my work.

Another issue pertaining to my role as the researcher in this study involved my relationship with the instructor in the classroom setting. There were several opportunities during the semester when I collaborated with the classroom teacher. We discussed journal questions, the role of the small collaborative groups, and the reflective final exam question. This was a valuable opportunity for me to give her input that would support the objectives of the study. We did not discuss my observations or interpretations of the events of the classroom setting or other aspects of data collection. I made this decision because of issues of confidentiality as well as the multiple roles that the instructor was managing in the classroom setting.

Despite the obvious benefits I was afforded in this collaborative relationship with the instructor, it also revealed a particular challenge. My familiarity with the course

curriculum and my experience as an instructor resulted in an ongoing conversation I had with myself about the instructor's facilitation style and concerns about the learning experiences of the students. This occasionally interrupted my focus on the data collection in the classroom setting. There were specific interactions the instructor had with students that I felt might have been managed differently and I noted my thoughts and feelings about this in my process journal. Several times during the semester the instructor asked for my feedback on her instructional style, and we agreed that I would discuss some of my observations with her at the end of the semester. This aspect of my relationship with the instructor was clearly a limitation, as it was challenging to manage the multiple roles we were engaged in throughout the study. However, we did manage this challenge well by communicating with one another and checking in frequently. I was also able to discuss my concerns with one of my other peer debriefers.

Acknowledging these elements of subjectivity helps to insure the integrity of the research methodology. In the process of data collection and analysis, I attempted to accurately represent the voices and experiences of the participants in order to reveal their struggles as well as their sense of commitment to building relationships across racial and ethnic difference.

Limitations and Considerations of the Study

Inherent in the nature of qualitative research studies are questions about the generalizability of the findings to other settings and populations. This study is exploratory and descriptive, as it attempts to investigate the nature of intergroup relationships in a college classroom. Therefore, a number of limitations need to be identified and discussed.

The sample population is small and is not representative of the diversity of racial and ethnic identification in the United States. This was partially a result of geographic limitations, since a majority of the students who enroll at the University are from the northeastern region of the country. The participants are one particular group of racially and ethnically diverse students at a large, predominantly White, public land grant and research-oriented university in the Northeast. Certain racial and ethnic groups are more represented on this campus - Puerto Rican, Cape Verdean, Irish American - as compared to a university setting in the Southwest, for example, where might be a larger population of Native Americans and Mexican Americans. Each racial and ethnic group brings its own experiences that are connected to a specific geographic location and prior history in the United States which has shaped the development of intergroup relationships in this country. The study participants are not representative of all racially heterogeneous classrooms across the country.

The class was structured in such a way as to create a nearly balanced ratio of White students to Students of Color, which limits the generalizability of the study since a balanced demographic profile is not the norm in most classroom settings in predominantly White universities. It was important to consider the affect that equalizing the status numerically in the classroom might have had on the study as well as the ability of students to develop intergroup relationships.

Another important limitation to consider is that the group of students who are part of the study have voluntarily enrolled and participated in this course, *Social Diversity in Education*. Their selection of this highly participatory course could be taken to suggest their interest in developing intergroup relationships. However, since all students on this

campus are subject to fulfilling a diversity curriculum requirement, students also choose

this course in order to fill the requirement and not necessarily because of an interest in the

course content or the process.

This course actively engages students in learning about issues of difference and

social oppression that may challenge or support their current understanding of intergroup

relationships across racial and ethnic lines. If this study were to take place in a more

formal and traditional academic setting, such as in the sciences, where the subject matter

does not address these issues directly, the outcome may prove to be different. This

limitation may make it difficult to generalize the findings to other classroom settings.

At different times during the semester, I worked with the instructor to design

some of the classroom time so that certain collaborative learning strategies could be

tested out in order to create intergroup situations for the purposes of the study. Working

with an experienced instructor, I had input into the design for several classes, which can

be viewed as both an asset and a limitation. Students' experiences are inevitably shaped

by the decisions made concerning the course, and my role in the pre-designing may have

influenced what I was observing in the classroom concerning student relationships and

may have limited a more natural process from evolving.

Both the instructor and I identify racially as White, which is a limitation for a

number of reasons. Since one goal of the class and the study involves examining racial

difference, Students of Color, because of their experiences as targets of racism, are likely

to have assumptions about us as White people that could affect our interactions with

them. As a White researcher and a White course instructor, our racial identity as

members of the dominant group creates a particular bias in our work, which could make

it impossible for us to understand the experiences of Students of Color. White students as well may have preconceived notions about our roles as a White educator and a White researcher. They may assume that because we are involved in anti-racist education and research, we have already labeled them as racist because of their dominant racial group identity. On the other hand, they may believe that because of the shared racial identity, we view the issues of racism through the same lens as they do.

In the section entitled My Role as the Researcher, I discussed my considerable familiarity with the course curriculum and the student population. Observing a section of this course as the setting for my study revealed particular perceptions and beliefs that I have regarding instruction of subject matter on social diversity, ranging from pedagogy to student-instructor relationships. Several times during the course of the classroom observations, I found myself critiquing aspects of the instructor's performance. This judgment on my part may have influenced how I perceived and assessed the value of the learning experiences for the students. A quote from my personal process journal describes this point "I want her to push them more – I don't think the students were challenged enough today." My opinion of the classroom instruction at different times during the semester may have affected how I viewed the participants in the focus group sessions because of perceptions I had about their classroom experience and performance. This may also have influenced my relationship with the instructor and the type of input I gave concerning the classroom design.

A final limitation involves transferability of the outcome of the study to non-educational settings. The participants are generally traditional-aged college students who are likely to have experiences that are distinct from their peers who are working in

factories or other service industries. Students in higher education settings are exposed to different academic experiences and may have greater opportunities to consider issues of intergroup relations than, for example, a young person who is working in a factory setting that is racially or ethnically diverse, where the goal is production levels and not social relationships. Thus, it may not be possible to transfer the results of this study to a workplace setting as described here. This limitation also assumes developmental differences of individuals because of age and life experience distinctions.

This study examines the social phenomenon of intergroup relationships across diverse racial and ethnic identities. Current social and historical contexts have the potential to influence the results of the study and I have attempted to identify those specific factors, as well as limitations due to the nature of the methodological approach. Chapter Four discusses the findings of the focus group data.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE FOCUS GROUP DATA

Introduction

The major themes that emerged from the focus group data collection will be discussed in this chapter. In order to maintain clarity, I will proceed first with findings from the focus groups and then note other data sets in Chapter 5, as they are relevant to the discussion.

Two rounds of focus groups took place during the semester and revealed two very distinct sets of findings. Only the first focus groups was preceded by racially homogeneous caucus groups. As a result, these data sets are analyzed differently and therefore, will be discussed separately. Relevant themes from the focus group data emerged as the students' responses were coded and organized and these will serve as major organizers within this chapter.

Major Research Question

As noted earlier, my major research question is the following: What conditions and factors facilitate positive intergroup relationships between college students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, in a classroom where the course content is focused on diversity awareness? In this course, social relationships are a primary but not an exclusive goal and there are students in the class who are members of either a dominant or subordinate racial group. There are five subquestions:

a. What is the definition of a positive intergroup relationship, from the students' perspective?

b. What are the facilitating conditions and/or factors that enable students to develop positive intergroup contact?

c. What are the obstacles that hinder positive intergroup contact?

d. What knowledge and/or skills do students need to create positive intergroup relations?

e. Do collaborative learning strategies in the classroom setting support positive intergroup contact?

Participant Information

The participants in this study were enrolled in *Social Diversity in Education*, an interdisciplinary General Education course that also fulfills the University's campus-wide diversity requirement. The course is offered in multiple sections of approximately twenty-five students each, and is taught in residence hall classrooms. Because of its popularity, all of the sections are overenrolled during the pre-registration period. It uses a pedagogical approach that includes a participatory, experientially based learning environment, where theoretical content and practical application are integrated.

A total of twenty-three students enrolled in the section I observed - twenty-one traditional-aged students, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, and two older women – one, thirty-two, and the other forty. There were nine men and fourteen women in the class. The racial and ethnic demographics were diverse and the following information is based on what students reported on their Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C):

- One student identified as multiracial – Native Hawaiian, Chinese and White

- Two biracial students, of White and African ancestry, who did not identify ethnically

- Eleven White students, three of whom identified as Jewish, the others did not identify ethnically

- Nine students reported as follows: Ethiopian, Black Haitian, Puerto Rican, Ethiopian-American, Native American (Hassanamisco tribe), Puerto Rican and Honduran, Black, and Asian-American, specifically Filipino.

Complete demographics are presented in Table 1.

All of the students in the classroom, except for one, participated in some aspect of the data collection, and fourteen students participated in both of the focus group sessions.

Table 1 – Participant Demographics

Name	Sex	Race/Ethnicity	Age
Adam	Male	Ethiopian-American	19
Alex	Male	White	19
Ava	Female	Black	40
Betsy	Female	White	22
Billy	Male	Puerto Rican-Honduran	20
Carla	Female	White/Jewish	19
David	Male	Ethiopian	21
Diana	Female	White	21
Darlene	Female	White	32
Elena	Female	Puerto Rican	N/R
Elisa	Female	White/Jewish	21
Eve	Female	White	21
Gary	Male	White/German	21
Julie	Female	White	19
Karima	Female	Asian/Native Hawaiian/White	20
Kris	Female	Filipino	19
KC	Male	White	21
Nick	Male	African American/French	18
Orlando	Male	Puerto Rican	19
Ranita	Female	Sicilian/African American	20
Rita	Female	Native American – Hassanamisco	20
RJ	Male	Black Haitian	N/R
Shira	Female	White/Jewish	19

Focus Group Organization

Two focus group sessions were organized for data collection. The first one (Focus Group I) took place in March, around mid-semester. The second round (Focus Group II) was held in May, near the end of the semester. Fourteen students participated in both rounds of focus groups, with two participants in the second round (Focus Group II), replacing two participants from the initial round (Focus Group I) who dropped out because of scheduling conflicts.

Focus Group I was preceded by racially homogeneous caucus groups, consisting of White students and Students of Color. This approach gave the participants the opportunity to discuss common issues and shared experiences of racism and racial identity in the safety of a racially homogeneous group. They worked in these groups and then reconvened as a multicultural focus group for an intergroup discussion. Caucus groups were not used in Focus Group II, since by then participants appeared to be comfortable participating in a large group discussion and caucus groups were no longer necessary.

Each focus group was ethnically and racially diverse. In Focus Group I, which was held five weeks after the start of the semester, the racial demographics were as follows:

- Seven White participants - three were Jewish; the remaining White students did not identify themselves ethnically.
- Seven Students of Color: one Latino, Puerto Rican; two biracial, African American and White; one multiracial student, Chinese, Hawaiian, and White; two Ethiopians; one Haitian American.

Complete demographic information for Focus Group I is presented in Table 2.

The demographics for Focus Group II also had seven Students of Color and seven Whites, with two changes because of two new participants. A woman of color, who identified as Black Muslim, joined the Students of Color and in the White group, a White man replaced another White male participant from Focus Group I. Specific demographics for Focus Group II are given in the discussion of those findings further in the chapter and are presented in Table 3.

Table 2 – Focus Group I Participant Demographics

Name	Sex	Race/Ethnicity	Age
Carla	Female	White/Jewish	19
Diana	Female	White	21
Alex	Male	White	19
Elisa	Female	White/Jewish	21
Eve	Female	White	21
Shira	Female	White/Jewish	19
Betsy	Female	White	22
Karima	Female	Asian/Native Hawaiian/White	20
Orlando	Male	Puerto Rican	19
RJ	Male	Black Haitian	N/R
Adam	Male	Ethiopian-American	19
Nick	Male	African American/French	18
Ranita	Female	Sicilian/African American	20
David	Male	Ethiopian	21

The two Focus Groups had distinctive qualities. In Focus Group I (FG I),

Students of Color and White students participated tentatively and at times appeared

defensive, suggesting a need to position themselves carefully in relationship to the topic

of race. Focus Group II, on the other hand, emerged as a cooperative effort among the

students. This difference will be discussed further along in the chapter.

The presentation of the findings for Focus Group I include a description of the

responses of participants to the focus group questions (Appendix D), organized

thematically. The findings for FG I are organized as five salient themes. Of these five

themes, three reappear in the data for FG II. In my discussion of FG II, I will therefore

consider the three common themes and then highlight any notable comparisons to

illustrate the changes in students' perspectives and experiences between the focus group

sessions.

Organizing Themes

With the research questions in mind, the following thematic areas emerged from

repeated readings and thoughtful analysis of the participants' responses and they organize

the presentation of the focus group data:

1. Definitions of the term "positive intergroup relationship"

2. Impact of early formative socialization process upon positive intergroup

   friendships

3. Perceptions of the facilitating conditions and factors which support the

   development of positive intergroup relationships in the classroom

4. Perceptions of the obstacles that prevent or make it difficult to develop positive intergroup relationships in the classroom

5. The role of narrative as a way to make meaning of one's experience. This was an unexpected finding.

Theme #1: Students' Definitions of a "Positive Intergroup Relationship"

The purpose of the first research question, "What is the definition of a positive intergroup relationship, from the students' perspective?" was to gain insight into the students' experiences with and understanding of the term "positive intergroup relationship." It was important to know how students interpreted this concept to correct for any assumptions on my part about their understanding of the language used in the data collection. I was also interested to hear what other words or phrases students might use to describe a positive intergroup relationship. The focus group question posed to them was "What is your description of a positive intergroup friendship?" I chose to use the term "friendship" instead of positive intergroup relationship in this first question because I had discovered during my pilot study that most students are not familiar with the term and felt it was too abstract. I also felt they would be able to build on their understanding of a positive intergroup relationship from their descriptions of friendship because this term had more meaning for them. Terms such as "cross-racial or cross-ethnic interaction" and "interracial friendship" were also used to help students discuss their experiences with cross-racial and cross-ethnic contact.

Focus Group I began with participants discussing their experiences of friendship. They answered this descriptively, and two minor themes emerged. First, participants noted elements of personal friendship that they valued. These characteristics focused on

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issues of mutual trust and acceptance. The second minor theme that arose from the discussion was the impact of early formative experiences regarding racial and ethnic differences on their friendships and their ability to build intergroup friendships. Participants' responses varied, at times, across racial and ethnic identities. These distinctions were helpful in understanding how a person's life experience informs their ability, and often desire, to engage in intergroup relationships.

Students did not describe their definition of personal friendship within a racial or ethnic identity context. In fact, there was apparent avoidance by most of the White students and several Students of Color of using any language that might refer to racial or ethnic issues. The majority of respondents used similar descriptors to describe what they valued in personal friendship. Terms such as trust and "honesty" were stated frequently as important elements of a good friendship, and White students specifically noted that having "common ground" was an essential quality of a successful friendship.

All student quotations in Focus Group I are from the focus group discussion, unless otherwise noted as "White caucus" or "Student of Color caucus." For this first question, participants gave the same responses in their respective caucus groups and in the focus group discussion. Five of the seven Students of Color and four of the seven White students identified trust as an important element of friendship, yet there were notable differences across racial and ethnic differences regarding how this quality is described and valued. The responses from Students of Color are discussed first.

In the following excerpt, Adam's use of the phrase "someone who has my back…if I ever got into trouble" suggests a genuine need on his part to know that good friends are people he can trust and they will support him when necessary. He also adds:

Someone I can trust, someone I can count on to be there for me - someone to talk to, about anything, not just the movies or who won the game last night. Someone who has my back, I guess, if I ever got into trouble.

Aside from trust, his response also implies that loyalty is an important element in a personal friendship. This is a recurring theme in the descriptions of friendship from Students of Color but is not reflected in the responses from White students.

Ranita, who describes herself as Sicilian and African American, also identified trust as a quality that she strongly values in her friendships. Although she did not state she has felt mistreated in certain friendships, her response reflected feelings of anger and frustration, suggesting she has had some negative experiences. She stated the following in her caucus group:

Well, for me, they have to be trustworthy. I think that's the major thing...as long as I trust them with something personal and they don't treat me like garbage! You can't trust people who treat you like garbage. There has to be some sort of respect.

This response, particularly her statement "You can't trust people who treat you like garbage" hints at the possibility that Ranita has felt betrayed and as a result, demands respect in her friendships. In the focus group discussion, she gave the exact same response and it appeared that the White students assumed the "people" she was referring to were White, as they became visibly uncomfortable. However, Ranita's straightforward response also impacted the level of risk taking in the group and as a result, the dialogue in the focus group became more honest and personal.

Two Students of Color, Orlando and Karima, gave similar descriptions of what they consider important in personal friendships, using the terms "honesty" and "sharing similar values." Both participants made references to the attribute of loyalty, which, as mentioned earlier, is notably present in the responses from Students of Color.

Orlando, a Puerto Rican male, described "a good friend" as "a person that is going to be loyal to you, a person that is going to be through the thick and thin kind of thing." He also emphasizes that is important "to have the same ideals and morals." Karima, a woman who identifies as having mixed racial and ethnic heritage, explains what she values in a friendship:

> Trust, honesty - someone I can be open with - someone I can count on when I like need to depend on someone. We have to share the same values, share the same views, not necessarily all the same but similar.

Orlando and Karima were the only two Students of Color who identified the need for sharing common "ideals" or "views," while White students named this consistently in their responses. White participants, when describing their definition of a good friendship, used descriptors that focused more on issues of acceptance and needing "common ideas." It also became evident in the discussion that Whites were more concerned with feeling comfortable in their friendships, as well as finding common interests and experiences. This was considered important and necessary for the success of the friendship.

Carla, who was Jewish, was one of the White students who believed that having common ground was important in a friendship. She begins to state this here, but then carefully reverses her answer, "There needs to be some common ideas and stuff - well, actually [she hesitates]- I have friends who have very different ideas and that works too."

Another White female respondent also initially stated that a good personal friendship could exist only between people who had similar ideas and values. A few moments after her response, she also changed her mind:

You know, that's not necessarily true, I thought, after I said that, because a lot of the best friendships that you have are with people who are different than you. Because one of my best friends is completely opposite from me...maybe immediately when you meet someone you look for those commonalities, but afterwards, they separate, I think.

The similarities in the responses of these two White students are striking. Both of these participants struggled to describe what they valued in their friendships, as illustrated in the contradictions they posed in their original responses. In their discussions, they began to consider the possibility that a "good friendship" could be built on differences as well as similarities. What was interesting about this finding was that these two White women also spoke a great deal about having friendships with people from different racial and ethnic identities, and they felt very accepted by these friends. It was evident that issues of safety and acceptance were critical for most of the White students, particularly in friendships across racial and ethnic differences.

One of the women in the White group considers the focus group question in light of recent personal experiences. She talks about her struggle with some of her friendships, and the following passage suggests her need for safety and acceptance:

Someone who respects your opinion and will listen to you, and you can have a discussion with them and they will try not to jump down your throat - I just had problems with this recently so this is why it is coming out. I just think that friends should be able to discuss things even if they disagree but learn from each other and talk about it.

As mentioned earlier, in their descriptions of personal friendship, most White students, in the caucus group and in the focus group, never mentioned racial or ethnic identity in the discussion. But when specifically asked to consider the term positive intergroup relationship most White respondents did share an experience of having a friend from a different racial or ethnic background than their own. When probed further

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to discuss how the issue of race or ethnicity impacted the friendship, most Whites repeatedly insisted that racial or ethnic difference was not an issue. They reported that the racial and ethnic identity of a person was not a consideration for them in creating personal friendships, to the extent that issues regarding race were not raised and discussed in these friendships. Comments such as "I never noticed, race was never an issue," were common, as reflected in the following statement by Betsy, a White woman who had friends in high school from different racial and ethnic backgrounds:

> One of my closest friends is Spanish, and he grew up in Boston and I grew up in a suburb. The race issue never really played into it and when I met him, I didn't see him as a Spanish guy. He welcomed me into his home, taught me about the Spanish culture. I guess it never played into it but it was never negative, it was always positive. I never saw him different from me. (White Caucus)

Betsy consistently gave responses similar to this that led me to consider the issue of invisibility of identity for Students of Color. In this discussion, she seems to equate naming her friend's racial difference as a barrier that might result in conflict, "There's never really been any hostility - we're both really comfortable with who we are. There was never really that racial barrier." Despite the positive experience she talks about having with Michael and his family, Betsy is not comfortable about discussing his racial identity with him or with the group. Her participation was much higher in the White caucus group than in the focus group discussion.

Many White participants gave responses that revealed their discomfort in talking about or noticing the different racial identities of people they have come into contact with. For these students, naming the difference is either considered an act of racism or having the potential for creating conflict. Whites primarily reported not seeing the benefit of talking about the racial or ethnic differences that existed with friends who

identified from different backgrounds. Alex, another White student, emphasized this in his response, when asked if he had any "positive intergroup friendship" experiences:

> I just don't think I have had those kinds of talks with any of my friends so I don't know if I can get into any of it...I have had both positive and negative experiences but I don't really sit down and discuss those kind of things – that's not what I do with my friends.

Alex had shared earlier about playing on an intramural basketball team with African Americans, and when asked if he considered this a positive intergroup experience he replied, "Yes, absolutely, but I wouldn't really think about it or talk about it." This answer represents a trend in the responses from Whites regarding intergroup friendships and suggests that Whites tend to ignore or dismiss the apparent racial or ethnic differences.

When asked if she had any experiences of a positive intergroup friendship, Eve, a White woman who grew up in a racially and ethnically diverse community south of Boston, told her story of a recent college roommate. Her roommate was African American and Eve was clearly uncomfortable sharing her story with the White caucus group:

> I got along fine with her. When I see her now she says, 'How is my favorite roommate?' so we got along fine, but we were very different, not because she was Black [hesitated]– because we had different personalities...we talked about things and she told me about her family. She was raised in Brooklyn, certain incidents happened...I just remember that conversation, it was a good conversation. (White Caucus)

Several times during the caucus group, Eve talked about her fear of being seen as racist and many of the White participants echoed this concern. As discussed earlier, most White students insisted that race or ethnicity was not an issue in their personal friendships

with people from other racial or ethnic groups and they did not see any reason to discuss it.

Similarly, most Students of Color stated that race and ethnicity were not major issues in their personal friendships with White people, but for different reasons. Most of the Students of Color in this study reported being raised in predominantly White neighborhoods and therefore grew up having many interactions with Whites. For most of these students, relationships with White people were a common experience and generally did not make them uncomfortable. Most Students of Color reported having positive interactions with White students on campus and a few stated they had more friends who were White. RJ, who identified himself as "Black Haitian," was educated in the United States in predominantly White schools. He is a member of a mostly White fraternity on campus where he feels "accepted:"

> I see it as pretty good. I mean, of course I expect people to act differently from different backgrounds so they might do things that I don't understand...a lot of [White] kids just accepted me for who I was – I didn't have to pretend or act differently towards them – I could be myself.

> Ranita, who is a dark-skinned biracial woman, stated that she "just got used to relating to White people" because she was raised in a predominantly White town. She claims to have many positive intergroup relationships because she is comfortable with them:

> It's so much easier for me to talk to White people, cause when I was growing up, I always went over their houses...their parents treated me just like I was one of their kids...but because I was the only one for so long and I was kind of stuck with the situation, I just got used to relating to White people better.

This student later discusses some of the challenges she faced in her community of African American people on campus because of her familiarity with White people and

White culture. However, her early experiences supported her ability to interact with other White students.

As has been illustrated here, the responses of White students and Students of Color involving issues of friendship revealed distinct challenges for members of each group as they consider building positive intergroup relationships. Most White participants avoid referring to race or ethnic issues in their personal friendships with members of other racial or ethnic groups, which suggests they may fear their actions will be perceived as racist. Most Student of Color participants reported not experiencing discomfort or tension in their interactions with Whites because they are accustomed to being in mostly White populations. However, some Students of Color later reported that acknowledgment of their racial or ethnic identity by a White person is an important aspect of affirming who they are and often supports their ability to build a friendship with that individual. In this response, they challenge the tendency of White participants to ignore race and ethnic differences.

As the participants in this first round of focus groups described their definition of personal friendship and positive intergroup relationship it was evident that their early socialization and pre-college experiences involving racial and ethnic differences directly informed their responses. The following section explores the impact of early formative processes further in depth.

Theme #2: The Impact of Early Socialization Processes on Building Positive Intergroup Relationships

The participants' early socialization process as a factor in the building of positive intergroup relationships is consistent throughout the focus group data and offers valuable

insight into the research questions for this study. Participants in Focus Group I provided information that connected their early formative experiences of racial and ethnic difference with their ability and willingness to have interactions with students who are from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. This finding proves to be a major factor in understanding participants' attitudes and behavior in regards to racial and ethnic difference, and the impact on their current ability to develop positive intergroup relationships.

As participants discussed their early formative experiences with race and ethnic issues, two minor themes emerged from their responses. Most respondents identified significant adults who impacted their understanding of racial and ethnic differences and although there were a few students who gave positive accounts of their experiences, most students discussed the negative effects of the racist attitudes and behaviors of these adults in their lives. The second minor theme involved the impact of experiences in their schools and communities involving race-related issues.

While the respondents easily identified the sources of the information they had learned about racial and ethnic difference, few were able to see on their own any relationship between what they learned and have, consequently, come to understand about race and how this impacts their behavior. Participants, as members of their ascribed racial and ethnic identity groups, gave responses that were distinctly relative to their own racial socialization process. These notable differences will be pointed out and then discussed further in Chapter Five.

The Role of Significant Adults in the Socialization Process

Most participants identified their parents or other significant adults as making a notable impression on their early learning process regarding issues of racial and ethnic difference. There was a variation in response concerning the impact of these formative experiences, ranging from a positive to a negative outcome.

Carla told the following story in the White caucus group and an edited version in the focus group discussion. She expressed anger about the stereotypes and attitudes that her mother exhibited regarding People of Color when she was a young girl:

> I remember my mom, when I was really little, would pull me closer to her when someone of a different color would pass by which I get angry about that now - but that's her ignorance. But I'm sure that affected me and gave me some stereotypes, who knows.

Carla also recalled her parents telling her "to never go beyond the tracks at night" and she admits their "ignorant" behaviors and attitudes had a negative effect on her:

> I was told never to go beyond the tracks at night in my town because it was majority Black and there were some projects and um, basically because it was dangerous when I was younger and I don't know if that really holds true – I know it is poorer down there so I am not really sure. (White caucus group)

This particular student took many risks in disclosing her personal experiences during FG I, but her responses here are most remarkable. Her statement "I don't know if that really holds true" reveals an uncertainty regarding the accuracy of the information she was told as a young girl. Also notable about her response is the strong impact stereotypes and misinformation continue to have on her ability to discern what the truth was about a group of people who were racially different than herself. As a result of this discussion, Carla did begin to recognize her own stereotypes and assumptions about the Black people in her town. Her story was also a powerful contribution to the White caucus group

discussion. It increased the level of safety and other White students felt compelled to also share similar stories of their experiences.

Carla also sadly told the caucus group and repeated in the focus group, that in high school she dated a man who was African American but she could never share this information with her parents and as a result, they never met him. This was an uncomfortable situation for both of them and eventually, the relationship ended. Carla's experiences confirmed for her the losses that she experienced growing up because of her parents' racist attitudes. She reported that currently she had many friends who were Students of Color and appeared to be proud of the fact that she was not perpetuating the beliefs and behaviors of her parents.

Other White students spoke mainly about negative influences from parents. Most of the negative experiences that White participants spoke about were only discussed in the White caucus group. Eva, who grew up in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which has a diverse racial and ethnic population, denies that her father is a racist while remembering his overtly racist comments. She was clearly humiliated about experiences with her father:

> My Dad was in the Navy and I wouldn't say he's a racist, but he likes to make comments sometimes... 'you better not bring home a Black boyfriend,' things like that. You know...isolated things, but it never affected me I guess. That was him, you know what I mean? (White Caucus Group)

One of the patterns that emerged from several of the stories that White respondents reported about their early formative years was their reluctance in identifying with the belief systems of their parents in regards to racial and ethnic differences. The previous student's response suggests this, as she states that her father's racist beliefs "never affected me." The following excerpt is from a White woman, Betsy, who had a

friendship with a Vietnamese man during high school and struggled with her parent's

reactions. She refused to agree with their beliefs:

> I told her that I was going to the prom with Bow, and I remember her being 'oh, ok.' My father had fought in the Vietnam War and I think they had tension there. My father had passed away. I think there was tension and she was like 'would your father be proud of you?' but I said 'it's over, I wasn't part of that. I don't feel that and I love him as a friend and we're going.' You know?

Betsy responded to all of the questions that were posed during the caucus group, but did

not speak once during the focus group discussion. The experiences that she reported in

the caucus group revealed a strong commitment to her friendships with People of Color

but she seemed unable to find a way to articulate this in the discussion with Students of

Color present.

Although many White participants reported learning predominantly negative

messages about different racial and ethnic groups as young children, there were a few

White students who were exposed to more positive attitudes and information at an

influential time in their lives. Alex, a male student, attended high school in a suburb of

Boston that participated in the METCO (Metropolitan Council for Educational

Opportunity) program. METCO supports inner city students, predominantly Students of

Color, being transported to schools outside the city of Boston, creating access for these

students to schools that have greater resources. Alex's school had a diverse racial and

ethnic population and he was accustomed to interacting with Students of Color in the

classroom and on sports teams. He strongly stated that he "never heard any of this stuff"

from his parents regarding people who were racially different:

I think a lot of the feelings people have negatively towards other races is because of their own experiences. My parents never had any of these bad instances happen and they were always very open towards people with different color. Both of my parents have friends of different color. I never heard any of this stuff, and I had babysitters of color - it wasn't a big deal in my family.

This student stated that racial difference "wasn't a big deal in my family" which is another common pattern in the responses from White participants. Many White students reported that racial or ethnic identity was not a major issue in their relationships with people who were racially or ethnically different from them. All of the White students gave examples of being "colorblind" – ignoring or denying the racial or ethnic identities of the people they came into contact with who were not White. Those few students who shared more positive experiences, still had a tendency to ignore the issues that emerge because of racial and ethnic differences. However, the nature of Alex's response also implies a subtle racism. Alex views his parents as unusual because of their cross-race friendships and child care providers who were People of Color, which gave him exposure to racial difference at an early age. He sees this as a positive experience, yet inherent in his comment "it wasn't a big deal in my family" is the lack of understanding or regard for the differences in status that existed between his family and the People of Color who entered their home. I probed him further and asked him what kinds of conversations he had with his parents about racial and ethnic issues and he replied "none – like I said, it wasn't a big issue in my family." His statements also reflect a lack of a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of racism.

Betsy, who spoke previously about having friends in high school from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, strongly emphasized that she "never noticed" the racial or ethnic identity of one of her closest friends. This quote was used earlier:

One of my closest friends is Spanish, and he grew up in Boston and I grew up in a suburb. The race issue never really played into it and when I met him, I didn't see him as a Spanish guy. He welcomed me into his home, taught me about the Spanish culture. I guess it never played into it but it was never negative, it was always positive. I never saw him different from me.

The statement "I never saw him different from me" was also a common sentiment among many of the White participants as they talked about having friends from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. As mentioned earlier, Betsy appeared to be apprehensive about noticing or discussing her friend's identity because noticing could be viewed as racist behavior.

Shira, who identified as having some Jewish heritage, also admitted not knowing the racial and ethnic identity of her friend:

I had one friend in particular, that I had since elementary school and it never occurred to me that she was different from me. She's Asian and I don't honestly even know what she is – maybe she might be Vietnamese…it never occurred to me, really did not occur to me that she was different.

Several of these White students reported that during their early formative years, they learned that noticing racial and ethnic differences and talking about them was considered inappropriate. With limited accurate information and skills, it appears that most White respondents felt compelled to ignore the different racial and ethnic identities of the people they came into contact with, since paying attention to these differences was considered racist. Even those students who had more positive early experiences did not see an inherent value in recognizing the differences, reinforcing the continual invisibility of racial and ethnic issues that many Students of Color reported experiencing.

Regarding their early socialization, few Students of Color reported positive experiences with their parents or other influential people in their lives regarding issues of racial or ethnic difference. There were several similarities to the White students'

responses. Most of the Students of Color discussed their experiences in the caucus group and in the focus group. Nick, a biracial man, admitted that meeting new people was difficult for him and his family "never talked much about diversity:"

> I could see that in my family's way - cause my brothers are very secluded from everything - where I am exploring a new world - because I am the only, the first one to go to college in my family. I am experiencing everything in a whole new perspective. I am trying to get out and meet more people and [he hesitates]- it's hard. They never talked much about diversity – just life goes on as you know it, just watch TV everyday, whatever. They just never talked about it. I just feel like I am going through this experience like, without any guidelines as far as the parental role or anything like that. That may be one reason I am quiet...

Areaya's experiences also reflected a family that did not openly discuss issues of race. When asked about parental role models regarding racial issues he replied:

> We never talked about any issues. We ate dinner together. That's one thing, we always ate dinner together. We never sat down and had like - we had family meetings you know, if someone was doing bad in school or something.

Orlando explains his experience of learning about racial and cultural differences. He was taught to appreciate the value of diversity by his father, but he had a different experience with his mother:

> My mom, she is Puerto Rican. We live in a safe area on the outskirts of Worcester and there's a lot of people who think Worcester is dangerous and it's not bad at all but she thinks it's dangerous. She, at one point, she wouldn't even go down to the store, our kind of store, Puerto Rican - she won't go down there because she gets nervous. She will lock the doors and you know, you see someone that is coming near your car and isn't going to do anything to your car, but yet, it makes you nervous, lock your doors kind of thing. I have seen that even in my family... I find that interesting, how little things can influence you.

He explained his story in the caucus group and in the focus group, and the White students appeared surprised to hear that even People of Color may believe stereotypes about other People of Color. This was a pivotal moment in the group, as the White students began to

understand the impact that racism has on People of Color. The incident also raised the level of risk-taking in the discussion among the students in the group.

Another student reported experiencing exposure to positive conversations regarding racial and ethnic issues. Karima, who grew up in Hawaii, was raised to believe that knowing about an individual's racial and ethnic identities is an important aspect of the relationship:

> I was brought up to see the difference first and we would know about the other cultures and so it would be like, I would see it first, or I would ask them 'oh, what are you?'

Despite this message she received from her parents and other elders in her life, she was still exposed to negative stereotypes, particularly about White people. She hesitantly tells her caucus group, "I was told growing up that White people don't take a bath, just little things like that, those stereotypes."

An interesting distinction in this discussion is how Students of Color reported learning the value of knowing and discussing a person's racial or ethnic identity, while most Whites stated their role models taught them it was more appropriate to ignore it. Suggested in the responses of White participants is the belief that not acknowledging or discussing a person's racial or ethnic identity will be perceived as anti-racist behavior. Students of Color who discussed this issue explained that knowing one's culture is a sign of respect and helps "to find something in common" with the person. Karima explained her experience further:

> Yeah, we were talking about this, how we see the difference first. It's immediate, we don't look at it as negative, we look at it as something to enhance our relationship, something to learn from and share from. I was brought up to automatically, if I don't know what you are, what are you? Tell me! To find something in common, in their culture.

This issue was discussed in the caucus groups and at length in the focus group discussion. Some of the Students of Color tried to explain to the White participants why acknowledgment of their racial or ethnic background was important. They reported feeling more affirmed and less invisible if the differences were not ignored but discussed.

Generally all of the participants in FG I reported receiving mostly negative information and little support from adults concerning issues of race and ethnicity. It was evident that most students were left trying to understand what they should believe and how they should act, particularly Whites. Students of Color reported that having their different racial and ethnic identities ignored or dismissed by Whites impacted their ability to build positive intergroup relationships with them.

Experiences in School and the Community

All of the participants reported some prominent experience in their schools or communities that effected the development of their understanding of racial and ethnic issues. White participants reported having some contact with students from other racial and ethnic backgrounds in their pre-college experiences, but it was limited. Most of the White students also observed some level of racial and ethnic divide in their communities and schools. In contrast, most of the Students of Color attended schools with a predominantly White population and they described experiences of adaptation and the importance of "fitting in."

Shira attended public schools outside of Boston and her school system also participated in the METCO program. It was evident in the White caucus group that she was struggling in her process of understanding her past and present experiences with racism and she told this story in the White student caucus:

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In elementary school, there were kids bussed in from Boston, the METCO kids, and everybody knew who the METCO kids were and there would be two or three students in there and there was one Black student who was actually from Framingham and he was accepted like a White student - like any other student, and I don't think anybody really thought about it but he was different than the METCO kids. People would be friends with them but there was something different about them…the strange thing was as we got into high school, that one boy who had always been accepted into our group, all of a sudden he grouped with the other colored students.

The fact that this Black student joined up with other Students of Color was an issue of concern and confusion for her. Shira had decided there was a distinction between the Black student from Framingham and "the METCO kids," whom she stated were "different." As a result of her thinking, she could not understand why the Black student chose to interact with "the METCO kids" since "he was accepted like a White student." She goes onto discuss how in her high school, social groups became more defined by racial identity and there was the absence of cross-racial interactions:

> Once we had students from all around Framingham and they were together in the high school, they would always be separated into different groups. I did a lot of talking about this in one of my classes - are they grouped that way because they don't know each other or because they separate on purpose? In the cafeteria, people are hanging out and you can see the different groups hanging out together and there was very little cross-race relationships.

In contrast, Adam, a Student of Color, reported an experience concerning "groups" that was particularly meaningful for him. It involved a critical incident for him during high school, when he started to notice he was more comfortable and confident with other Black students:

And a lot of the Black kids hung out together, like in high school, that's when I started to notice, how when Black kids sat together at lunch and how White kids sat together...I just started sitting (hesitates)... I mean everyone was my friend really. Ever since high school I started sitting with the Black kids at the lunch table. Then I started to feel more comfortable. I got a lot more self-confidence. I started to open up and talk more.

For Adam, who identifies as Black or Ethiopian-American, the opportunity to interact with other Black students had considerable value for him. However, in contrast, Shira's excerpt illustrated her lack of understanding regarding the significance of homogeneous gatherings for Students of Color. Other White participants posed questions in the caucus group concerning the issue of "groups" defined by race identity. Shira continued to struggle in the focus group discussion with race-related issues, but did not take as many risks in describing her experiences and perspectives concerning the topic.

Another White student, Elisa, who was Jewish, observed similar examples of segregation at her high school:

My high school was 85% Jewish and a small percent Black - Cleveland, Ohio...they all got along but I think it was somewhat segregated but nobody seemed to think it was a big deal. Everybody was friends but when it came to hanging out and outside of school it was mostly the Jewish kids. (White Caucus)

The previous statements made by White participants exposes the limited awareness and understanding of the experiences of Students of Color that many Whites exhibited throughout the study. For example, Elisa's perception that "nobody seemed to think it was a big deal," in reference to the apparent race-based segregation in her school, reveals her inability to look beyond her own experience as a White student in that school. Her response illustrates a perspective that prohibits her from understanding the experience of the Black students.

Students of Color reported that their schools had large White populations, with very few Students of Color. Most respondents noted their struggle to adapt to environments that were predominantly White. Students of Color who participated in the focus group did not report experiences with members of other targeted racial or ethnic identities different from their own. They reported experiences of learning about or interacting primarily with White people.

Orlando, a Puerto Rican male, grew up in a racially diverse city outside of Boston. He attended a Catholic boy's school where he felt he was constantly "defending the minority:

> It was probably 96% White and I think the problems I saw there were…like in the fraternity they see him [RJ] as different? Well, they saw me as different you know what I mean? I found myself, since I was the only Latino or minority in the class, I found myself trying to defend the minority and everybody ganged up against me.

Nick talked about the racial demographics at his high school, which depicted a scenario typical for most Students of Color:

> In my high school, there was me and another African American and one Asian and one Hispanic in a class of one hundred or so. It wasn't too big of a class but it was…it was terrible (chuckle) – it wasn't *terrible*, it was just the fact…it was uncomfortable.

While White students talked about their lack of experience with people from different racial and ethnic groups, Students of Color reported early socialization experiences of learning how to adapt in predominantly White schools and communities. This theme of adaptation was discussed consistently among the Students of Color, who had to interact with Whites on a daily basis. At times, these respondents shared painful stories of their experiences. While Whites were apparently ignoring the differences and the issue of race altogether, the experiences of Students of Color suggested they had no

choice but to adapt and assimilate for survival. Ranita, who was raised in a predominantly White area, south of Boston, talked about a particularly difficult experience of rejection by other People of Color because she was viewed as having assimilated. She struggled to figure out how "to fit in:"

> It's so much easier for me to talk to White people, cause when I was growing up, I always went over their houses…their parent always treated me just like I was one of their kids, it didn't matter that they were all White. But because I was the only one for so long and I was kind of stuck with the situation, I just got used to relating to White people better. Then I got to visit my mother at the school she worked at, Dorchester High, and People [of Color] would make fun of me all the time. They would tell me I was half White and that I talked funny because I spoke proper English and it was kind of traumatic actually…I tried to stay away from those people because I didn't feel like being subjected to all of that stuff 'cause it wasn't my fault that I grew up in a small White town and that I had to fit in so I wasn't walking around by myself all the time.

This type of experience was common among the Students of Color and posed many challenges for them as they tried to build friendships with other Students of Color on campus who had not lived in predominantly White communities.

Most Students of Color reported not noticing the absence of students from other racial and ethnic groups. Nick described his experience:

> When you are in a class like that, you are just used to walking into the class and doing your work and not worrying about the other people around you. After awhile, I didn't even notice it.

Another Black male student responds with a slightly different experience:

> I never noticed anything…until, I think the first Black kid I had in my class was in the third grade. I remember that day, I don't know why. When he walked into the classroom of people, I just turned and I looked at him and I was like 'finally'…I don't know why I said it, 'cause it never really bothered me…when I got to high school, it started to bother me a little bit though…

For this student, he was startled to realize that the absence of other Students of Color before his third grade classroom may have actually affected him. These excerpts

illustrate the level of adaptation that Students of Color experienced in White dominated classrooms.

As illustrated through the stories of the participants, early socialization processes impact students' understanding of racial and ethnic issues from pre-college experience until present time. Their definitions of personal friendship and positive intergroup relationship is often an outcome of their early formative experiences that include their pre-college intergroup friendship experiences in high school, and in the neighborhood where they grew up. Parents and other influential people who taught them about racial or ethnic difference are also major factors. Most students are recognizing what they have been taught is inaccurate and they are motivated to find a new, informed way of initiating relationships with each other, whether in just simple contact or deeper friendships.

An individual's socialization process can be viewed as an obstacle and a supporting factor, depending on the experience of the student. For some Whites, although they may have received positive support to interact across racial and ethnic differences, there is still a belief that choosing to be "color-blind" instead of recognizing the difference is the better course of action. Most Students of Color, who want to be recognized for who they are and their lived experience, reported feeling invisible. All of these factors continue to perpetuate the system of racism and create barriers to the possibility of building relationships across racial and ethnic difference.

Theme #3: Facilitating Conditions that Support Students in Developing Positive

Intergroup Relationships

Initially when asked to discuss what supports their ability to build intergroup

contact, a few students talked about the value of open communication. One White

woman, Diana, who values honesty in her friendships, expressed the following:

> I really respect relationships where friends [of Color], they want you to ask
> questions, about anything. There's no hang-ups and if I offended you, maybe you
> could just tell me 'that offended me' but you'd tell me why and we'd talk about it
> and that would be it. I would know not to do it again. I know I am not always
> going to be right and say the right things.

Ranita, a biracial woman, responded similarly with a strong statement about

needing honesty and open communication in order to have a relationship with a White

person. She gave this response in the focus group discussion, and it appeared that she

was directing it to the White participants:

> I'd like to know if someone was blatantly a racist, to tell you the truth, just so I
> know how to approach you and I know what to say and what not to say to you. I
> hate it when people tip toe around things 'cause they are trying to be sensitive to
> not hurt my feelings, 'cause they don't want to be seen as racist. 'Cause I have
> probably heard it, almost all of it...I had a friend who was white and Jewish and
> she had had no contact with minorities...she asked me 'Is it OK if I ask you
> questions and I don't want you to take them the wrong way.' I don't mind fielding
> those questions if I know the person genuinely wants to know.

Ranita's statement significantly influenced the focus group discussion, resulting

in an increase in dialogue between Whites and Students of Color. The White participants

also appeared relieved that there was permission to ask their questions.

The previous statements were the only responses specifically discussing the value

of open communication in developing intergroup relationships. The level of risk-taking

by these two respondents was typical and they continued to be valuable role models for the rest of the group.

The following discussion presents the major categories of responses from all of the participants that describe facilitating conditions for positive intergroup contact. These categories include learning and sharing information about each other's racial and ethnic differences; establishing common ground and factors present in the classroom environment. A final category describes what students talked about as motivational factors and conditions for building intergroup relationships and practicing anti-racist behaviors.

Learning New Information about Racial and Ethnic Differences

Most participants in the study agreed upon the value of learning and sharing information with others about their racial and ethnic identities. Several students reported having friendships with other students on campus who were racially or ethnically different and these friendships included conversations about the differences between them. Only three of the White participants shared experiences in the focus group of actual discussions with their friends from other racial backgrounds, yet most of them agreed about the value of doing it. This was an obvious contradiction but a very typical pattern among White respondents in Focus Group I. On the one hand, they agreed on the value of discussions about racial and ethnic differences but their resistance to discussing their personal experiences suggested a strong concern about how to talk about it in the focus group among other Students of Color without sounding racist. A strong distinction was that the Students of Color reported more experiences and displayed greater ease with this type of discussion in their friendships, and talked about it in the focus group more

directly. RJ believes that having conversations about racial and ethnic difference do not have a negative impact on the friendship:

> If I see someone, especially if I am in an international environment, I will ask the person where they are from just to get to know them. Just basic questions. Somebody is always asking me 'Where are you from? Where do you live?' so it becomes second nature to answer those questions...I don't think it affects my friendship toward them at all.

Orlando, who was born in Puerto Rico, spoke earlier about his father encouraging him to learn about people's differences. He views this as an important factor in building relationships:

> In Puerto Rico, my father is the talker – 'What's your background?' and usually it's to find out, to be able to relate to the person's culture a little more and not to really down it and not to say 'Oh, he's Puerto Rican' or 'He's American.' It's 'Oh, that's great!' It's more to have something to talk about if you don't know that about the person. It's a positive thing.

Although most of the White respondents reported they did not discuss race or ethnicity with their friends who were not White, those who did clearly articulated the significance of learning about these differences. Carla, who reports having many friends from different backgrounds, talks about her experiences:

> I guess will give two examples – they are very different. My friend Jason who I am very close to and have known for a while, he's from the West Indies and we have a lot in common. Our friendship is very good...There's not a lot about race ever...I learn about the Buddhist background a lot, which I love. So, I think that is good. I benefit a lot from that but I also have a lot to give on my ideas around religion.

She continues with another example:

> My friend Richard, who I met here at school, he's African American. There are race differences between us like cultural differences because of how we grew up. It's not a problem ever, I like to ask him questions, if I don't know something...or about my stereotypes and things like that and he'll answer me. It's really good, I'm really glad that we're friends because I learn a lot about myself and him - it's great.

Elisa, who came from a predominantly Jewish community, explains that she chose this particular University because she wanted the experience of interacting with students from diverse racial and ethnic groups:

> I have had a lot of conversations with people and it's great because that was a big reason I came to this school, to learn about different kinds of people. When I first came to school and I started meeting people from other backgrounds – at home, all my friends were Jewish, so we never really talked about anything like backgrounds or anything – I thought it was really great because I learned so much about other cultures and so many things. That was one way in which the friendships are really different...there was much more of a learning experience – it was a give and take – they would tell me about their backgrounds and then I would tell them about mine.

It is evident that the intergroup contact these two women have experienced provided them with powerful learning experiences. In the following excerpts from the same women, they both mention the element of conflict in these friendships, and the impact on the relationship. Carla had an insightful perspective about her friendship with Richard:

> I think some of the discussions I have with Richard are sometimes very challenging on both of our parts because he has interacted with people who are racist and he asks questions about me...it's very challenging but I think it makes us stronger and I think we both learn from it. It's a positive learning experience.

Elisa replied:

> Yeah, I agree. I remember this incident where I spent two hours debating with a Cape Verdean friend of mine whether or not Santa Claus should be in the public schools because for her it was a cultural thing…and I was like 'No I wouldn't want that' and we debated about it for hours. We never ended up agreeing but we just moved on. It wasn't a negative experience, it was cool, because I knew everyone else I knew would have just agreed with me but I learned something from her too.

Throughout the caucus group and the focus group discussion, most of the White respondents would not talk about conflict or denied that it existed in their friendships with Students of Color. However, these two White women were able to reflect on the value of having difficult discussions about race related issues with their friends. The lack of discussion about conflict in intergroup relationships was a noticeable theme with Whites as well as Students of Color.

Another White student, Betsy, talks about the value of her friendship with Michael, who is Latino:

> We dated at first, and then we became really good friends and we have been friends for five years. Really solid friendship – we share everything. We're really close and it's been a positive experience. One New Year's Eve, he took me to a Spanish church and I experienced the whole New Year's Eve. It was awesome! It's been great. We just learn from each other.

The responses from the White participants are important to consider, as they reveal a prominent distinction in how Whites and Students of Color describe the benefits of learning about differences in racial and ethnic identity. Although most students who shared stories of gaining new information about different racial and ethnic identities felt that it was a positive experience, there was a difference in how Whites benefited. It is evident that learning about racial and ethnic differences was a new experience for most White participants, and several reported that it supported their ability to build intergroup

relationships. In contrast, responses from Students of Color involved learning about other People of Color or individuals from international locations, not White people. Yet, Students of Color did not state that there was *value* for them in learning about other Students of Color or building friendships with Whites.

Participants' responses suggest that Whites and Students of Color define the value of learning about racial and ethnic differences in distinct ways. One possible explanation for this is the result of lived experiences that are shaped by issues of differential status. Most Students of Color, having been raised in a White society, already have a great deal of information about White people and White culture and learning new information about Whites is not a priority. They may also be unclear about the benefits of interacting with Whites because of previous negative experiences. The findings suggest that for Students of Color in this study, they approach potential contact with Whites cautiously until they have established a level of trust. Then the goal for the interaction can be further explored.

Learning and sharing about individual racial and ethnic differences is an initial stage to developing common ground. In the following section, participants discuss how finding common ground with other students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is a major supporting factor in building positive relationships with each other.

Finding Common Ground Across Racial and Ethnic Differences

Participants provided information about experiences of finding common ground with students across racial and ethnic lines. Their responses are presented, as well as information regarding a specific incident on campus involving all of the participants that

strongly illustrates the value of common ground for building positive intergroup relationships.

The following excerpts were reported by the students in their caucus groups and then later, in the focus group discussion. Nick identified sports as a factor in developing common ground with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds:

> Yeah, we were talking about that. For me, it was sports that got me to interact with people. Because I was a minority, there had to be one common ground where it was either - it had to be that one thing that would bring a tight group together, where you would interact with everybody and it was either the classroom or sports for me.

Diana gives an example of trying to develop common ground. She felt this was one approach to interact with students who are racially and ethnically different from her:

> There was a Latin American Culture Dinner, fancy dinner in the Student Union Ballroom. RJ and I were walking by the ballroom and we were both looking in and he knows that I love that kind of thing. He was like ' Let's go in, let's go in!' and I said 'No, I can't go in there, I don't want to go in there. I am the only White person in there, there's nobody with blond hair – I am not going in there.' He said 'Who cares, let's go in and have a good time.' I started to get psyched for it. I said 'Come on, let's dance' and by the time I got out there, I felt more welcome because I knew how to do their dances.

Karima talks about finding common ground with other Students of Color, an issue that was not mentioned at any other time in the focus group:

> A lot of my friends that are from different backgrounds, I met them in class and it has come out of topics or conversations that we both were of color and we had similar situations we would start talking about.

These previous examples illustrate more informal contexts in which participants were trying to interact with students from diverse racial and ethnic groups. However, an unanticipated event took place on campus that created a more formalized opportunity for students to develop common ground with other students from different racial and ethnic

identities. The instructor addressed the issues raised by this critical campus event in the course content and several of the students who were involved encouraged its insertion into the classroom discussion. This illustration of finding common ground is discussed in the next section.

A Special Case of Common Ground: The Goodell Student Protest

In early March, five weeks into the semester, there was a student takeover of the Goodell Library on campus. It was an organized protest focused on the students' claim that the University was not providing adequate resources to meet the financial needs of students, particularly Students of Color and students who came from a lower income status. There was also concern that all students were not receiving adequate information about procedures for filing the Federal Financial Aid Form, which delayed their ability to receive aid and register for classes.

The Goodell student takeover provided an unexpected opportunity for students to work together on issues that impacted them across racial and other identity groups. Many students in the course described their involvement in this event as facilitating them in cross-race and cross-ethnic interactions and friendships, enabling them to develop common understanding and respect for individual and social group differences.

This event had a major impact on some of the White students' thinking about developing positive intergroup relationships. Shira became very involved with the protest and talked enthusiastically about her experiences:

> I got really involved in the Goodell thing. It was just such a community feeling - you'd meet one person, they'd introduce you to this person and I was meeting all these different students and it was this great opportunity.

Shira continues, discussing the new friendships she made:

> It had such a profound effect on me! I was very involved and I was down there everyday. I have a lot of very close friends on my hall and none of them supported them. It was very difficult for me – because I kept going down there and there would be people that I sort of knew and we'd be like 'Hey how are you doing' and we'd start to get to know each other. I made this new source of support and it was all of these different people from different backgrounds and I loved it because it didn't matter who you were.

This student's statement begins to illustrate the asymmetrical interpretation of common ground between Whites and Students of Color, particularly regarding how they experienced the student protest at Goodell. Shira clearly identifies critical turning points for regarding her understanding and perceptions of her interactions with Students of Color. As a White woman who is struggling to develop a deeper awareness of race issues, the event at Goodell provided her with significant learning opportunities, in an environment where she felt accepted instead of suspect because of her White skin.

In contrast, the Students of Color involved with the protest did not report experiencing similar benefits as a result of the intergroup interactions across race and ethnicity that took place at Goodell. The opportunity for finding common ground with White students was not their primary goal or outcome. Although there was the perception on campus that Students of Color were the lead organizers of this student protest, this was not accurate and in fact bothered the Student of Color organizers who would have appreciated more White student involvement. Two of the major organizers of this event who were Students of Color also participated in this study. The following statement from one of these students illustrates a somewhat different perspective:

I talked about how aggravating it was for me at Goodell because a lot of people turned it into an ALANA issue and for me it was never anything but students get the run around on this campus. But it was us [the organizers] asking for everyone else to try and adapt and change the situation that was affecting everybody but it turned into 'Why do we have to adapt to what you want us to do?' kind of a situation and it was frustrating and aggravating when everyone's opinion in there was for every single student on this campus and that's kind of like where some of the major obstacles come in.

Despite the distinctions in how this event impacted Whites and Students of Color, all of the students involved expressed their shared experience of having a common goal that both groups could work towards. This experience proved to be a major if unexpected factor in building positive intergroup relationships for those students who participated, and these relationships continued to develop during the remainder of the semester. It is important to note that events such as the Goodell student takeover are usually spontaneous and students need to continue exploring other informal contexts for establishing common ground across racial and ethnic difference.

Supporting Factors in the Classroom Environment

All of the participants in this study reported that the classroom environment and the role of the instructor were strong factors in supporting their ability to build positive intergroup relationships. Students of Color and White students expressed similar reactions to their experiences in the course, in regards to both content and process. Several students reported certain aspects of the classroom environment as supporting factors in their ability to develop relationships with racially and ethnically different students in the classroom. These included the opportunity to interact with a diverse student population, and the safe classroom environment.

The following students reported the benefits of having a diverse group of students in the classroom. Shira talks about interacting with Students of Color that she met in the class:

> I love our class. It's very interactive. I don't see the segregation in our class, people just talk, it doesn't matter. I feel very comfortable there. I have talked to [Nick] a few times outside of class. I was down at Goodell some other time and [RJ] was down there. It is so nice to be able to interact with other people because I don't have the exposure.

Orlando, who is Puerto Rican, also appreciates the opportunity to "interact with the students:"

> To tell you the truth, the only class I have really got to interact with the students is this class...I really know everybody. I think it's the environment and the topics but its almost not forced upon you, but encouraged. You're encouraged to talk and express yourself.

A few students mentioned the issue of safety in the classroom environment. Orlando reported what the Student of Color caucus discussed, "We said it was a safe environment and we were encouraged to talk to each other." When asked if the class felt "safer" because there are more Students of Color compared to other classrooms on campus, he responded, "Oh definitely. I haven't missed a class yet so that should say something...I remember my high school - I was the only one. At least here you can have a discussion where it's not just one person of color putting some input but everybody has something to put in." He continues to discuss his experience of feeling safe in the classroom, "In class we are encouraged to be open about things and if we're open about things, then we can say 'What he said, I don't really like it.'" Karima finishes the thought, "but let's talk about it, let's think about it."

The importance of "safety" as a supporting factor in the classroom was identified specifically by Students of Color and not by the White participants. Orlando noted that

he appreciated the class because he could "have a discussion where it's not just one person of color putting some input." This comment supports his previous story about being the one Student of Color in a high school classroom where he felt he was always defending his position as a Latino. In this experience, he begins to recognize he is in a classroom with other Students of Color who share common experiences and may relate to his perspectives.

Students reported some reactions to the role of the instructor as a supporting factor in developing more intergroup contact in Focus Group I. Karima, appreciated the instructor's goal of student interaction, "It's fun to meet other people and in class, it's easier. She encourages more interaction."

Orlando also appreciated the topics chosen by the instructor to discuss in class:

> The class has a lot of topics that a lot of people have opinions that they have no solid information on that we get from the readings and the lectures that she does. So all in all, it makes a safer environment to talk about things.

Shira stated that the instructor's encouragement to 'lean into your fears' when confronted with the opportunity to develop an intergroup friendship impacted her decision to interact with Students of Color at the Goodell protest:

> The first day, [the instructor] said something about lean into your fears and that had the biggest effect on me. I went back [to Goodell] on Tuesday to see how things were going. There was a Latino student, a Black student and a White student and who did I go up to and ask how things were going? The White student! Without even thinking about it and the minute I walked away and looked around, it hit me like that. I was so horrified with myself. The next time I went by, I went up to the Latino student and we talked. It was really cool.

Shira's experience was a critical turning point for her and she continued to take more risks in building intergroup friendships. Notable here is the impact the instructor's support had on her ability to try a different behavior when she found herself in a racially

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mixed environment. Most of the responses here suggest that the students felt supported by the instructor in a number of different ways. This kind of attention to the needs of the students facilitated their ability to interact with each other across racial and ethnic lines.

Motivational Factors that Support Students in Building Positive Intergroup Relationships

Focus Group I proved to be the beginning of the conversation that students would continue in Focus Group II regarding their motivation to build positive intergroup relationships. The discussion of this minor theme further in FG II strongly reflected the students' ability to identify the motivation for having friendships with students from different racial and ethnic groups, particularly as they developed throughout the semester. The shifts in the perspectives of many of the participants is striking and an important finding for this thematic strand. Almost all of the participants gave responses that revealed a strong desire to build positive intergroup relationships.

Participants previously identified certain conditions that supported their ability to build positive intergroup relationships. These conditions included learning new information about each other's racial and ethnic differences, aspects of the classroom environment, and opportunities for finding common ground as noted earlier. These categories of facilitating conditions that were discussed are factors that support students in becoming more familiar with each other and with the language of racial and ethnic differences. Once these conditions are present, the findings suggest that students are more able and willing to have experiences that motivate them to interact across racial and ethnic difference.

For the most part, White participants shared experiences that highly motivated them. However, Students of Color did not similarly articulate the enthusiasm or

eagerness that Whites expressed about building intergroup relationships. It appeared that they were more interested in the ability and willingness of the White participants to take risks and engage in relationships with racially and ethnically different students. This distinction proved to be one of the main findings for this theme. As participants discussed the motivational factors that supported them in building positive intergroup relationships, the impact of one's lived experience based on racial or ethnic identity was highlighted. White students spoke enthusiastically about their motivation for building intergroup friendships, while the Students of Color, who already had the experience of developing friendships with Whites, appeared more tentative and skeptical. This distinction highlights again the asymmetrical lived experiences of Whites and Students of Color, which often dictates how they approach the task of developing positive intergroup relationships.

In the following statements, two White students identified the qualities of trust and "respect" from the other person as important motivational factors. Diana responds:

> I really need trust from the other person that I am not trying to offend them and that I am really trying to change and open up and respect them. I might not know what offends them and what doesn't but I want them to trust and to know that I am not trying to offend them.

Carla, who claims to have many friends from diverse racial and ethnic

backgrounds, gives a similar answer:

> I know I personally need People of Color not to assume that I am racist because I have definitely encountered a lot of reverse prejudice and it is really hard because I don't consider myself racist.

This quote illustrates a common perspective held by many of the White

participants. Carla wants "People of Color not to assume that I am racist" yet insists that she has experienced "reverse prejudice." Her use of the term "reverse prejudice"

suggests a misunderstanding of the dynamics of racism. Most White students agreed that they need Students of Color to not assume they are racists. They feel more motivated to interact with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds if there is a presence of trust.

In the large group discussion in FG I, a White student and a Student of Color have a dialogue about what motivates them to have a cross-racial interaction. Diana begins:

> What I wanted to bring to the group was that – the thing that I thought was important was that if I meet someone that looks differently than me, I want to know that they aren't sitting there saying 'What's your problem?' like kind of questioning me? I want them to know that there's trust there, that you're just looking at me like someone you just met and you're like 'What's she about?' It's not like, 'Is she against me?'

Ranita replies "The same with me." And Diana responds, "Do you know what I am trying to say? That's what I need in order to start a relationship, I have to know that the person isn't going to bring all of this baggage in with them thinking that, you know?"

This dialogue between Ranita and Diana is an excellent illustration of the kind of discussions that participants began to have with one another. At this point, the students exhibited a genuine interest in talking with each other about building positive intergroup friendships, particularly within the large group. Orlando shares his perspective:

> I think all I want is an open mind from both. You see, I don't see myself as having problems making friendships with anyone from different races, so it's tough for me to answer that question. I think all in all, what I need and it doesn't matter what race it is, just an open mind to it and look at people as individuals.

Generally, the presence of trust and respect motivates these students to build positive intergroup relationships across racial and ethnic lines. Most of the White participants gave this type of response, however fewer Students of Color answered the question.

The following discussion reflects the perspectives of a few White participants, who reported further factors that motivate them to interact with members of different racial and ethnic groups. Their responses are notable as they suggest these two women engaged in a more reflective process of thinking about the question of motivational factors. Shira, who has exhibited great enthusiasm to further her understanding and awareness about her own racism, talks about what motivates her:

> The group of friends I have right now are very conservative and they have been my friends for a couple of years and it has gotten to the point where they make a comment about it and I'll either let it slide or I'll make a comment about it and they just say 'Yeah, OK, Shira'…Having this class has been really good for me. I don't want to let myself be unaware of these things – I don't want to just let it slide. I had a diversity class last year and it kept me on my feet, kept me watching out for things. Just that reminder – it's good for me to have that there – 'Look, this is something that you should be paying attention to.'

Betsy, when asked by the facilitator to describe what motivated her to have friendships with Students of Color in her high school, responded, "I would say it was something inside of me that came out."

The discussion regarding what motivated these students to build positive intergroup contact illustrated notable changes in the perspectives and behaviors of several of the participants. Increased self-awareness and the ability to talk openly about issues of race and race relations was an evident outcome for the White students and several of the Students of Color did exhibit more risk-taking and improved listening skills.

Theme #4: Factors that Hinder the Development of Positive Intergroup Relationships

Overall, participants were easily able to identify and discuss the factors that hinder their ability to build positive intergroup relationships across race and ethnicity. Participants reported similarly about specific obstacles: lack of support from friends and

society; fear of rejection; and negative experiences that have shaped their perceptions and assumptions about members of different racial and ethnic groups. The Student of Color caucus also discussed issues involving identity and invisibility as deterrents to interacting with White students.

Lack of Support and the Fear of Rejection

Carla discusses her feelings about the lack of societal acceptance as an obstacle to intergroup friendships:

> I think society makes it really difficult. Even though it is politically correct to have interracial friendships, I think…it is the PC thing, but I don't think underneath they [society] necessarily believe that, so that makes it hard.

Another White student, Eve, replies:

> I agree with her – society. I don't know, if somebody's been hurt. If a Black person has been hurt by a White person so many times, they just give up on trying to create a friendship with them or even trying with somebody else because they feel that they are going to get a negative response.

It is worth noting Eve's response to the question, as it typifies the manner in which several White participants consistently discuss issues raised in the focus group. She uses a possible scenario of a Black person's experience and perspective instead of her own to discuss the notion of fear of rejection. This response is not surprising and reveals a number of issues that White students face as they try to develop relationships with members of different racial and ethnic groups, primarily the fear of inserting oneself into the discussion and being labeled a racist. Another distinction suggested in the responses of White participants is the lack of self-awareness and reflection regarding their role in the system of racism. A greater awareness and ability to reflect is more evident in the participation of the Students of Color.

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Ranita has a strong understanding of racial issues, and she discusses a different perspective about the lack of support she has in developing friendships with Whites:

> I didn't have obstacles until I got here… I've been the outcast when it comes to People of Color because of the way I speak, because of the way I dress…I think, for me, from my own community, it's fear of rejection, fear of being called the 'outcast' or the 'sellout' even though I know I am not.

This is a common concern among the Students of Color who were socialized in predominantly White communities and have the skills and the confidence to interact with Whites. These students reported that upon entering the University, they began to experience peer pressure from their respective racial and ethnic communities on campus to participate in more homogeneous social groups and they perceive this as a lack of support to develop friendships with Whites. Once Ranita arrived on campus, she began to feel the pressure from her own racial community to stay within this homogeneous group. This is a difficult struggle for her and other Students of Color, who were raised in a White community and learned, at an early age, how to adapt to White culture, but are rejected by members of their communities. Ranita explains her dilemma further:

> I have to watch every single thing I say when I talk to another Person of Color, to make sure that it's the proper thing and I don't have to hear 'You're a sellout.' Whereas I have been associating with White people my whole life so it's easy for me 'cause I know what to say and I know how to act, to some degree.

Carla talked about feeling rejected by the friends of an African American student with whom she has a friendship:

> Friends are really hard also. Not my friends specifically because I think most of my [White] friends are open-minded. I know when I befriend People [of Color] some of their friends give them a hard time. Yes, their friends will give them a hard time or will crack jokes around me or say stupid things about…and I'm just like, 'That's not necessary.'

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Nick who admits to being shy, shares some thoughts about his fears of interacting with White students, based on an experience that he had in high school:

> It's not fear of rejection, but definitely the receptiveness of White people. If you go into a lunchroom and you're like, 'Where am I going to sit?' Who are you going to sit with if it's your first time in the lunchroom? You don't know anybody and it's all White people for us.

Ranita replied, "I sit with whoever says come on over." Nick responded, "Yeah, either that or the empty chair or table."

This somber disclosure from the participant reflects the isolation and loneliness that many Students of Color experienced in their schools, and currently, as students on predominantly White campuses. It also suggests how prevalent the fear of rejection is, particularly for Students of Color.

Carla expressed her concern about the issue of emotional safety when she is in racially diverse settings. She is afraid to experience rejection:

> There are times I don't feel safe, not physically but like, emotionally because I have experienced reverse prejudice. I am almost afraid to feel rejection – it's not very fun. I like people as individuals and something like that, a possibility of being rejected because of my color – that is a safety thing.

Similarly Ranita discusses, in the Student of Color caucus, her concerns about interacting with Whites on campus:

> The White students here come from different settings than the ones that I went to high school with. They're not very open – they don't make it very open initially. Like here in class, they'll talk to you or whatever but it's not that general feeling of like, you can just go over to someone and chit chat. So I guess I notice more here as an obstacle – talking to them – and I am scared of them! They scare me and I hate rejection and it has happened in the past so I am a little wary.

As suggested in these excerpts, White students and Students of Color are strongly impacted by issues of rejection and lack of support in their efforts to build positive

intergroup relationships, with certain distinctions. As this theme emerged in the data, similar attributes of the issue became evident for both Whites and Students of Color, despite their different stories and experiences. The task of building relationships across racial and ethnic identities is challenged by the complex interpersonal dynamics of racism, as illustrated in students' responses.

<div align="center">Perceptions and Assumptions of the "Other"</div>

Participants identified perceptions and assumptions of members of different racial and ethnic groups as another category of obstacles that prevent or make it difficult to build positive intergroup relations. Whites and Students of Color reported making assumptions about members of other racial groups that hindered their ability and willingness to initiate an interaction. The reporting of these responses was more abstract, with participants describing feelings and emotions. The focus group discussion centered on students' internal thinking processes rather than their external experiences. Further in this section, respondents discuss specific negative experiences that expand on some of the following responses.

Diana consistently struggled with articulating her thoughts and feelings about the issues raised in the focus group. In this excerpt, she tries to express some thoughts about her perceptions of cross-racial and cross-ethnic interactions:

> OK – I think I have stumbled onto some understanding of myself here. I think the reason – when I look at you, I just look at you. I am not thinking in my head, it is almost like (big sigh)…I think there is a lot of mistrust within both of the people. They don't know if this person is against them, or if you're against me, or who is against me and I think you feel on guard because you don't know what they think about you. But if you're of the same color or anything, I know there's no problem because I am just like you. You know what I mean?

Eve replies:

> I think that happens a lot, where people assume that you don't want to get to know them and you don't want to be their friend. Even if you talk to them, just the way their energy is towards you.

Students of Color reported similarly when talking about the perceptions and assumptions that challenge their ability to build relationships with Whites. The following two quotes were reported by these students in the caucus group. Ranita wondered how White students perceive her when she enters a classroom on campus:

> And that is the general feeling on this campus, when you walk around this campus, is that people are you looking at you and thinking 'There's another example of Affirmative Action in the works – there is another one of those.' That's how we get treated sometimes and that makes it a little bit more difficult to talk to people when you are thinking 'Oh, are they thinking that I am one of those Affirmative Action cases?' even when I know for certain that I am not.

Nick also questions what Whites think about him:

> You're wondering how people are looking at you. You don't know if they're looking at you in a negative way or are they just looking at you. It's weird…like you have to read their minds.

Orlando discussed his experience of the assumptions that are made about his ethnic group with a bit of humor. He stated this in the focus group discussion:

> In my opinion, when I go to Puerto Rico everyone is just so accepting. If you are hungry, 'Come on in.' Up here, if you're hungry, it's like '*Oh,* you're *hungry…*' (Laughter and agreement in the group). I am not talking about any race in particular - it is everybody doing this.

Students of Color and White students share a similar concern about the assumptions and perceptions held by members of other groups that impact their ability to develop intergroup relationships. As mentioned earlier, participants struggled to give concrete examples of the assumptions they have about members of other groups. However, they easily spoke about how they felt they were perceived based on their own

racial or ethnic identity. These responses illustrate the power that perceptions and assumptions have on one's ability to build relationships with others from different racial and ethnic groups.

The Impact of Prior Negative Experiences

Most participants reported experiencing a negative interaction with someone from a different racial or ethnic group that prevented them from having further contact with that individual or with another member of the specific racial or ethnic group. Generally, these experiences were with people they did not know and there was often a perceived tension in the interaction.

The following Students of Color shared stories that involved other White students on campus and both students felt that the Whites they interacted with were fearful of them. This represented a negative experience for them. Adam reports his experience:

> This happens so many times. In the DC (dining common), a lot of times I bump into people and I am not clumsy but a lot of times when I am getting my food, I sometimes I bump into people and they're like 'Excuse me, excuse me!' And I was like, '*I* am sorry!'

I probed this student further, "So you sense their fear?" The student replied, "Yes!"

> Ranita also experienced a sense of fear on the part of Whites:

> People have done that to me too. If there's a White person, they will apologize like crazy and I hate that. I've had people say 'Oh, I'm sorry, so sorry' and it was me who bumped into them. I am not going to rip your head off. Like 'Please don't kill me' – I hate that, it drives me crazy. Sure, say sorry, but not for five minutes.

White students reported experiencing mistreatment by Students of Color, particularly Blacks, on campus. This woman tells a story that took place in a classroom on campus:

> I went to a class here, a Black Women's history course. I tried to get into the class and I talked to the professor. He asked people for suggestions for majors that he would let into the class. I said Women's Studies and BDIC and these two Black women told me to shut my mouth and I was really shocked because I would think they would be psyched that I was there wanting to learn about it and they just made me feel shitty. I was so shocked and caught off guard and I couldn't say anything the rest of the class.

This participant clearly articulates her discomfort with this experience, but she is not able to consider the perspectives of the two Black women and their reasons for responding to her in a negative manner. This example illustrates once again a consistent theme in the data involving White participants. This theme suggests that a lack of awareness and reflection regarding their identity as Whites results in their inability to participate in building positive intergroup friendships across race and ethnicity. Although Carla claims to have friends from different racial and ethnic groups, she lacks an ability to reflect on her status as a White person and the fact that her differential social group status impacts how others perceive her and ultimately, behave towards her. As a result, she is unable to feel or express empathy regarding the lived experiences of these two Black women that may have contributed to this challenging intergroup dynamic.

Participants in this study, Whites and Students of Color, identified a number of obstacles that make it difficult for them to build positive intergroup relationships across racial and ethnic differences. One of the underlying elements of these obstacles is the presence of assumptions and preconceived notions that most people maintain about the racially or ethnically different "other." The following discussion describes a major distinction that Students of Color named as an obstacle that prevents them from trusting Whites and having positive contact with them.

The Invisibility of Identity for Students of Color

Issues involving identity were consistently raised in the discussion among

Students of Color. Most students expressed that they wanted to be recognized for their

racial or ethnic identity, but felt that Whites often avoided the discussion for a number of

different reasons. They reported feeling "invisible."

RJ shared an example of how he felt White students ignored his racial identity:

> A lot of my friends, like they see me and they accept me because I am in the
> fraternity but they don't accept me or see me as Black. I am in the fraternity and I
> think 'Ok, they see me as a Black person so when they see somebody else they
> will think 'Oh this guy reminds me of [RJ]' but they don't see it like that. So if a
> Black person comes in (to the fraternity) they get bad treatment just because they
> are Black – like they cannot see the relationship between me and another Black
> person. I want them to see me as a Black person first.

He spoke again later about his need to be "accepted" for his identity as a Black

man:

> Being accepted for who you are and once they [Whites] accept you, you become
> one of them as opposed to, you are their friend. Now they see you as one of them
> but if the Latinos come into the room, they'll be like 'What the hell, what are you
> doing here? You're not Black you're brown' or something like that – you know?

Karima, who identifies as multiracial - Native Hawaiian, Chinese and White -

described her struggle with the issue of identity:

> I grew up with a lot of people from different ethnic backgrounds. I think coming
> to the University has been a different experience for me. I just have a lot of
> problems with the terminology. I don't know, like…with White people, to them,
> I look White or I look different and sometimes they don't know how to deal with
> that. Then I don't like when they label all Asians the same. There is so much
> diversity within the one race and you can't label it all the same thing. I hate the
> one grouping - that kind of bothers me.

Karima feels that if people do not know what her racial and ethnic identity is and how she

values that aspect of herself, it creates an obstacle in their ability to develop a positive

relationship with her. She is proud of the different parts of her identity and says if they are ignored or unacknowledged by a White person, it makes it more difficult for her to interact with that person. This was a widely held perspective by most of the Students of Color who commented on this issue.

Theme #5: How Students Make Meaning of Their Experiences: The Role of Narrative

An unexpected finding was that the focus group experience itself became an intervention and provided an opportunity for the students, individually and collectively, to reflect and talk with each other about the issues of racism and intergroup relations across racial and ethnic difference. This process took place through the use of personal narratives. Students told their stories as a way of communicating with one another and their narratives revealed the potential for students to develop an understanding of their experiences with each other and their own identities in relationship to race and intergroup relationships.

The use of narrative in educational settings has been studied and documented elsewhere. Kirin Narayan (1991) uses narrative as an instructional strategy with his students in his philosophy courses. "Stories, I believe, both teach and heal by encouraging individuals to observe and reflect on the personal self rather than to blindly identify with it" (p. 132). Although the use of narrative was not a focus of this study, it did emerge as a distinct theme in both focus groups, and was the preferred mode through which most participants engaged as a way of getting to know each other. Distinctions between the significance of narrative in Focus Group I and Focus Group II will be discussed here and in the findings for FG II. Based on the findings of this study, I believe

narrative is a powerful intervention that has the potential to support the development of positive intergroup relationships.

This section will explore the role of narrative in Focus Group I from two perspectives: as an opportunity for students to acquire new information about themselves and others, and as an intervention for supporting the development of positive intergroup relationships.

Several distinctions emerged between Students of Color and Whites regarding their use of narrative during Focus Group I. One of the ways I observed Whites struggling with their understanding of race-related issues was their need to share lengthy, richly descriptive stories of their experiences. Some White participants told their "stories" without describing their feelings or suggesting any personal meaning. Generally, when they conveyed an experience concerning race or ethnic issues that did not directly involve them, the narrative lacked attention to the interpersonal dynamics taking place. Often White students viewed the situation as "someone else's issue," as if issues of race and racism did not involve them. For the most part, I assumed that most of these White students could not make sense of their story at that time but did have feelings that they chose to keep to themselves, particularly in the focus group discussion where they were unsure of the level of safety.

In contrast, when White participants told a story that had personal meaning for them, they attempted to reflect upon and understand their role inside these particular experiences. In these narratives, there was greater acknowledgment of how their identity as "White" may be involved. Examples of this type of narrative were more prominent in Focus Group II.

In FG I, there were many examples of White students telling their stories about their experiences with racial and ethnic difference. In the following excerpt, Alex explains how his experience with race issues is "different" from the other White students. Parts of this response were used earlier in the chapter:

> I think I am a little different than you guys [other White students], because I did have relationships with people from other backgrounds and racial backgrounds because of my school and the METCO program. A lot of kids in my classes were Black. I played basketball all the time with Black guys and never had a problem with any of it. And I never had a negative experience growing up, my parents were very liberal and didn't tell me negative things about other groups of people. I did have something happen recently, though. We were playing basketball, there were two Black kids and then some of their friends came over who were also Black and they definitely reacted differently than they did before these other guys came over to us. That was kind of a negative experience for me. (White Caucus)

This type of response was frequent among White respondents. The need to distance oneself from the "problems" of race is another characteristic of telling a story and suggests White students not wanting to be seen as a racist. The following excerpt is part of a story a White woman shared about her family and again, reflects her not wanting to be seen as racist:

> My Dad was in the Navy and I wouldn't want to say he's racist, but he likes to make comments sometimes – 'You better not bring home a Black boyfriend,' things like that. You know, isolated things but it never affected me I guess. That was him, you know what I mean?

Although this woman's narrative lacked any evidence of reflection upon how she was impacted by her father's racist comments, the experience of telling the story created an opportunity for dialogue with the other participants, whose responses to her took the form of their stories of how their exposure to racist attitudes affected them. Eve began to understand that this incident with her father was more problematic than she originally had

thought. This opportunity for dialogue among students is a valuable outcome of narrative in a classroom setting.

Two of the White women in this group told long, descriptive stories, sharing their experiences with people from different racial identities. What is noticeable about these narratives are the unspoken questions and meaning embedded in the telling of the story. Diana identified the complex issues of race relations, yet she was unable to present her understanding of the personal significance of this story:

> Well, a few weeks ago, I was in the DC [dining common] and there's always the table in the middle where everyone who's not White sits together. So they're talking and laughing and all the White people are sitting there like 'Why are they so loud? Why do they have to make so much noise?' So this woman goes over to the juice machine and she wanted ginger ale and the ginger ale wasn't working...

At this point, the racial identity of the other woman is unclear, so I ask, "So was it a woman of color that went over to the machine?" She nodded and continued with her story:

> Yeah, and so I went over to the machine and it was working again so I got ginger ale and I walked over and I looked at her and I pointed at it but she wasn't paying attention but all of her friends were like 'hey, hey, look she's being nice to you!' and everyone was like 'Wow!' but it was funny how they were all really surprised that I was nice to her!

Although I probed Diana to discuss how this incident influenced her thinking about race issues, she was unable to do this and responded by telling other stories.

Few White students reflected on their experiences of race issues in Focus Group I. However, there were two women in the group who demonstrated efforts at least to consider the complexities of the issue. Shira told unusually long stories that generally concluded with a limited discussion of her own learning from the experience, as she does in this excerpt, which has been edited for brevity:

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There was a scholarship being presented and it was going through this church, this Unitarian Church. Youth groups had gotten invited to it. And we were the only ones who went – it was me and two other White guys in my youth group and my advisor, who was White. And that's it, everybody else in there was Black. And we walked in and everybody was like 'Whew!' OK. A, we look different, B, it wasn't the kind of thing that we were told it was, it wasn't a community thing, it was a memorial specifically to this person and it was weird for us to be there…we were playing pool and a bunch of other guys, these inner-city like guys, were staring at us the whole time. We actually ended up playing pool with them and getting to know them and we were really pushing ourselves. It was really the most interesting experience I ever had because I have never been on the other side of the fence. We were the minority, the distinct minority.

In the following quote, Diana struggles to articulate her thoughts and feelings about the difficulties of building relationships across race and ethnicity:

OK – I think I have stumbled onto some understanding of myself here. I think the reason – when I look at you, I just look at you. I am not thinking in my head, it is almost like (big sigh)… I think there is a lot of mistrust within both of the people. They don't know if this person is against them, or if you're against me, or who is against me and I think you feel on guard because you don't know what they think about you. But if you're of the same color or anything, I know there's no problem because I am just like you. You know what I mean?

By sharing her internal thinking process, which was viewed as a high-risk activity in the group, this student redefined what was considered appropriate for the other participants to discuss. However, at this point in Focus Group I, her statement did not have a great impact on what other participants discussed.

Students of Color told stories and shared experiences for rather different reasons. Their narratives were a way of informing White students and other Students of Color about their lived experiences, as well as having their story legitimized. Most Students of Color who participated in the focus groups were risk-takers and they shared their experiences with honesty and emotion. Another interesting distinction with many of the Student of Color participants was their ability to describe personal stories within a frame

of analysis. The following excerpt illustrates RJ's depth of understanding about how he continues to be treated as a Black man:

> I would expect more from them, like for example – a lot of my friends, they see me and they accept me because I am in the fraternity but they don't accept me or see me as Black. I am in the fraternity and I think, ok, they see me as a Black person so when they see somebody else they will think, 'Oh, this guy reminds me of RJ' but they don't see it like that. So if a Black person comes in they get bad treatment just because they are Black – like, they can not see the relationship between me and another Black person.

RJ's comments show a strong understanding of the complexities of racism and how it impacts the development of relationships across racial and ethnic lines. Talking about his experiences as a Black member of a mostly White student fraternity was a valuable learning experience for the White students, who often did not reveal an understanding of the complex interpersonal dynamics of race. It also provided RJ with an opportunity to tell his story and have it validated by his classmates, particularly other Students of Color, many of whom reported having similar experiences.

Ranita, who identifies as Sicilian and African American, talked about her experiences as a Student of Color and directed her conversation to the White students in the focus group discussion. This is an edited version of her narrative:

> When you guys look...I am talking to the other caucus. When you guys walk around and you look at your surroundings, you don't always think about the other person you are looking at and all of your teachers are White and I feel a lot of times, that's how minority students are seen - as always walking around being completely conscious of every person that's there and they're going to notice every little thing and it's not even true. If I did that I'd have no hair and I'd be wrinkled like crazy 'cause I don't have time to pay all that attention to what's going on! I don't need that stress, I'd go crazy!

This student demonstrated a great deal of risk-taking throughout the focus group discussion, and this powerful disclosure revealed a great deal of information about herself and her challenges as a Student of Color on a predominantly White campus. A notable

distinction in her statement is how she identified the subtleties of racism from a Person of Color's perspective and the daily impact she sustains because of her racial identity.

Another man from the Student of Color group talked about a critical turning point for him as a Student of Color in high school, when he started to notice he was interested in socializing with other Black students. He told this story in the Student of Color caucus group and this excerpt was quoted earlier in the context of the impact of socialization on intergroup relationships:

> A lot of the Black kids hung out together, like in high school, that's when I started to notice, how when Black kids sat together at lunch and how White kids sat together...I just started sitting [hesitates] – I mean everyone was my friend really. [hesitant to admit this]. Ever since high school I started sitting with the Black kids at the lunch table. Then I started to feel more comfortable, I got a lot more self-confidence, I started to open up and talk more.

Adam's narrative raises several issues concerning the impact of racism, particularly the struggle with identity for Students of Color. His story was important because it allowed other Students of Color in the caucus group to talk about similar experiences and feelings concerning their targeted racial identity. Students were answering the caucus group questions in the form of stories and their responses to each other also emerged as stories. I interpreted this as their way of letting each other know they have a common lived experience and understanding as a group of Students of Color. This is a strong example of how narrative can be utilized as an intervention in an educational setting where student relationships are a goal.

Although narratives were more prominent in FG II, they still played a role in this initial round of focus groups. They gave students an opportunity to begin telling their stories as a way of introducing themselves to one another and possibly reveal their vulnerabilities. This encouraged the level of risk-taking in the group. FG I set a

particular tone for FG II, in which students felt more comfortable participating in the focus group discussion and began to reflect more on their experiences with racial and ethnic differences. Their experiences in the classroom setting also supported their ability to engage more openly in FG II.

Focus Group II: A Spirit of Collaboration

Of the five themes that emerged in Focus Group I, three recur in Focus Group II: students' definitions of positive intergroup relationships, the conditions and factors that support students in developing positive contact, and the role of narrative. In the following section, these three themes will be discussed as they emerged in the second round of focus groups. Distinctions between the experiences of Whites and Students of Color will again be highlighted.

Focus Group II (FG II) reflected more of a spirit of collaboration, with students displaying more interest in building friendships and understanding the experiences of their peers who were members of different racial groups. There was also evidence of considerable progress in their ability to talk with each other about issues of race and ethnicity. Caucus groups were not used in this focus group and unless otherwise indicated, students' responses to the questions (Appendix E) took place in the focus group discussion, which is identified as FG II.

There were two new participants in FG II, but the demographics were similar to FG I. The demographics for FG II included seven Students of Color and seven White students (see Table 3). Among the White participants, there was one man and of the six women, three of them identified as Jewish. The remaining White students did not identify ethnically. The participants who were Students of Color came from diverse

backgrounds: a Latino man, who identified as Puerto Rican; a Black Muslim woman; two Ethiopian men; one Haitian American man; a woman who identified as multiracial – Chinese, Hawaiian and White; and a biracial woman who is African American and Sicilian.

Table 3 – Focus Group II Participant Demographics

Name	Sex	Race/Ethnicity	Age
Adam	Male	Ethiopian-American	19
Ava	Female	Black	40
David	Male	Ethiopian	21
RJ	Male	Black Haitian	N/R
Karima	Female	Asian/Native Hawaiian/White	20
Orlando	Male	Puerto Rican	19
Ranita	Female	Sicilian/African American	20
Diana	Female	White	21
Carla	Female	White/Jewish	19
Betsy	Female	White	22
Elisa	Female	White/Jewish	21
Eve	Female	White	21
Shira	Female	White/Jewish	19
Gary	Male	White/German	21

<u>Theme #1: Students' Definition of Positive Intergroup Relationship</u>

In Focus Group I, White students appeared reluctant to talk about issues of race and ethnicity, stating it was not an important issue to discuss in their friendships with people from different racial and ethnic groups. They also lacked a specific language to disentangle racial and ethnic differences. However, in FG II when several of them revisited their definition of a positive intergroup relationship, they appeared more at ease and competent in discussing the issues in a multiracial and multiethnic group. This shift in the students' behavior was significant as they attempted to have dialogues with each other and needed less guidance from the facilitator.

In FG I, Carla had talked about having several friends who were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds but was uncomfortable discussing her experiences with the group. She appeared more confident in her response in FG II, in which she reconsidered the important elements of a positive intergroup relationship, "Well, in any friendship you have to have something in common – common interests, and communication in all areas, to be able to communicate to them about feelings on everything as well as on the issue of the differences between races." Carla's response was probed further: "So, you think it is important to talk about that, the racial or ethnic difference?" And she responded: "Yeah, definitely. [She pauses] Yeah, learning the difference between the two, racially and ethnically, their background is important."

A discussion about the value of acknowledging the racial and ethnic identities of one another reemerged. In FG I, Students of Color identified their own racial and ethnic identity as creating an obstacle in their intergroup friendships with Whites. They reported feeling "invisible" in their friendships with Whites because of the lack of

acknowledgment of the racial and ethnic differences. A similar opinion was revealed in FG II. The following excerpts were part of a discussion between two Students of Color, who had different perspectives about the value of discussing identity in the context of an intergroup friendship. RJ talked about the issue as he did in FG I. He felt strongly that discussing race issues immediately in a friendship creates a "barrier:"

> I would say that the person needs to accept you for who you are first and then you can think about the difference – but the person has to see you as a person and then you can deal with the other issues. But if they just see you as a Black person or a White person first, it's going to be hard to be friends 'cause there is that barrier.

Karima, who was multiracial, felt strongly about the issue of acknowledging a person's identity and viewed it as an important aspect of a positive intergroup friendship. She disagreed with RJ, "But how can they not see that? How do you skip that?" RJ replied, "I can skip it – I'll see people personality-wise and I can just talk to them." Karima responds, "But to me, that is the person. That's them, it's part of them. It's like ignoring them."

Racial identity was clearly a salient issue for this woman. As a Woman of color, she wanted people to acknowledge that aspect of her and she felt it was important to reciprocate this in her friendships as well. However, it was not clear if she was including White people when she talked about this issue. Only one Student of Color, Ranita, mentioned the issue of identity concerning her interactions with Whites, but admitted she didn't think about it often:

> I guess it's just easier for me to not pay attention to that and to just sort of look past that because all I've ever been for the most part is with White people…so it's an everyday average thing, it's not something I really think about. I might ask where they are from out of curiosity…are they Irish or Italian or whatever…

This quote illustrates the distinctions that emerged for the participants concerning the issue of identity for Whites and Students of Color when developing intergroup friendships. Most Students of Color reported it was important in their friendships with Whites that their racial or ethnic identity was not "ignored" or "invisible." This perspective had not changed since FG I, although more Students of Color gave their opinion in FG II. In contrast, Whites spoke about feeling more comfortable having the discussion with their friends from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and appeared less resistant to using specific language to describe the identities of their friends who were not White.

Theme #2: Facilitating Conditions and Factors that Support Students in Developing Positive Intergroup Relationships

In Focus Group I, students identified and described factors they felt supported their ability to develop positive intergroup relationships. Their responses included aspects of the classroom environment and finding common ground across racial and ethnic differences. In FG II, students again emphasized factors in the classroom environment as well as the benefits of student interaction in the classroom. Participants also gave examples of what inspired them to build intergroup relationships and White students, particularly, talked about viewing these relationships as a way to work against racism.

Supporting Factors in the Classroom Environment

Participants in FG II identified student interaction and the role of the instructor as primary supporting factors for developing positive intergroup contact. In FG I,

participants commented on the benefits of the diverse classroom population, but there was limited cross-racial and cross-ethnic interaction among the students in the class. In contrast, FG II revealed increased student interaction, in the classroom and on campus, and respondents spoke positively about their experiences, particularly the value of learning from each other. This outcome was reported by White students and Students of Color.

Ava, who identifies as a Black Muslim, is an older woman who was initially apprehensive about entering the classroom after many years of not being a student. She appreciated the goal of student interaction in the class - "Well, socially, I found that the way she gears the class is to get everybody to really know other people. That's good – it makes you feel more comfortable."

Other students spoke emphatically about the impact of increased student interaction in the classroom. These participants talked about being in large classrooms at the University, where there are few, if any, opportunities to meet other members of the class. Orlando, who is Puerto Rican, appreciated the social aspect of interacting with his peers:

> I think socially, it's different [in this class]. For instance… at least at the University it's like I haven't really known anybody, and I have never really met anybody [in a class] other than, help me out with this problem, like in math or something like that. I know most of the class pretty much. I know everybody's face and I pretty much know everybody's name. I hadn't had that experience at the University. That's neat.

I probed Orlando further on his comments - "Did you feel like you made more of an effort at doing that, [Orlando]? Or was that just something that happened?" He responds "It just happened. You got to interact, you got to talk…there's a lot more interaction so

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that forces you to know that person and their viewpoint and then you can respond to that."

Another student talked about how increased student interaction allowed her to learn from her classmates:

> I think a big part of this class was getting to know each other and so it was encouraged more than in other classes 'cause in other classes I think it's more about *what* we are being taught and in this class the point was that we learned so much from *each other*.

RJ, an engineering student, feels that he benefits from the ability to talk with his classmates in this course, which he says doesn't happen in engineering courses. "This is also a longer class, three hours, so you have the chance to talk and say something. So people learn more from other people."

Adam appreciated the relaxed classroom atmosphere, which allowed more students to feel comfortable participating. "I like the family type atmosphere we have. It's easier to talk in class and easier to participate when you know everyone and everyone's sharing while you are sharing."

A few students shared examples of how interaction developed in the classroom resulted in friendships that continue to flourish outside of the class. Betsy, a White student, talks about becoming friends with Karima, who identifies as multiracial. This friendship started when they met in the course:

> I became friends with Karima – and I think it is because she is in my aerobics class too. So then I saw her twice during the week. I remember one class I missed and I asked her for the homework and then we just started…if she needed the homework or I did she would call me. That was how my friendship built up with her.

Two of the students in the focus group identified as having Ethiopian heritage. They met in the class and occasionally spent time together on campus. I asked David, who had

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resided in the United States for about five years, to talk about his friendship with Adam. He was hesitant to speak because of a language barrier but gave some information, "Oh yeah, we get together…just to hang out. He invited me to his house over Easter – but I had something to do here."

Orlando spends a lot of time at the Campus Center because he lives off-campus and enjoys seeing classmates there, "I think I have gotten to know a lot of people, whoever goes to the Campus Center. Diana is down there, I see Ranita a lot, RJ is down there. Who else? Rachel, Adam is down there."

Most of the participants remarked about the instructor's effectiveness and the impact she had on their learning experience. They described her approach as student-centered, and felt she valued their input. Adam commented on the value of the course content and the instructor's individual attention to his work:

> I really like the heterosexism unit we did and the last one we did, ableism? I think I learned more dealing with those two than anything else 'cause I really didn't see what she meant about technology fixing hearing or blindness or something like that. And I kind of thought 'Why not?' and I raised my hand and asked about it in class and she wrote me a three page thing in my journal and she was explaining how my ideology was ableist and I didn't take any offense to it 'cause I asked her to tell me what she thought about it. I kind of thought that was one of the big things I learned in class. And I never forgot that.

Betsy appreciated the instructor's willingness to hear students' opinions:

> I think I liked it because we had a lot of say in the class, compared to other classes. It seems like she really values our opinions and we really get a chance to voice what we feel and how we think about things. When I brought my sister in…I really liked how she integrated my sister and let her go in the group. That's great, she's a senior in high school and that's an opportune time for her to learn.

In FG II, participants had the opportunity to reflect on their individual learning in the course, particularly as it related to their ability to have positive intergroup contact. They were asked to discuss any stereotypes they were rethinking as a result of their

experiences in the course. Participants' responses included learning information about other forms of oppression that were part of the course content. David, who has been in the United States for only five years, talks about learning new information that he never heard about in his country of origin, Ethiopia:

> I learned a lot of new things in this class, about different kinds of groups. Most of the stuff we were talking about was new for me. It was a good experience…the transgender issue was new for me. I had kind of a negative stereotype about it but now I know a lot more.

Orlando also felt he had learned new information about groups that he did not have prior experience with:

> The one we are doing right now, the disability issue, is one that kind of shattered a lot…it enlightened me on some things I don't always think about. Jewish oppression, definitely, because I don't see that one at all and it's like, I am so naïve about it, that it must not exist that much out there.

Elisa, who identifies as Jewish, entered this course with previous training and education on issues of diversity. However, she felt that hearing from her classmates who were members of other identity groups enhanced her understanding of their experiences with oppression. "But now I understand people better, 'cause now I understand the history and I read articles from other voices. It's pretty cool to understand the marginalized group experience."

Overall, students agreed that the classroom environment facilitated their learning and ability to develop positive interaction across racial and ethnic lines. This participant sums up her experience in the course - "I think academically, I learn better in environments where you talk and have communication in the class. Looking back, I just felt like the whole learning environment was a good one – a great one."

In FG I, students emphasized the value of learning new information about each other's racial and ethnic differences. This was described as a primary factor in their ability to develop friendships with each other. During the second class session, the instructor organized small collaborative groups, with the intention of enhancing students' learning and their ability to interact with each other. However, when FG I convened, participants were not able to report on their experiences due to the lack of time spent in these groups. In FG II, most participants reported that the small groups were effective in regards to social interaction, but responses varied regarding the positive impact of this approach on students' learning.

Several students felt that the small collaborative groups "were a waste of time." These students were interested in hearing more factual information from the instructor and felt that additional lectures would be a "better use of time." All of the students, however, agreed that the small groups benefited them socially because they were able to talk with each other every week, and this created a sense of familiarity. However, according to most of the participants in FG II, discussions in the small groups did not focus on the assignment the instructor had given. Elisa explains what happened in her group:

> Sometimes in our group we would really get off the subject because we knew that other people would say whatever the right answer was. So we would have our own discussion. They would pertain – it wasn't just about where did you get your shirt – we would get really political and we would go off the wall. We could never begin to report back. That's honestly what happened, sorry.

Adam talked about his small group, which also had difficulty focusing on assigned tasks. "I don't know...I liked the people in my small group but I just didn't like

– we really didn't get work done. We kind of just talked…[group laughs]. So they weren't really effective."

Carla also feels the small groups were not productive:

> I don't think it was so effective. I enjoyed speaking to the people in my small group and I liked the people in my group. On the whole, I don't think I learned as much in the small groups as I did from the big discussions we were having or [instructor] bringing up key things.

In the small groups, students had the opportunity to learn more about each other's racial and ethnic differences and experiences. For this reason, Betsy valued the small group experience:

> I like this class. One of the things that smaller groups helped with because you got to know people on a more personal level. Being able to interact with people you hadn't talked to before and having the opportunity to get into the smaller groups helped.

Other Factors That Motivate Students to Develop Positive Intergroup Relations

As discussed in the findings for FG I, students began to identify factors that have a more personal impact on their desire to build intergroup relationships. Part of this process was accomplished through narrative. In Focus Group II, students spoke at length about what motivates them to develop positive intergroup relations. Participants discussed the type of support they need from each other, as well as the information and skills to build positive intergroup relationships. However, there was more emphasis on the internal process that led them to feel personally motivated to have friendships with others from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. A notable finding was how many White students began to view intergroup relationships as an approach to interrupting racism.

It became evident through the discussion in FG II that most students needed a compelling reason to interact across racial and ethnic difference. It was also apparent in FG II that as students began to develop more self-awareness about issues of race and race relations, they were able to identify more of the motivational factors for increasing contact with racially different people. This finding proves to be more predominant among the White participants.

Participants discussed conditions that supported their ability to develop positive intergroup relationships, which are organized in two categories. The first, which is more evident in FG I, can be identified as structural factors that included the classroom environment and the role of the instructor. According to most of the students, these elements, as they described them, need to exist in order for students to develop positive intergroup contact in the classroom.

In FG II, participants told in-depth stories and gave examples of supporting factors that revealed a level of personal connection that was not evident in FG I. This second category of facilitating conditions involved personal investment in the content and reflection on the individual's learning experience in the classroom. The findings revealed that students needed to feel personally motivated to build intergroup contact. The fundamental question most students were asking within the responses to the questions in FG II was "What is the intrinsic value of building intergroup relationships with others from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds?" Several students were able to explore this question and discussed their own experiences of building these types of friendships.

For a few of the participants, this type of learning experience was not new for them. They had previously been involved in diversity workshops or other courses related

to the content in this course. However, they were still able to identify the value of participating in this diverse classroom.

Elisa, who identifies as Jewish, has taken other diversity-related courses, but feels that this course has motivated her to think more about what she can do to interrupt oppressive incidents. "I have taken a lot of courses and I am an RA [resident assistant] so we have had a lot of training and it is repetitive but it's good because it reinforces…it goes more in depth so I learn more about why I am stopping things or why the oppression exists." Betsy also felt that this class reaffirmed her awareness of race issues:

> For me personally, before this class, I felt that way anyway. I already had friends of different [races]…it just reinforced everything I already felt. I was already agreeing with everything that [instructor] was teaching. It just felt built upon everything I already felt.

This student felt motivated to build positive intergroup relations because she was more familiar with the subject matter and the process of talking about issues of race. The more often she engaged in this type of discussion, the more she was able to reflect on and recognize the value of her participation in the process.

During the focus group, I asked the participants "Are positive intergroup relationships a form of social change?" The following are examples of several student responses. Betsy believes that education helps to build intergroup relationships, "I think you are definitely breaking down the barriers. Definitely. The more open you are to other people…relationships are the best place to start. Education is a big thing. But I think it definitely breaks down the barriers."

Orlando also emphasized the importance of education, "I think building friendships and interracial relationships is educating yourself anyway because there is more conversation about this or that…you are more educated."

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In FG II, participants reflected on the value of the course. They began to see how educating themselves about race issues and having contact with people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds helps to interrupt racist attitudes and behaviors.

Betsy, who has friendships with students from other racial groups, talked about what motivates her to take a stand when she witnesses a racist act:

> I think when you become friends with [people from] different races and religions you are more apt to defend them. You get angry more and you want to fight it more because you have that close bond with someone and you hate that it exists. I think that is really hard.

This sentiment was discussed a number of times in FG II. White students agreed that their experiences in the course motivated them to consider interrupting an inappropriate comment or action. Eve entered the course with very little knowledge of or experience with diversity issues. She initially described herself as "shy and naïve." Her response revealed a considerable shift in her thinking and willingness to take a stand, "I learned a lot – enough that if someone were to say something or do something that I would say something. In my small group I was able to ask so many questions, about so many things…it was good for me."

White participants in FG II particularly showed an enhanced ability to think critically about issues of race in relationship to their own racial identity. I asked Eve if her relationships with other students from different social groups impacted her ability to interrupt an incident, as Betsy described. She agreed, "I think when you put it in that context, I think that is definitely true. Oh definitely!" This example illustrates the shift in understanding that is critical for students to have if they are going to truly embrace an analysis of racism and how it impacts their ability to build relationships across racial and ethnic differences.

Orlando was one of the few Students of Color who described how the course encouraged him to consider his role in social change. He states that as a business owner, he needs to be sensitive to differences:

> This all relates to my job and the biggest part of it was the LD [learning disabled] part. I have to figure out how to explain things in a way that people can understand. As a teacher, how can I change the way I teach people? How can I be sensitive to it?

Respondents gave insightful answers in this focus group, speaking from a personal perspective instead of discussing their external observations, as was more evident in FG I. This in-depth response to questions in FG II was apparent with several White students, who were experiencing notable changes in their awareness and understanding of race and ethnic issues. Students of Color also discussed personal experiences and feelings about the issues raised in the group, but appeared to have fewer shifts in the depth of their understanding of the issues discussed. The level of trust and safety in the group increased over the course of the semester, resulting in a higher level of personal disclosure. This finding is explored further in the next theme, the role of narrative story telling, which continues to be a strong presence throughout the duration of FG II.

Theme #3: The Role of Narrative: How Students Make Meaning of Their Experiences

In FG I, personal story-telling allowed students to begin sharing information about themselves but it also impacted the development of the group by setting a precedent concerning the level of risk-taking. Students were not yet ready to make themselves vulnerable with each other, resulting in fewer examples of positive intergroup contact. In contrast, FG II illustrated greater emphasis on personal narrative, as students

spoke more extensively about their feelings and thoughts regarding experiences with cross-racial or cross-ethnic interactions. As a result, there was an increased sense of connection among the participants in FG II, and they carried on a dialogue with little assistance from the facilitator.

Diana had developed a friendship with RJ during the semester. At other points during the focus groups, she explained that they discussed race issues frequently in their friendship. She disclosed this story after asking RJ, who was in the group, if he approved:

> He [RJ] wanted to walk up to Sylvan for something and immediately it started pouring rain out and we had one umbrella. So we both were under the umbrella and he had his arm around me and we felt weird. We knew everyone that walked by was like 'Oh, look at them.' So I was trying to hold the umbrella down so they wouldn't look at me and we laughed because we looked like a mixed couple. It was weird. And he asked me 'If someone asked you if you'd walk down the street with a Black man would you feel weird?' and I said 'I'd say no' and I still say no – but I did - I felt uncomfortable.

This excerpt illustrates the value of narrative on a few different points. Diana was one of the few White participants who exhibited an ability to explore internal feelings and observations of 'self' in relationship to race and ethnic issues. Her story was a powerful example of an effort to understand her role inside a particular experience, while acknowledging her discomfort with the situation. This high-risk disclosure in a racially mixed group increased Diana's level of vulnerability in the group but also appeared to prompt other students to share internal observations of themselves. One other point to consider regarding this excerpt is the development of the friendship between Diana and RJ. Their decision to discuss race issues in their friendship in an honest and open manner was a strong model for other students in the group.

The following excerpts were part of a discussion that the students initiated, involving their experiences of meeting and interacting with students from different racial and ethnic groups. It is a strong example of how narrative, in this context, creates an opportunity for students to help each other understand certain aspects of the interpersonal dynamics of race by sharing their own lived experiences.

Ava, who was an older Black Muslim woman, discussed an experience about interacting with a White woman from Ireland:

> I went to the Graduate Center and there was a woman from Ireland who works there. We hit it off and we just sat down and talked for about forty-five minutes. And I can't do that with all White people. She asked me where I was from – she thought I was from a different country. Everyone asks me what country I'm from. And I say 'Right here!' [Laughter] We hit it off really good and it's good to be able to do that but I can understand how she feels because I feel that anxiety sometimes with other people…not just White people but from Black people too.

The conveying of this participant's story is another example of how the risk level was raised in the group when one student described a story that disclosed personal fears about interacting with someone from a different racial or ethnic group. It was important for the White students to hear this particular narrative from a Black woman, who experienced the same anxiety they may have felt when interacting with students who were members of different racial and ethnic groups.

Adam expressed his thoughts about interacting with people from international locations, who were also members of different racial and ethnic groups:

> My parents are from Ethiopia and I kind of know how people – people who aren't from America kind of think alike. They don't have that Black/White racist mentality that you do when you grow up here. And when they come here, it's 'I'm Ethiopian and everyone else is American'…they don't grown up with the division.

Ava responded with another example:

> Well, one girl, she's German and French and we started working at our job at the same time and when we met each other we just hit it off real good and we've been friends for eighteen years. She didn't make me feel uncomfortable and I probably didn't make her feel that way either. And we had a lot of things in common.

RJ continues the discussion with an honest statement about friendships with several White people:

> Me personally, I can feel it if someone doesn't want to be my friend. I just feel it…I just *feel* it. If that person doesn't want to be my friend, whatever. It could be because of race…it someone doesn't want to be my friend because I am Black, I can feel it and I'm not going to be surprised.

This style of discussion dominated the latter half of FG II and is evidence of the increased level of trust and group cohesion among the participants. In response to RJ, Carla, a White student, discussed similar feelings about her efforts to interact with Students of Color. "Well, on the other side, I feel the same way sometimes. I've been in a couple of situations where I felt like someone doesn't want to be friends with me because of my color. "

Carla's response, as she has shown in other examples, lacked an understanding of how her experience as a White person has specific distinctions in comparison to RJ's statement about his perspective as a Black man. She was unable to step back from her White experience and hear and understand the reality of her peers from other racial groups, without feeling the need to defend her experience. Yet, the group is able to hear her thoughts and to a certain extent, empathize with her struggle. A tone of collaboration has been set in the group at this point, and participants are able to listen to each other, trusting the intention of their efforts towards developing positive intergroup relationships.

Throughout FG II, there is much evidence pointing to the value of narrative in the context of learning and deconstructing experiences with racial and ethnic issues. It is clear that students need an opportunity to tell their stories and be heard, as it legitimizes their experiences and allows them to begin making sense of their lives. The tone of collaboration that was evident throughout FG II was developed further because of the dialogue that took place among the students.

Summary of Focus Group Data Sets

This chapter presented the focus group data, which represents the participants' perspectives on and experiences with building intergroup relationships. Several significant themes emerged from each of the focus groups. The following is a synthesis of the themes from each focus group.

Five themes emerged in Focus Group I:

- Students' definitions of the term "positive intergroup relationship"

- Impact of early formative socialization process upon positive intergroup friendships

- Perceptions of the facilitating conditions and factors which support the development of positive intergroup relationships in the classroom

- Perceptions of the obstacles that prevent or make it difficult to develop positive intergroup relationships in the classroom

- The role of narrative as a way to make meaning of one's experience.

Three of these themes were evident in Focus Group II:

- Students' definitions of the term "positive intergroup relationship"

- The conditions and factors that support students in developing positive contact

- The role of narrative as a way to make meaning of one's experiences.

These thematic areas provide a framework to examine the students' understanding of positive intergroup relationships. Chapter Five will discuss specific answers to the original research questions and consider the other supplemental data sets – fieldnotes, student journals and final reflective paper – as they confirm or contradict the focus group findings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The research questions will structure the analysis in this chapter, with the focus

group findings as the primary data source. Additional data sets, which include my

fieldnotes, student journal entries, and a final reflective written assignment, will be

considered as they confirm or contradict the results that emerged from the focus group

data. Changes in students' understanding and behaviors regarding intergroup

relationships between Focus Group I and Focus Group II will be highlighted as they

appeared in the findings.

This study has one major research question, with a set of minor questions that

focus on specific aspects of the study.

Major Research Question

What conditions and factors facilitate positive intergroup relationships between college

students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, in a classroom where the course

content is focused on diversity awareness? In this course, social relationships are a

primary but not an exclusive goal and there are students in the class who are members of

either a dominant or subordinate racial group.

Subquestions:

1. What is the definition of a positive intergroup relationship, from the students'

   perspective?

2. What are the facilitating conditions and/or factors that enable students to develop positive intergroup contact?

3. What are the obstacles that hinder intergroup relations?

4. What knowledge and/or skills do students need to create positive intergroup relations?

5. Do collaborative learning strategies in the classroom setting support positive intergroup contact?

Question #1: What is the Definition of a Positive Intergroup Relationship from the Students' Perspective?

The purpose of this research question was to determine the various ways in which participants defined the term "positive intergroup relationship" which was the foundation of the focus group discussion. It was also important to begin understanding the participants' perspectives on their prior experiences in friendships with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. This research question was the first one posed to the participants in both Focus Group discussions and both discussions probed the valued qualities of "friendship." When the question was given to the group, I also referred to the term friendship knowing they were more likely to be familiar with that word than with the term "positive intergroup relationship." The social psychology literature on intergroup relations offers general and abstract definitions of an "intergroup relationship," and several of these descriptions are discussed in Chapter Two. My intention with this research question was to ground the actual experiences of the

participants within this literature. Specific references to the topic of friendship did not emerge in the other sources of data.

In Focus Group I, most of the students who responded to this question did not make references to racial or ethnic identity when describing their experiences of a "positive intergroup relationship" in the caucus groups or in the focus group discussion. This was most notable with White students but a few Students of Color tended not to use any language that might refer to race or ethnicity. The experience of discussing the issue of race relations in a racially and ethnically diverse group was an unfamiliar experience for all of these students, and most of the respondents appeared cautious in their choice of language to describe their experiences.

Most of the White students in Focus Group I conveyed a level of discomfort in talking about or noticing the different racial identities of people they have come into contact with. I attributed this primarily to their concern of being perceived "racist" if they even noticed racial or ethnic difference. However, I also wondered about their need to not feel uncomfortable about the tension that can be created because of these potentially difficult situations. Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997) discusses this dimension of White students' experiences with racism in relationship to Janet Helms' White identity development model (1990). Helms describes the stage of "disintegration" for Whites who begin to recognize the negative impact of racism on the lives of People of Color and their own lives as Whites. As a result of this new awareness and "cognitive dissonance," Whites will often "psychologically or physically withdraw from it" (Tatum, 1997, p. 98). Several of these White students reported experiences that may have influenced their reluctance to talk about identity differences also because of the potential for conflict with

people who are members of those racially targeted groups. In fact, throughout Focus Group I, White participants' responses communicated their sense of fear that those who are racially or ethnically different may not accept them as Whites and as a result, they were tentative when discussing their experiences with race or ethnicity. It seemed that a few White students believed they were engaging in anti-racist behavior if they didn't acknowledge the differences or the issues. For most of the White students, it was important that the Students of Color in the group not view them as racist.

Most of the Students of Color, as well, were unfamiliar with having this discussion in a racially and ethnically diverse group. They exhibited careful word choice and articulation of their responses. There was little evidence of conflict between White students and Students of Color in FG I and it appeared to me that the participants were making a conscious effort not to offend each other.

Overall, most respondents used similar terms when describing elements of a positive intergroup relationship. Several White students and Students of Color identified trust as a valued element of friendship. However, Students of Color responses reflected a fear of betrayal within their emphasis on trust. This strong response, quoted earlier from Ranita implies that she has felt mistreated in past friendships:

> Well, for me, they have to be trustworthy. I think that's the major thing...as long as I trust them with something personal and they don't treat me like garbage! You can't trust people who treat you like garbage.

Although Ranita never talks about a specific experience in which she felt betrayed, this response was strong enough to suggest that she might have had past negative experiences. The assumption that her fear of betrayal is based on difficult interactions with Whites is supported by reports from other Students of Color concerning negative experiences with

Whites at different times in their lives. With these experiences in mind, Students of Color appear to have more at stake when they are developing friendships, particularly with Whites, and so it is not surprising these respondents reported trust as a primary characteristic of friendship. A few Students of Color also emphasized the importance of loyalty in a friendship and stated they could trust someone if they were assured of that person's loyalty to them.

The use of the word *trust* by Students of Color also emerged during the second class session, as observed in the fieldnotes. During a discussion about values, Billy, a Latino male, identified trust as an important quality in his relationships with people. He states earnestly, "A person has to earn trust." Orlando, another Latino, who referred to similar qualities in the focus group discussion, nodded his head in agreement. The importance of the presence of trust in relationships with others was clearly a salient issue for several Students of Color.

In contrast, White respondents in the focus group discussion were less emphatic in their use of the word *trust* and never used the word *loyalty* to describe valued aspects of friendship. It did not appear that trust was a prominent element of friendship for them, possibly because their familiar, homogeneous experience of friendship has allowed them the privilege of assuming that a certain level of trust already exists. Also, in their friendships with other Whites, these students do not face the same challenges of developing or betraying a sense of trust, as compared to a friendship with someone from a different racial or ethnic group. As a result, in friendships with People of Color, Whites benefit from the privilege of having less at stake if the person doesn't trust them and so

the existence of trust initially in the friendship is not a priority, as suggested in their responses.

While Students of Color identified loyalty and trust as important qualities of friendship, Whites students were discussing the notion of *common ground* as a valued element of their friendships. It became evident that it was critical for Whites to feel accepted by Students of Color and finding common ground was one approach to creating that sense of acceptance. Even more apparent from their responses was how most of the White participants had what could be described as an ethnocentric perspective on common ground. One interpretation of their White-centered perspective is the notion that "I can only be with others who are like myself or whom I am comfortable with." Having lived in predominantly White neighborhoods, many Whites had few experiences of building friendships with peers from different racial or ethnic groups and as a result, it was not an opportunity they pursued eagerly or with much confidence. Also, it did not occur to them that there is value in having friends who are different and who have ideas or values unlike their own.

Two of the White students, in particular, had responses in the focus group that reflected this White-centered perspective. Both of these participants struggled to describe what they valued in their friendships, as evidenced in Chapter Four by the contradictions inherent in their original responses. An example of this is illustrated by one of the participants, Carla. She initially emphasized that "There needs to be some common ideas" but then hesitated and said, "Well, actually, I have friends who have very different ideas and that works too." She began to consider the possibility that a friendship could be

built on differences as well, but still focused on her need to feel accepted and comfortable, specifically in interactions with Students of Color.

What was interesting about Carla's responses in FG I was her lack of consideration of a perspective or experience other than her own. For example, feeling comfortable and accepted on predominantly White campuses is a privilege not afforded Students of Color (Bourne, 1995), who reported in this study that most initial interactions with Whites were not comfortable because they could not assume they were accepted. Carla's pattern of White-centered thinking was noticeable among most of the White students throughout FG I, and will be discussed further along in this chapter, as it is relevant to other findings.

By the time they participated in the second focus group (FG II), there was a considerable shift in how participants, particularly Whites, talked about their understanding of a positive intergroup relationship. Most of the White students gave responses that reflected a deeper understanding of the value of exploring differences in identity between themselves and their friends. Students of Color, on the other hand, focused on the issue of "feeling invisible" and how that affected their friendships with Whites. They reported it was important in friendships with White students that their racial or ethnic identity not be ignored or invisible. This perspective had not changed since FG I, and several Students of Color spoke about this issue again in FG II. In contrast, Whites spoke about feeling more comfortable having discussions concerning racial difference with their friends from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and appeared less uncomfortable using specific language to describe the identities of their friends who were not White.

It was evident that the participants' increased ability to interact with one another in FG II was consistent with the new insights they had in their thinking about intergroup relationships. Most of the students showed more ease in their interactions with each other during FG II. In fact, a productive dialogue took place, with the participants talking *to* each other instead of focusing upon the questions posed by the facilitator, as they had in FG I. This observation led me to consider the impact of the course and other factors that contributed to this shift in participants' responses and behavior. These factors will be discussed in the next section.

Question #2: What are the Facilitating Conditions and/or Factors that Enable Students to Develop Positive Intergroup Contact?

This research question emerged as a result of the critique I developed in response to studying Gordon Allport's theory of contact hypothesis (1954), prior to conducting the research for this study. Allport suggests three conditions that must be present in order to reduce prejudice, and to improve positive intergroup contact:

1) cooperation among members of the group regarding a common goal;

2) support for the contact situation from an authority figure;

3) equal status of members within the confines of the contact situation.

With specific questions in mind regarding these conditions presented in Allport's contact hypothesis, I was interested in the participants' perspectives regarding the factors that supported their ability to develop positive intergroup contact.

Participants in both rounds of the focus groups (FG I and FG II) reported a number of conditions and factors that supported their ability to build positive intergroup relationships. In Chapter 4, these factors are organized into the following categories:

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learning and sharing information about each other's racial and ethnic differences; finding common ground, and specific factors present in the classroom environment. An unexpected finding described what students identified as motivational factors for building intergroup relationships. In the discussion that follows, I use the categories presented above as a structure for presenting the findings for this research question. Data from the student journals, final paper responses and the fieldnotes confirm several of the findings and will be inserted when appropriate.

Learning New Information about Racial and Ethnic Differences

Although most of the respondents who shared stories of gaining new information about different racial and ethnic identities felt that it was a positive experience, a subtle difference emerged in how Whites and Students of Color valued this type of experience.

Several White participants in the focus group reported they did not discuss race or ethnicity with their friends who were not White, and those who did clearly articulated the significant impact of learning about these differences. These students reported that it supported their ability to build intergroup relationships for a number of reasons. Discussing issues of racial and ethnic identity allowed them the opportunity to learn about the person they were interacting with and created a sense of familiarity with them. Feeling comfortable appeared to be a critical need for White students in developing contact with Students of Color and having these conversations also created a sense of safety for Whites. If a White student has a positive interaction with a Student of Color, it is likely that the student will attempt to develop relationships with other Students of Color because she will feel increasingly confident in her ability to do this.

Conversely, Students of Color did not report learning new or valuable information in their interactions with Whites. Having been raised in a White-centered society, we can assume that Students of Color already have a great deal of information about White people and White culture. Their responses in the focus group involved learning about other People of Color or individuals from international locations, not White people. This finding left me with questions about the reciprocal value of intergroup relationships for Students of Color with White students and whether or not it was valuable for Students of Color to build positive intergroup relationships with Whites as an approach to combating racism. Students of Color valued the subject matter and information provided by the diversity course more than the content of the discussions with White students. This finding was also evident in the student journal entries and the final reflective paper, where students had the opportunity to describe their experiences in the classroom and the small collaborative groups they worked in.

The data collected from the student journals and final reflective written assignments confirmed that although most students strongly agreed on the value of learning information about different racial and ethnic groups, the manner of gathering the information differed for Whites and Students of Color. Many White participants described a relational approach, which gave them the opportunity to talk about personal experiences. The following response to the question "What did your small group experience teach you?" for the final reflective paper confirms the value of building relationships for this White student. Gary struggled with his multiple privileged identities throughout the semester, particularly his White racial identity:

As a White in a small group that contained two Blacks, I was at first very soft spoken about my feelings, I was 'walking on eggshells.' Throughout the semester I was able to become closer to my entire group. When this happened, I was able to ask more questions and learn more about the lives and feelings of the Blacks in my group. This is something that I will be forever in debt to this class for.

Most of the White participants gave similar responses in their journals and final reflective papers, referring to the value of interacting in a diverse classroom population and in the small groups.

Several Students of Color, on the other hand, reported appreciating the content-driven aspect of the curriculum, which provided them with historical information and factual accounts. This content, specifically when it focused on race and ethnicity, was valuable for Students of Color as it validated their experiences of racial discrimination and provided them with new insights about their own experiences as People of Color. This source of information included the reading assignments and the instructor's lectures. As suggested in the findings from the focus groups, Students of Color were less focused on learning new information about their White peers and more interested in discussing their interethnic perspectives on an issue of concern to Students of Color, particularly concerning race and ethnicity. Most of the Students of Color reported enjoying the high level of contact with other members of the class. However, many of the responses from several Students of Color also suggested that building relationships with Whites was not a primary goal for them.

Finding Common Ground across Racial and Ethnic Differences

Learning and sharing about individual racial and ethnic differences is an initial stage to developing common ground among students from diverse backgrounds. The following discussion illustrates another supporting factor, which is the impact of common

ground on students' ability to build positive relationships with each other across racial and ethnic difference. Findings for this discussion are primarily from the focus groups, with additional input from the fieldnotes.

Participants in the focus groups reported experiences of interacting with students from diverse racial and ethnic groups, which initiated an opportunity for establishing common ground. For White students and Students of Color, these opportunities included more informal contexts, such as participating on a sports team and attending student cultural events on campus. However, the Goodell student takeover was clearly a critical event for students, particularly Whites, because it created a formalized although unexpected opportunity for the students to develop common ground in a number of different ways.

The student protest at Goodell was an opportunity for students to work together on issues that effected them across racial and other identity groups. However, White students and Students of Color reported different perspectives regarding how they were affected by this campus event. Many of the White students described what could be identified as "critical turning points." These were experiences that posed a contradiction to their previously White-centered experience. As a result, there was a substantial influence on their understanding and thinking about their involvement as White people in cross-race and cross-ethnic interactions. For example, Shira discussed specific ways she challenged herself to work on her racist beliefs and behaviors. As a result, her awareness of her White identity increased and she was able to better understand the experiences of her peers from different racial and ethnic groups. Overall, participating in the Goodell student takeover had many positive outcomes for Whites, including an increased sense of

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confidence in developing positive contact with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Students of Color reported a notably different perspective on their involvement. Those Students of Color in the study who were involved with the protest did not report experiencing similar benefits to Whites as a result of the intergroup contact that took place at Goodell. The opportunity for finding common ground with White students was not a primary goal or outcome. In fact, the Student of Color organizers, two of whom were participants in this study, reportedly were more concerned with the perception on campus that Students of Color were the initiators of the protest. This assumption preoccupied these students, who wanted the protest to be seen as a campus-wide issue, involving all students across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Their outward frustration was a culmination of the numerous instances when their issues have not been seen as legitimate because of the perception on campus that Students of Color often "make it a race issue." These students were more interested in institutional change as a desired outcome from the protest.

The student protest at Goodell is a strong illustration of how common ground can be conceptualized differently across racial and ethnic lines. This example provides important insight for the development of positive intergroup relationships, as it challenges the assumption that all parties involved are seeking a similar goal or outcome in the interaction or establishment of common ground. The findings in this study reveal the asymmetrical nature of how Students of Color and Whites view common ground. The notion of common ground as a factor for developing positive intergroup relationships is clearly an area for future research and consideration.

The Goodell student protest emerged as a critical topic in the classroom, as reflected in the fieldnotes. One entire class session was devoted to attending the protest so the students could offer their support to the core group of organizers. They felt it was important to learn more about the issues being raised. At the next class session, the instructor gave students the opportunity to discuss their experiences and feelings about attending. I observed a considerable shift in the group dynamics during this focus group discussion. There was an increase of intergroup contact among the students in the classroom and the level of risk-taking in the discussion also shifted dramatically. Students took more risks in conveying their experiences and perspectives and this supported their ability to find common ground with each other.

The following excerpts from two female students who spoke in the class discussion about Goodell illustrate these observations. Darlene, a White student, who seldom spoke in class, talked about her fear: "This [the protest] was on my mind every single day and I was there every single day. I told myself not to be fearful of the unknown."

Kris, a woman who identified as first generation Filipino, talked about her struggle with the issues the protest raised for her personally:

> I think I am having an identity struggle. I didn't go back to the rally. For the first time, I really looked at myself as a Person of Color and it is scary. I have only seen myself as an individual. I work for Admissions and I see the other side. People ask [me], 'Are they here as a Person of Color or on merit? I *am* a minority and I see it more now…

Kris raises complex issues in her response, but what is most remarkable is the level of risk-taking she models in the group that set a precedent for other students to disclose more reflective thinking.

These two excerpts and other similar responses in this class discussion raised an important question that I noted in my field notes and continued to refer to: How did the students' experiences with the Goodell event impact their ability to develop positive intergroup contact, specifically with an increased *ability* and *interest* in talking with each other about the issues raised? As the findings reported in Chapter Four, there were many positive outcomes for students as a result of their experiences with participating in the student protest and discussing it in the classroom. Despite the distinctions in how this event affected Whites and Students of Color, it did provide the students with a formalized and intense immersion opportunity to establish common ground. This experience also provided students who were involved directly with the event a shared experience of having a common goal that both groups could work towards. The value of the Goodell student protest, in and out of the classroom, was clearly significant for many of the students and as observed in the fieldnotes, proved to be a major identifiable factor in building positive intergroup relationships, which continued to develop over time.

Supporting Factors in the Classroom Environment

All of the participants in this study reported in the focus groups that certain aspects of the classroom environment and the role of the instructor were substantial factors in supporting their ability to build positive intergroup relationships. These included the opportunity to interact with a diverse student population, and the safe classroom environment.

White students primarily discussed the benefits of having a diverse group of students in the classroom, which gave them opportunities to interact with Students of Color. The goal of interacting with Students of Color continued to be important for

Whites throughout the study. Students of Color spoke about the presence of safety in the classroom environment and how it positively impacted their ability to participate in the classroom. One Student of Color noted the large number of Students of Color in the classroom and appreciated that he was "not the only one," as he talked about "feeling safe" in the classroom.

One of the more interesting observations recorded in the fieldnotes was the consistently high level of participation by Students of Color. This tone was set early in the semester, when students participated in an activity called "The Cultural Origin Activity," in which students are asked to talk about what they know about their personal cultural heritage. As I have observed in other learning settings using this activity, a large number of the Students of Color had more information about their cultural lineage than most of the White students. However, the high level of participation by Students of Color observed during that class session did not decrease and over the course of the semester, I continually noted this finding and considered the possible reasons. The percentage of Students of Color in this classroom in relationship to Whites, 40% to 60%, is not the usual experience of Students of Color on this predominantly White campus (Bourne, 1995). Thus, Students of Color who were members of this classroom reported feeling more comfortable and safe to participate in the classroom environment. The level of participation by the Students of Color can be tied to their high level of satisfaction and performance in the learning environment. According to their journals, most Students of Color were very satisfied with their experience in the classroom and felt that it was a "positive learning opportunity." Their responses suggested they felt acknowledged and

affirmed by the content and the instructor, but did not make specific references to their interactions with White students.

As was noted earlier, Students of Color posed a particular contradiction regarding their interest in contact with other students. They reported that interaction with other students in the classroom was beneficial to them, but made no references to White students when they discussed their experiences. Based on my observations of Whites and Students of Color interacting in the classroom and in the focus groups, there was evidence of interest from the Students of Color in building relationships with Whites. However, initially they appeared tentative and cautious, possibly a result of past negative or painful experiences with other Whites.

The role of the instructor was valuable for several of the students regarding their ability to learn and develop more intergroup contact in the classroom. Respondents in FG II, which took place near the end of the semester, were able to give more specific responses regarding the role of the instructor.

Students consistently gave the instructor positive feedback in their journals about her style in the classroom, which was more student-centered than they had experienced in other classes. They appreciated her concern about what interested them concerning the curriculum and her willingness to include them in decision-making processes, such as the group's decision to attend the Goodell protest. There were no major distinctions reported between the experiences of White students and Students of Color with the instructor. Several White students commented in their journals on the significance of the instructor's encouragement to "lean into your fears" when confronted with the opportunity to develop an intergroup friendship.

The instructor for this course was very committed to creating opportunities in the classroom for the students to interact with each other and her commitment was evident throughout all of the data collected in the study. She played an essential role in the students' experiences in the classroom and created a learning environment that allowed all of the students to explore each other's differences without fear of rejection or accusation.

Motivational Factors that Support Students in Building Positive Intergroup Relationships

This facilitating condition as described by the students emerged in the Focus Group discussions, primarily in FG II, and in the student journals. As the semester progressed, students began to discuss the notion of social change and what motivated them to work against issues of social injustice. The opportunity to build positive intergroup relationships was identified by most students as an approach to working against racism, but the way in which White students and Students of Color discussed their involvement in this approach had distinctions.

In the previous sections, specific conditions were discussed that students identified in FG I as supporting their ability to build positive intergroup relationships. These conditions included learning new information about each other's racial and ethnic differences, opportunities for finding common ground, and aspects of the classroom environment. These factors allow students to become more familiar with each other and with the language of racial and ethnic differences. If these conditions are part of the student's experience in the learning environment, the findings suggest that students are more able and willing to have experiences that motivate them to interact across racial and ethnic difference.

In FG II, most participants exhibited an increased ability to self-reflect. They talked more in-depth about internal factors and personal experiences that motivated them to build positive intergroup relationships. They were interested in exploring ways to feel more personally connected to the issues that were raised in the classroom and in their small groups. The findings suggest that if students feel more connected to the issue, in this case, racism, they will feel motivated to engage in positive intergroup contact, which may also result in a stronger commitment to interrupting racist attitudes and behaviors. Several White students referred to building positive intergroup relationships as an approach to "combating racism." Based on other data in this study, it was not surprising, once again, that Students of Color did not similarly articulate the enthusiasm or eagerness that Whites expressed about building intergroup relationships. It appeared they were more interested in the ability and willingness of the White participants to do this.

As students developed more self-awareness and confidence in talking about issues of race and race relations, they were able to identify the motivational factors for increasing contact with racially and ethnically different people. This proved to be more important for the White participants. At this point, the findings revealed that Students of Color in this study did not feel personally motivated to build friendships with Whites but for the most part, felt comfortable doing so if the opportunity existed. What needs to be further explored is the potential value for Students of Color in building friendships with other Students of Color who are different from them. In a racially and ethnically diverse learning environment, this experience would have a valuable effect on Students of Color, particularly those students who have not had the opportunity to explore common ground with students from other racial and ethnic groups that are not of White-European descent.

<u>Question #3: What are the Obstacles that Hinder Intergroup Relations?</u>

As I had expected, participants in Focus Group I easily identified examples of obstacles and discussed experiences that hindered their ability to build positive intergroup relationships. The findings for this question are from the first Focus Group discussion and from several of the student journals. This theme did not emerge in FG II and there were no questions posed in the group that focused specifically on obstacles or challenges to building positive intergroup relationships.

Students of Color and Whites reported similarly about specific obstacles that were highlighted in Chapter 4: lack of support from friends, family and society; fear of rejection; and negative experiences that have shaped their perceptions about members of different racial and ethnic groups. A salient theme for Students of Color was the lack of acknowledgment and affirmation from Whites regarding their racial or ethnic identity. They spoke about this openly in the focus group, but did not discuss it further in their journals.

Several participants spoke about the lack of support from friends and family. White students and Students of Color reported that their families perpetuated many of the stereotypes and beliefs that exist, which made it difficult to get accurate information about racial and ethnic issues. Many students, particularly Whites, agreed that their experiences of interacting with people who were racially and ethnically different would have been more positive if they had received appropriate support and information from their families. A few White students and Students of Color spoke about the negative messages that society perpetuates, and as a result, make it very challenging to build positive intergroup relationships and maintain them.

The fear of rejection by individuals who are racially or ethnically different was reported as a substantial obstacle by most of the participants in the study. White students and Students of Color spoke about this issue at length in their journals when the issue of racism was discussed in class. This finding appeared to be based on past negative experiences of interacting with someone from a different racial or ethnic group from their own, in which the student felt misunderstood and unaccepted. However, there was an important distinction in how White students and Students of Color understood these kinds of experiences, which once again illustrated the tendency of the White participants to view experiences from the lens of a White-centered perspective. The example used in Chapter 4 to illustrate Carla's experience in a Black Women's History class, clearly shows that she did not consider the perspective of the two Black women in her anecdote or their reasons for responding to her in a negative manner. This finding suggests that a lack of awareness and reflection regarding their identity as Whites creates an obstacle in their inability to participate in building positive intergroup friendships across race and ethnicity. Although Carla claimed to have friends from different racial and ethnic groups, she rarely reflected on her status as a White person and the affect it may have had on how others perceived her and ultimately, behaved towards her.

In contrast, Students of Color strongly articulated their understanding of how the issues of racial and ethnic difference hindered their ability to build relationships with White students. Fear of rejection and betrayal was a powerful reality for these students. A few students gave emotional accounts of experiences where they were rejected, isolated or just not included because of their racial or ethnic difference. As a result, having experienced this numerous times in their lives, many of them reported feeling

fearful of new relationships with White students and needed time to trust the person before feeling comfortable.

As a pattern of White-centered thinking was prevalent among the White participants, Students of Color consistently spoke about the lack of acknowledgment from White students about their racial and ethnic identities. They reported that this sense of "invisibility" caused them to feel less inclined to build positive intergroup relationships with Whites. Students of Color who discussed this issue explained that knowing one's culture is a sign of respect and helps "to find something in common" with the person. This was an interesting finding, considering that many of the White participants throughout the study reported that "Race was never an issue" or "I never noticed any difference." I believe early socialization plays a role in this type of attitude. Many White students reported learning when they were younger that they should not draw attention to the racial or ethnic differences of others. As a result, they feel it is appropriate to not raise the issue of the obvious racial or ethnic difference, for fear of being perceived as racist and ultimately, rejected by the person they are interacting with. The few White students who had more positive early socialization experiences also did not see an inherent value in recognizing racial or ethnic differences, reinforcing the continual feeling of invisibility that Students of Color reported.

The task of building relationships across racial and ethnic identities is challenged by the complex interpersonal dynamics of racism, and most of the participants discussed personal experiences that highlighted this in FG I. However, in FG II, they did not focus on the issue of obstacles, but spoke more about what they needed in order to interact with students from different racial and ethnic groups. Students also talked about different

strategies for working against racism. I attributed this shift to the group's collaborative spirit. The students were interacting at a higher level at this point and there was an apparent desire to develop relationships and less of a need to discuss the challenges. The issues of racism can be difficult and often painful, and I believe it is important for students to have opportunities, such as the one in this classroom, that give them a sense of hope.

Question #4: What Knowledge and/or Skill-Building Do Students Need to Create Positive Intergroup Relationships?

This research question was founded on my assumption that students need specific interpersonal skills in order to engage in positive intergroup relationships. Based on my observations and interpretations of the findings from the fieldnotes, student journals and the final reflective paper, students benefited from those aspects of the curriculum that focused on interpersonal skills. This question was emphasized more in FG II, since students had been involved in the course for many weeks and were able to report more extensively concerning their experiences. Respondents highlighted aspects of the course that enhanced their interpersonal skills (*how* they learned), and knowledge or content (*what* they learned), which supported their ability to develop positive intergroup relationships.

According to the respondents, aspects of the instructor's curriculum that focused on communication skills and working effectively in the small collaborative work groups were the most helpful. Most students admitted they were not careful listeners. These skills focused primarily on listening and the instructor guided them through several activities to help them notice their listening skills and discover where they needed to

improve. As a result, students wrote in their journals about the value of listening with respect to their classmates who were conveying perspectives different from their own. They also mentioned how important it was for them to have the opportunity to talk about their ideas and opinions in a learning environment that was safe and open to diverse perspectives.

Another skill that many students mentioned in their journals and in their final paper responses was an increased awareness of social issues. This could be considered "content," although students were referring to what they have learned *from each other*, particularly as members of small collaborative groups. Students reported benefiting from hearing personal experiences from one another and many of those conversations happened in the small groups.

As discussed in Chapter Four, students' narratives proved to be a valuable asset to the development of relationships in the group. The use of narrative was not an original focus of this study and was an unexpected finding, but it did emerge as a distinct pattern in both focus groups. I observed the use of narrative in the classroom setting, but it was more prevalent in the focus group discussions.

In Focus Group I, narrative proved to be an approach that allowed students to gain information and new perspectives from each other, as well as a strategy for increasing the level of risk-taking in the group. It was an effective tool for creating "common ground." In Focus Group II, students' stories and anecdotes also became a tool for the storyteller to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. This was also evident in the classroom setting near the end of the semester, as students had acquired skills in critical thinking and the instructor encouraged them to reflect on their understanding of the

course content and how it intersected with the personal experiences they were conveying in class. The instructor in this classroom showed strong facilitation skills in her ability to help the students construct meaning from their stories. Student narrative can be an effective strategy in a classroom setting, if the instructor is able to facilitate a process in which the students, the storyteller and the audience, can extract personal meaning from the anecdote. Based on the findings of this study, I believe narrative is a powerful intervention that has the potential to support the development of positive intergroup relationships.

Question #5: Do Collaborative Learning Strategies in the Classroom Setting Support Positive Intergroup Contact?

The brief answer to this final research question is "yes and no." My original expectations, based on the extensive literature on collaborative learning (Sharan, 1994; Slavin, 1983, 1995) was that the formation of small collaborative groups in the classroom setting would be effective in supporting students' learning as well as positive intergroup contact. In fact, the students reported a high level of satisfaction because of increased social interaction but contrary to what I had anticipated, most students stated that these collaborative learning groups did not support their learning of the course curriculum.

The presence of racially and ethnically diverse collaborative learning groups within the classroom structure was originally expected to have a major impact on the students' ability to build positive intergroup relationships because they would be working closely together on group tasks that required cooperation among group members. Instead, the findings in this study showed that the small collaborative groups were more effective as a way of social networking for the students and overall, did not support their

ability to learn and retain information. The use of collaborative learning groups as an approach to improving learning outcomes is one dimension of the traditional research on collaborative learning as discussed in the literature. However, Slavin (1985) and others have discussed cooperative learning, as the field is referred to, as having an impact on student relationships: "Studies relating cooperative learning to intergroup relations clearly indicate that when students work in [racially and] ethnically mixed cooperative learning groups, they gain in [cross-racial] and cross ethnic friendships" (in Banks, 1995). In this study, the small collaborative groups did enhance social interaction outcomes among students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The presence of a group task that focused on some dimension of the course content was not a major factor in the development of intergroup relationships, according to my observations and the reports of the participants in the focus groups. There are three possible reasons for this finding. The first one involves the instructor, who was new to the use of cooperative learning strategies. As a result, she may have been unclear about how to facilitate the process of the groups and the desired outcome. The second reason also involves the instructor's lack of familiarity with the strategy, particularly the designing of the group task. Occasionally students had mentioned in their journals that they did not always understand what was expected of them in the small group. It seems that the group task needs to be clearly defined with a final product as the outcome. In my classroom observations, I often noticed students straying away from the assigned task and I often wondered if this was because there was no expectation of delivering a finished product to the instructor or their classmates. A final reason is based on the consistent reports from students regarding the social interaction that resulted from small group

work. Most participants felt this was more beneficial for the development of positive intergroup relationships.

Creating diverse collaborative work groups in a classroom is one approach to supporting the development of positive intergroup relationships in a racially heterogeneous classroom. This chapter will end with several students' quotes that highlight the value of the small collaborative groups for the participants in this study and suggest the potential impact that student relationships can have on student learning outcomes. The following statements are extracted from students' final reflective papers. The question for the assignment was "What did your small group teach you?"

- "I really learned the value of relationships with other students from different backgrounds and I learned how to be more open." (Student of Color)

- "I learned a lot of new information about different people." (White student)

- "I realized how important the skills of listening are and being aware of different issues. I also learned to listen to others' feelings and opinions." (White student)

- "My small group taught me how change can happen – it is possible!" (White student)

- "I feel more confident that this generation can make change." (Student of Color)

In Chapter 6, I discuss the implications of the findings and suggest recommendations for educators in classroom settings.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS AND CONCLUSIONS

<u>Introduction</u>

This final chapter accomplishes several tasks. I revisit Gordon Allport's Contact

Hypothesis (1954) and critique as well as acknowledge what this theory offers in

relationship to the findings of this study. This discussion continues with implications and

recommendations for educators in classroom settings. The chapter concludes with

thoughts for future research and final remarks.

It is most appropriate to return to Allport's Contact Hypothesis, as it was the

starting point for this inquiry. During my initial exploration of the intergroup relations

literature, Allport's account of the preconditions for "positive contact" was often referred

to and proved to be a major contribution to the field. For my own purposes, this theory

provided me with an entry point to my research on intergroup relations and assisted me in

formulating critical research questions. I appreciated the complexities that were apparent

in the theory and how it problematized the notion of contact between majority and

minority groups in a way that other theories did not.

Allport (1954) was also one of the few social science theorists who spoke about

"social change" in his work:

> Intergroup relations have existed for centuries in many different cultures, all over
> the world - the question is, are they working and if they aren't, what can be done
> about it…Working towards social change includes building relationships with
> those who we may have avoided our whole lives (p. 34).

This statement reflects my premise for this study of intergroup relations. If members of different racial and ethnic groups strive to build positive intergroup relationships, their efforts can ultimately result in increased understanding of one another. Building positive intergroup relationships is a necessary action for social change.

The discussion of the Contact Hypothesis in Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954) describes a set of conditions that, if present, would increase the potential for the development of positive intergroup relations (Slavin, 1995). The Contact Hypothesis laid the foundation for developing and implementing strategies for prejudice reduction, and continues to help us consider the value of supporting student relationships in heterogeneous classroom populations. However, the theory lacks consideration of other factors that can enhance the potential for intergroup relationships between individuals from different identity groups and this is discussed further in the chapter.

I focused on three aspects of Allport's theory that were the most compelling and relevant to my study: equal status roles for group members of different racial groups within the confines of a contact situation, the support of institutions and an authority figure, and the pursuit of common goals. In the following quote, Allport summarizes these elements in his Contact Hypothesis:

> Prejudice...may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports...and if it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups. (1954, p. 52)

In this chapter, the three aspects of the Contact Hypothesis mentioned above will be discussed as they emerged in the literature and in my own research findings. This critical exploration of Allport's theory reveals several issues for the school setting that

educators and school administrators need to consider. I propose specific recommendations that will address these concerns and have the potential to support a more beneficial learning environment for students in a classroom setting.

Equal Status

In the Contact Hypothesis, Allport discusses the notion of creating equal status among majority and minority members of the group as a condition for positive contact, but neglects to consider factors perpetuating unequal social status that can also affect a contact situation. The theory emphasizes the reduction of prejudice if members of minority and majority groups have equal status roles and although efforts to achieve this circumstance are necessary and important, they are not sufficient to insure the existence of equality for all group members. The interpersonal dynamics that are likely to emerge as a result of the existing structural inequalities among members of different social groups can interfere with the ability of group members to build positive contact.

The primary focus in the intergroup relations field has been on issues of cultural awareness and prejudice reduction, omitting the paradigm of systemic domination and subordination that has historically existed and is currently operating in the United States. This important consideration for the development of positive intergroup relations is not addressed sufficiently in the intergroup relations literature. However, there is an emerging body of literature in the social justice education field that attempts to conceptualize the elements of a hierarchical social system. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) describe a system of social oppression that exists, "when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit" (p. 17). The existence of this oppressive social system is a result of the structures of domination

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and subordination, which have emerged from the dominant, or agent, group's control of access to institutional power and resources. The agent group maintains dominance in the system of oppression by assigning the target group its subordinate social status. The subordinate, or target, group experiences an inequity of resources and differential treatment based on the selective status of their social group (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). Social institutions in the United States operate from this power structure, which favors those individuals who are descended from White-European roots, and conversely prevents People of Color from gaining equal access to social resources. In the context of this study, Whites are members of the dominant social group and People of Color are part of the subordinate social group.

Racial and ethnic identities are ascribed social identities. Racial identities are categorized in the United States into the following racial groupings: Black, non-White Hispanic (referred to in this study as Latino/a), White, biracial or multiracial, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American. Ethnic identity describes a group membership often based on characteristics such as history, language, ancestral geographic location, and values (Wijeyesinghe et al, 1997). Examples of ethnic groups that are currently represented in the United States include Puerto Rican, Haitian, Irish, German, Swedish, Vietnamese and West Indian. People are born with an ethnic and racial identity, and there is an assigned social status as dictated by the hierarchical nature of social oppression. This racial or ethnic identity shapes their experiences on a daily basis. When members of a group enter a contact situation, these identities and lived experiences are not left behind, even if an attempt is made to create "equal status roles."

The existing social hierarchy that impacts the lives of the group members does not allow for the achievement of equal status roles in a contact situation.

The findings in this study revealed a number of reasons why it was not possible for students to shed their unequal status roles derived from the larger social structure upon entering a classroom setting. Participants, primarily Students of Color, often discussed personal experiences in which it was evident that issues of racial and ethnic subordination were a constant presence in their lives. Ranita, a biracial woman, reported several difficult experiences in predominantly White school systems. It was apparent from her stories that she was keenly aware of her targeted racial identity in the classroom setting and she wondered how the White teacher and White students perceived her. She recalled "feeling exhausted" because of "the amount of energy it takes to feel comfortable walking into a classroom and wondering if other students, Whites, are thinking that I am an Affirmative Action case." This student's experience dramatizes the challenges many other Students of Color reported. Ranita's awareness of her racial identity and how she is likely to be perceived by White classmates as a "minority group member" is a result of her lived experience as a biracial person, which likely includes incidents of mistreatment in the past.

The impact of early socialization on all students teaches and reinforces misinformation about the racially and ethnically different "other." Ranita also made judgments about how White students would receive her. These biased perceptions alone make it impossible for her to feel that she was in an equal status contact situation with White students. Students have preconceived notions about members of the group that can influence their behavior towards individual members based on their prior experiences of

racial and ethnic difference. Ranita's example suggests the difficulty of achieving equal status roles in a group with participants from unequal racial and ethnic social groups. It also highlights how racial and ethnic inequality can impact the learning experiences of students on a university campus.

Despite this critique or Allport's discussion of the condition of equal status, the student protest at Goodell does illustrate an unexpected situation of equal status on student turf. Students concerned with issues of institutional access organized the protest at Goodell and the organizers were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. With increased Student of Color involvement, particularly in positions of leadership, the protest became labeled as a "Student of Color issue." However, the fact that Students of Color were in positions of power in this situation may have presented a challenge for many White students, who were accustomed to seeing mostly Whites in leadership roles and positions of authority. The perception of equal status roles was achieved by increased visibility of Students of Color, which is a reversal of the usual circumstances. This example is illuminating because although equal status roles were not actually achieved, having Students of Color in leadership positions posed a contradiction for many White students because of the increased numerical balance between Whites and Students of Color in this setting.

The findings in this study suggest that institutional efforts to create numerical balance of White students and Students of Color in a classroom setting may have some value for all students. I have discussed why equal status is not possible in a racially and ethnically diverse group, but efforts to create a sense of racial balance are significant and

can be achieved by utilizing certain interventions. The attempt to structure the numerical balance of Whites students and Students of Color is one of these strategies.

The classroom where I conducted my study had a little more than 50% of the students identifying as Students of Color. During the focus group discussions, several White students and Students of Color commented on the value of participating in a highly diverse classroom population. Most participants, when asked if the diversity of students had a positive impact on their experiences in the class, strongly agreed. They gave additional comments such as "I loved the diversity of perspectives and opinions" and "I learned a great deal of new information about who my classmates are and what their lives are like." One student, Orlando, who is Puerto Rican, also reported in the focus groups how he appreciated knowing that other Students of Color in the class would speak up about issues concerning race. His previous experience in high school was challenging, as he was the only Student of Color in his Catholic school and he often had to defend himself and interrupt racist comments in the class. Orlando was one of several Students of Color who had a high level of participation in the classroom and in the focus groups. I assumed that these Students of Color felt more comfortable to participate in the class when they did not experience themselves as "the only one." There were several instances when I noted in my fieldnotes the high level of participation by Students of Color, starting from the first class session and continuing throughout the semester. It seems appropriate to assume that the high level of participation by Students of Color in this study is partially a result of the higher numerical presence of members of this group in the classroom.

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the impact of the broader hierarchical structure still enters the classroom environment and the issues that emerge as a result of it need to be acknowledged and addressed. Students' lived experiences and socialized ways of interacting with one another because of perceived differences have the potential to create challenging classroom dynamics. The next section discusses recommendations for educators involving issues of social status in their curriculum and in the classroom environment.

Recommendations for Educators: "Equalizing" Status

Even if it is impossible to create pure equal status among diverse group members in a classroom setting, other efforts to create a sense of equality in the group are important and necessary. Allport's work calls attention to a number of issues that educators should consider in a classroom because of diversity and social status in a group. His discussion of equal status as a condition for creating positive contact may overlook the impact of the existing hierarchical structure, but it does remind us how important it is for educators and administrators to consider issues of differential social group status in classroom settings.

When a student enters the classroom, or what Allport calls "the contact situation," factors of social group membership and social status are operating as they do in their everyday lives outside of the classroom. Teachers need to educate themselves about these issues and embrace the value of integrating the lived experiences of all the students into the classroom learning, particularly minority group members. Factors of status and social stratification impact each individual's existence and experience in and out of the classroom and will have some effect on the dynamics of the group whether they are

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addressed or not. I suggest that teachers learn *who* their students are and consider how issues related to the diverse identities of their students may emerge in the classroom setting.

Aside from developing awareness about issues pertaining to unequal social status that can affect a classroom setting, individuals in positions of authority in school systems should make efforts to create situations that attempt to equalize status for students from diverse racial and ethnic identity groups. One approach to this is to equalize the numbers of students from dominant and targeted groups and attempt to achieve numerical parity. For the purposes of this research study, the student population in the classroom was equalized intentionally to balance interactions across race and ethnicity. The results of this effort were remarkable, as most of the students reported positive experiences as a result of the increased diversity in the group. Another striking observation was the high level of participation by Students of Color, which is not usually observed when they are subordinated group members in a numerical minority within predominantly White classrooms. As a result of numerical parity in this classroom, Students of Color were no longer monolithic, but were seen as individual members of the group.

If educators and administrators in schools are willing to acknowledge the issues of unequal social status that exist in a classroom, there is the potential to create a learning experience that will benefit all of the students. Students will have the opportunity to learn more about their peers who are racially and ethnically different, particularly if the teacher is willing to use the issues that emerge because of these differences as part of the curriculum. It is critical that efforts be made to create diverse populations in learning

environments and that educators and administrators view this as an asset to the students and their learning experience.

However, numerical equality of members from different racial and ethnic groups in a classroom is not always achievable for various reasons. A teacher who works in a suburban setting where there is typically less students from diverse racial and ethnic groups needs to consider strategies that will challenge the norms that operate as a result of a White-centered perspective on the part of the instructor and the school system. The following list offers several suggestions for addressing equal status issues when numerical parity is not possible in the classroom setting:

- Consider who is chosen for leadership roles in the classroom. If the same students are selected, develop a system that insures each student has an opportunity to fill various roles in the class.

- Notice how the classroom environment is structured, which often impacts the ability of students to participate. Observe where students are seated and if this influences who is invited to participate during large group discussions and activities.

- Monitor the "air time" of students so that each member of the class has an opportunity to speak. Notice who is more comfortable speaking in class and consider ways to involve other students who are less at ease in talking in the large group.

- Incorporate varied approaches of presenting subject matter in the classroom that attend to different learning styles among the students.

<u>Support of Institutions and an Authority Figure</u>

Another condition that Allport identifies in the Contact Hypothesis as necessary for the development of positive contact is institutional supports, including the sanction of an authority figure. From the findings of this study emerged three elements of institutional support that students identified as aspects of the learning environment that supported their ability to build intergroup relationships. These categories broaden Allport's description of institutional structures that increase the potential for intergroup contact: course curriculum, classroom environment and the role of the teacher. These categories will be discussed in the context of social justice education practice.

<div align="center">Curriculum and Classroom Environment</div>

The elements of curriculum and classroom environment intersect with one another in obvious ways when considered in the context of social justice education practice. As mentioned earlier, it is not possible to separate *what we teach*, known as the formal curriculum or content, from *how we teach*, referred to here as "process." The formal curriculum can play a significant role in stimulating "process" in a classroom environment.

The curriculum for the course *Social Diversity in Education* emphasizes formal content as well as process. The course includes a number of issues concerning diversity and social oppression and situates itself in the field of social justice education. A process orientation is useful to social justice education practice as it values the integration of emotion with thought. This approach has its roots in feminist pedagogy, which believes that emotions assist in the exploration of feminist values and beliefs (Adams, 1997).

Romney, Tatum, & Jones (1992, 98) summarize the value of the role of process in the teaching of social justice issues:

> We know that it isn't information alone that educates people. If it were, we would already have a very different world than we do...Our experience is that, when we focus on process in the teaching of oppression, learning occurs at an unusually deep level...The information students gain through the experiences of connection, empathy, and identification is not readily forgotten (cited in Adams et al, 1997, p. 38).

Social Diversity in Education is a strong example of how process-oriented strategies can enhance a student-centered approach to learning. Students are encouraged to interact with the formal content and with each other. In this study, most Students of Color reported that the content presented in the course was important to the learning, particularly the history presentations that included the experiences of diverse racial and ethnic groups in the United States. This curriculum also includes an emphasis on student relationships and according to the results of this study, directly influenced the students' ability to develop positive contact with members of the diverse classroom population. When students participate in the process of their learning in a diverse classroom setting, they have an opportunity to experience the intergroup dynamics that are likely to emerge as a result of the diversity.

Specific conditions in the classroom supported the development of positive intergroup relationships, including a safe and open classroom environment and a diverse student population. Most students said they appreciated the high level of interaction in the class each week and several students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds reported meeting with each other informally outside of the classroom. One White student stated "building relationships with Blacks and Latinos is new for me and will be useful in my life experience."

Participants in the study reported a high level of satisfaction with the environment in the classroom and agreed this had a direct impact on their ability to succeed in the course. They discussed several factors that supported a comfortable learning environment, including a sense of safety and openness to share individual perspectives. A Latino man discusses his experience of feeling safe in the classroom: "In class we are encouraged to be open about things and if we're open about things, then we can say 'What he said, I don't really like it'…" Another student finishes his thought, "but let's talk about it, let's think about it." One of the strategies that help to encourage a safe and open learning environment is the development of classroom guidelines, which determine how the students will work together in the group. These guidelines, also referred to as classroom norms, are often more effective when generated by the students in a large group discussion, which encourages them to take ownership of them.

Another factor that most students noted as benefiting the learning environment was the diversity of the classroom. Several White students discussed the value of having members of diverse racial and ethnic groups in the room who were willing to speak about their experiences with racism, while a few Students of Color noted the racial and ethnic diversity for a different reason. They appreciated not being "the only one who speaks up about racial issues," which is often the experience for Students of Color on predominantly White campuses.

Recommendations for Educators: Paying Attention to "Process" and "Content"

Educators from across the disciplines need to consider strategies in their curriculum that support their students' ability to build positive intergroup relationships in diverse classroom settings. Although this course, *Social Diversity in Education,*

emphasizes student relationships as one of its objectives, which is not likely to be the case for topics such as mathematics or chemistry, teachers need to establish for themselves and their students the value of having contact with other students from different racial and ethnic groups.

The relationship between process and content in a curriculum is often not understood or even considered by most classroom teachers. Many educators have not been trained to consider this orientation in their teaching practice. Social justice educators view the role of process as essential to each student's individual learning experience. Considering the role of process as valuable to student learning is a critical step. As the findings in this study revealed, there is great value for students when they interact with the subject matter that is presented and engage in discussions with other students, particularly when there is personal significance for a member of the class. Participating in this process can be a powerful learning experience, as it encourages students to identify with issues that are raised in the curriculum as well as influencing their view of social relationships in a different way. Aspects of the formal curriculum such as setting a historical context, presenting current issues connected to the subject matter, and varied individual perspectives described through personal narratives have the potential to stimulate students and personally connect them to the subject matter. Implementing teaching strategies such as intergroup dialogues among students is another approach that supports the relationship between content and process.

Utilizing the element of process in one's classroom allows students to clarify their own values, as they listen and consider the perspectives of their peers. As the instructor is able to support students in understanding the content or information presented in

relationship to their own personal experiences, this will result in a beneficial educational experience for all students. Group structures in the classroom, such as focus groups or caucus groups, are helpful instructional strategies for encouraging students to consider thoughts and feelings about their experiences. The small group context allows students to talk with each other in a more personal environment and is often helpful when discussing challenging subject matter. Students also have opportunities to practice communication skills and challenge as well as appreciate one another. Creating this type of learning environment is a strong effort towards the development of positive intergroup relationships among diverse groups of students.

Creating an environment in a diverse classroom where students feel safe enough to participate is an important step towards their ability to develop positive contact across racial and ethnic lines. Issues of personal safety and guidelines for group behavior need attention and will likely ensure a student's ability to openly participate in the learning process. A classroom environment that encourages its students to participate and values student interaction needs to be a priority of the teacher in the classroom. If these factors are in place, the potential for intergroup contact is increased.

Educators can play a considerable role in creating this learning environment. Developing classroom norms, encouraging student participation and modeling respectful ways of communicating are critical instructional strategies, and reflect the teacher's commitment to social relations in the classroom.

Role of the Teacher – Support of Authority Figure

Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954) states that "communication of unequivocal teacher support for interracial contact" will increase the ability of members of a diverse

group to build positive intergroup relations. It was evident from the findings in this study that several instructional strategies implemented by the classroom teacher in this course had a direct effect on the students' ability to develop relationships across race and ethnicity.

A teacher needs to consider the various factors that ensure the inclusion and success of all the students in the classroom, particularly when there is a diverse population. Most of the literature on classroom teaching, however, pays little attention to the dynamics that arise because of issues of social diversity and difference in the classroom. In a study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of college curriculums that have integrated a social diversity component, Tatum (in Pincus & Erlich, 1994) reports, "Unfortunately, less attention has been given to the issues of process that inevitably emerge in the classroom when attention is focused on race, class and gender" (p. 143). She continues on to say that although some institutions of higher education are requiring courses on social diversity issues, lacking is the attention to managing the interpersonal dynamics that appear as a result of the content.

It appears that many educators have not received adequate training to attend to the process of how students are interacting with this challenging subject matter. As a result, students are not able to negotiate cross-race and cross-ethnic interactions in the classroom because there are likely to be unresolved issues in relationship to the content.

The course being taught in the classroom site for this study was focused on issues of social diversity and difference, and certain issues emerged due to the nature of the subject matter. There were several approaches based on social justice education practice implemented by the teacher that students reported as contributing to a positive experience

in the course. Factors in the classroom environment were discussed in the previous section and the instructor implemented these strategies which created an atmosphere where students felt comfortable participating. Several students appreciated her willingness to include them in certain decision-making processes, and this proved to be most effective during the Goodell student protest. The instructor was willing to modify her original agenda during one of the class meetings to discuss the value of joining with the protesters and learning more about the issues surrounding the protest. There were other instances during the semester when the instructor was responsive to students' needs regarding unexpected topics that emerged in the group.

The instructor's willingness to facilitate the process of discussing difficult issues was evident throughout the semester, according to student reports and my observations of the classroom. Her overall approach in the classroom highlighted her commitment to the issues of process that emerged due to difficult subject matter. She was willing and able to manage conflict and created opportunities for dialogue in the group.

Most of the responses from students regarding their reactions to the instructor portrayed a teacher with a strong student-centered approach, who placed the students at the focus of the learning experience. One White woman noted the effect it had on her when she "received encouragement from the instructor" to interact with her peers from different racial and ethnic groups in the classroom. This kind of attention to the needs of the students facilitated their ability to develop positive intergroup relationships across race and ethnicity in this classroom setting.

Recommendations for Educators: Managing the "Unexpected"

Managing issues of difference in a classroom is a challenging task for the students and the teacher, who has the primary responsibility of creating a learning environment where difficult subject matter can be explored in a safe and respectful way. What appears to be lacking for most teachers are the skills and awareness needed to facilitate the interpersonal dynamics that are likely to emerge in the process. This is slowly changing, as described by Weinstein and Obear (1992), who discuss the increasing expectations that faculty "be sensitive to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism, regardless of their academic specialization, but also to treat these issues as part of their teaching responsibilities" (p. 39). Educators today should assume that issues of multiculturalism, which often create tension, will most likely need to be managed in the classroom, particularly as student populations become more racially and ethnically diverse. Based on the findings of this study, I suggest several recommendations that will assist a teacher in managing this challenging task, and ultimately support the students' ability to build positive intergroup contact:

- Educators need to be aware of the interpersonal and group dynamics in the classroom environment. An atmosphere of openness and respect allows students to fully participate.

- Educators need to embrace "teachable moments" when unexpected events arise that may influence the classroom agenda. A successful teacher sees the value in a curriculum that evolves because of the needs of the students.

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- Educators should have a willingness to focus on the process of discussing difficult subject matter. This skill is essential and generally overlooked. Students cannot build positive intergroup contact if there are unresolved issues in the classroom.

Pursuit of Common Goals

A final aspect of Allport's theory that I considered in this study was the pursuit of common goals by group members as a condition for prejudice reduction. Allport (1954) believed that if members of a diverse group worked towards a common goal, there was the potential for less prejudice and bias among group members. This aspect of his hypothesis was relevant to this study, as I was interested in exploring the impact of racially and ethnically diverse collaborative groups on the students' ability to build positive intergroup contact. The instructor in the classroom setting where I did my observations developed and implemented small collaborative workgroups. As discussed in Chapter 3, efforts to integrate cooperative learning strategies as part of the curriculum were a collaboration between the instructor and myself.

A number of research studies have been done to evaluate the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies on student friendship patterns in desegregated classrooms. Several of the studies utilized Allport's contact hypothesis to design methods that were applied to classroom settings, and eventually were identified as approaches to cooperative learning (Slavin, 1995). A scan of the literature on cooperative learning, including Aronson & Bridgeman (1979), Cohen (1972), and Slavin (1990), reveals a wide belief in the correlation between the implementation of these strategies, based on Allport's principles, and the ability of all students to build positive contact across racial and ethnic lines, as well as improved racial attitudes (Banks, 1995).

A large portion of the research on cooperative learning strategies in classrooms has also been interested in the academic outcomes of the students, but my study revealed different results. I expected that these small groups would enhance the students' ability to interact through the pursuit of common academic goals that were assigned by the instructor. However, the result of using this strategy appeared to be increased social interaction, resulting in more interest in social relations and less interest and commitment to the academic goal assigned to the group. This finding suggests that small, diverse collaborative groups have the potential to support the development of positive intergroup relations and confirms several of the studies in the collaborative learning literature.

The role of collaborative small groups was originally viewed in this study as a strong intervention for students to work on academic tasks as a team. Although participants in this study reported they did not benefit from the small group experience in regards to traditional academic outcome, they did emphasize the valuable social interactions that emerged in their small groups. This finding has compelled me to think about what has traditionally been considered a learning outcome and how social interaction among students in the classroom can alsobe part of an effective learning experience. Many of these students reported learning new information about racial and ethnic differences, and also had opportunities to build self-confidence in their ability to interact and build positive intergroup contact.

Recommendations for Educators: Collaborative Learning Strategies

The findings in this study revealed that creating collaborative small groups in a diverse learning environment has the potential to support students in developing positive intergroup relationships. Students in this study agreed on the value of social relationships

in the classroom and appreciated the opportunities to interact that small group work

offered. Although it was evident that students were not working cooperatively on the

traditional academic goal assigned by the instructor, they later reported learning new

information about each other and agreed this was a valuable outcome for them.

This finding suggests that teachers need to play an active role in insuring the success of

collaborative small groups. When assigning a task to the group, it is important to be clear

about the expected goal or outcome of the task. Students in this study reported paying

less attention to the assignment and more attention to the development of social

interaction because they were not always sure of the goal for the group. Group tasks such

as presentations on reading material, role plays and final projects that focus on issues of

interest to the group will support the success and learning outcomes of the small

collaborative group.

Teachers also need to consider the value of social interaction as a learning

outcome, particularly in diverse classroom populations. Students will generally have few

other settings where they can consider the interpersonal dynamics that arise as they

attempt to pursue social relations in a racially and ethnically diverse group.

<u>Additional Recommendations</u>

<u>Classroom Population Should Inform a Teacher's Development of Curriculum</u>

This statement does not reflect traditional pedagogical approaches but with the

increase in diverse student populations across the country, it seems fundamental that

teachers and administrators begin exploring questions concerning the identities and lived

experiences of their students. As I hear about the numerous reports of poor student

achievement (National Public Radio, March, 2000) as measured by standardized testing, it would seem appropriate to consider the correlation between outdated pedagogical approaches and student learning outcomes. Broad institutional changes are needed to deal with less than satisfactory academic outcomes, and one strategy is to reevaluate the effectiveness of classroom curriculum and its relevance for the students.

Considerations for curriculum development need to include questions such as "Who are my students? What do I need to know about them? How might their diverse identities and lived experiences affect their ability and desire to learn? What strategies can I use to support the students' ability to learn from each other?" These are critical questions that many teachers have not been trained to ask and often teachers will assume that the learning styles and needs of the students are similar for the entire group. This assumption has the potential to create a learning experience that is not effective for all the students in the class.

Asking critical questions about the diverse student populations in our classrooms is a step towards creating socially relevant learning experiences. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) describes her notion of "culturally relevant teaching" in which all members of the learning community are acknowledged and affirmed (pp. 478-79). If teachers engage in this type of approach in the process of curriculum development, they increase the potential of a more inclusive learning environment. They will also be better prepared to manage the issues that emerge as a result of a diverse classroom population.

Adams, Jones and Tatum (1997) also discuss the importance of "knowing our students" as a way of supporting their ability to know more about themselves, about each

other and the instructors. This approach facilitates the development of positive intergroup relationships in the classroom.

Improve the preparation of teachers for diverse classroom settings

Teachers working in schools across the nation will continue to find themselves facing racially and ethnically diverse classroom populations. This is an unfamiliar experience for many of them, who also lack the appropriate skills and training to manage the issues that emerge as a result of the increased diversity in schools. It is critical that teacher training programs and professional development opportunities for educators focus on the issues that can emerge as a result of diverse classroom populations. Language differences and learning style differences are just a few of the many issues that teachers will need to consider in a classroom with diverse racial and ethnic populations.

Teacher preparation programs need to assist potential teachers in understanding the inherent value of supporting the development of student relationships in the classroom. A diverse student population is an invaluable resource to students and educators. Building friendships across racial and ethnic differences has the potential to combat racism and increase respect and understanding of racial and ethnic differences. Potential educators should also be encouraged to reflect on their own biases and prejudice that interfere with their ability to facilitate an effective learning environment for all of their students.

In colleges and universities across the country that have schools of education and teacher certification programs, issues concerning social diversity and intergroup relations must be at the forefront of the curriculum that is designed for students studying to become classroom teachers. Additional elective courses on multicultural education are

not adequate, but an integrated philosophy that focuses on social justice education practice and is carried throughout the student's curriculum will be most beneficial for the student teacher. This will adequately prepare her for the day when she stands in front of her own classroom.

Suggestions for Future Research

Several questions arose from this research study to consider for future research.

1. The findings from this study suggest that the Students of Color, for the most part, were ambivalent about developing friendships with White students. There was a notable distinction between Whites and Students of Color regarding the value of intergroup relationships. It would be interesting to conduct a study with a predominantly Student of Color population and explore the development of intergroup relationships in the classroom to see if Students of Color describe the value of these relationships differently.

2. This study did not explore social identity development (Hardiman and Jackson, 1992, 1997) as a variable in how students negotiate intergroup relationships. Exploring how students make sense of their racial and ethnic identities and how this develops over time would contribute a greater understanding of the dynamics of intergroup processes. This has the potential support educators in better assisting students in building these relationships.

3. The use of collaborative small groups in this study raised a number of questions that would be worth exploring: Why didn't the small groups assist students in achieving a group task? What is a common goal for the group and who defines it? Is it possible for Whites and for Students of Color to have a common goal and what makes

this so challenging? What is a common goal for Whites and People of Color? What are the goals of race relations?

Concluding Remarks

> Educators cannot ignore the fact that intergroup relations in society and the world that are overshadowed with tension do not escape the classroom. These manifestations of intergroup conflicts have and still are threatening the stability of families, communities, nations and the world - how could they not impact the classroom and the educational process? (Lloyd Cook, 1950)

Schools need to embrace the opportunity to support students in learning about the differences that exist among them and assist them in building skills for working collaboratively with racially and ethnically different students. Supporting the development of positive intergroup relationships in the classroom has the potential to positively influence the academic as well as non-academic outcomes for all students. However, this belief contradicts the traditional notion of the role education should play in the lives of students. The impact of non-academic outcomes, in this case the skill of learning how to interact with members of diverse racial and ethnic groups, has traditionally been undervalued and underestimated.

Schools should view this opportunity as an intervention that ensures students' ability to succeed in and out of the classroom. This is an increasingly important aspect of a student's educational experience. Current population trends make acquisition of this skill important for all students if they are going to work effectively and coexist in a pluralistic society that is striving to overcome an extensive history of prejudice and discrimination.

This study has illustrated the conditions that support and hinder the development of positive intergroup relationships for students in a racially and ethnically diverse

classroom setting. It has much to teach us about the challenges that confront White students and Students of Color as they strive to learn about one another in classrooms that may not necessarily support their efforts. The usefulness of this study lies in the extent to which the recommendations are put into action in order to provide a deeper foundation for considering the various intergroup dynamics that can emerge in a diverse classroom. These issues can no longer be ignored. We do a disservice to our students by not providing them with the opportunity to explore the racial and ethnic diversity in their classrooms and schools. When educators and school administrators are willing to take the risks involved to tend to the issues of racial and ethnic differences in their classrooms, their efforts will further the cause of anti-racist education and educational practices.

In the following passage, which concludes this study, Shira, a White student, describes what she believes is gained by building intergroup relationships:

> The best way for social change to happen is to get to know people who are different from ourselves. The only way we will learn is to get to know people and to engage in conversation with them. We need to learn from one another's experiences. I learned we all have more commonalities than we have differences. I am very proud of so many people in our class. They are students who are dedicated to making a change and our their hearts and souls into everything they do. They have shown me that one person can begin to make a difference.

APPENDIX A

PILOT STUDY PROTOCOL

The questions for the Student of Color caucus were as follows:

1. What are you proud of about being _____ (Your race and/or ethnicity)?
2. What is difficult about having this identity on a predominantly white campus?
3. How do you struggle with internalized racism?
4. For you, what would a positive intergroup relationship look like? What are the characteristics?
5. Something I need from the white student group in order to develop relationships across race and ethnicity is...
6. Something I want you to know about _____ (Fill in with race/ethnicity) is...

The questions for the White student caucus were as follows:

1. What is it like to be separated from the rest of the group?
2. What value is there in meeting in an all white group?
3. What other questions or viewpoints do you have for the other group that you think might be offensive?
4. For you, what would a positive intergroup relationship look like?
5. Something I need from the student of color group in order to develop relationships across race and ethnicity is...
6. Something I want you to know about _____ (Fill in with race/ethnicity) is ...

CONSENT FORM

Can We Build Relationships Across Race and Ethnicity?
A Study of Intergroup Relationships in a College Classroom

Dear Participant,

My name is Mary Gannon and I am a doctoral student in the Social Justice Education Program, School of Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, currently working on my dissertation. The focus of my dissertation is exploring the conditions that support the evolution of intergroup relationships across racial and ethnic identities in a college classroom. I have found very little research in the area of intergroup relations on college campuses and your participation will make an important contribution to the field of intergroup relations in educational settings. This research will also assist educators in understanding better what promotes and hinders intergroup relations in the classroom, which will ultimately support the development of relationships across race and ethnicity in the classroom setting and increased understanding of racially different students.

My data collection for the study will include the following:
1. Classroom observations:
2. Access to anonymous classroom journal entries;
3. Focus groups with students from the class, at mid-semester and at the end of the semester, as an extra credit option for participants;
4. Possible follow-up interviews with students whom I would like to speak with further.

As a participant in this research study, you have the following rights:

1. Your name and identity will be protected in all written materials and all research data is confidential between the researcher and the participant. Initials will be used for all proper names and pseudonyms can be chosen by the participant.

2. At any time, participants have the right to end their participation at any phase of the research process. Participant can request that field notes and taped portions of the focus groups that include information about themselves not be used in the study. They may also review any aspect of the data collection that relates to them specifically.

3. Participant have the right to participate or not participate freely without prejudice or bias to them.

4. Participants may have access to the final written document.

It is also important for participants in the study to know that information from the results of the data analysis, aside from being included in the dissertation, may be used in a journal article, book, chapter or conference presentation. Thus, the researcher has permission to use any information without further consent from the participant or the benefit of financial compensation.

Is there anything else you would like to add to this agreement?

Agreement: I understand that as a student in this classroom setting, I am free to participate or not participate without prejudice or bias regarding my performance in this class. In signing this consent form, I am agreeing to all of the information outlined above, except for any changes that I may discuss with the researcher. I am aware of the purpose of this study, how the information will be used and I am agreeing to allow the researcher to use this information.

Participant Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Participant Signature:

Researcher Signature:

Researcher Information:

Mary M. Gannon
PO BOX 769
Amherst, MA 01004-0769
413 367 9903

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION
Intergroup Study

To aid the researcher in becoming familiar with who you are, please fill out the following information. All information will be held confidential or discussed in a manner that will not disclose your identity.

Name:

Age:

Year in College:

Hometown:
Rural, urban, or suburban?

Sex:

Racial Identity – Please fill in your ethnicity or national origin

African American/Black/Person of African Descent -

Asian-American/Pacific Islander/Asian –

Native American – tribal affiliation –

Hispanic American/Latino/a –

Arab-American –

European – American/White –

Multiracial –

Biracial –

Are you an international student? If so, please specify your nationality:

What is your experience with people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds, where you grew up and here at UMASS? Please use the back of the page if necessary.

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP I PROTOCOL

Focus Group I: March 26, 1997 and March 27, 1997

1. What is your description of a good friendship? What is your description of a 'good' interaction with someone you wouldn't necessarily call a 'friend?'

2. What has your experience been with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds? In your neighborhood, work, school, friends, etc.

3. What did you learn growing up about people who were racially and ethnically different from you?

4. When you think about creating relationships with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, what do you see or what have you experienced as the obstacles that prevents this happening? What supports this building of intergroup relationships, based on your experience?

5. How are the collaborative small groups in class helpful in getting to know others from different racial and ethnic backgrounds? Do they impact your ability to work with students who are racially and ethnically different?

6. What will it take/does it take for you to have a relationship/friendship or to get to know someone from a different racial or ethnic background?

FOCUS GROUP II PROTOCOL

Focus Group II - May 7, 1997 and May 8, 1997

1. How would you describe a successful friendship or 'connection' with someone from a racial or ethnic background different from yours?

2. What has been different about your experience in this class in comparison to others, socially and/or academically?

3. Did this change for you at all as a member of a classroom and of a small group that is racially diverse? What did you notice about yourself in relationship to others in this class?

4. Did you build any new acquaintances or friendships with other students from different racial/ethnic identities? If so, what elements in the classroom supported this to happen?

5. Has this experience changed your attitudes/beliefs or shattered any stereotypes about those who are racially different?

6. Has this experience impacted your ability to leave this class and make some kind of change in society? If so, how?

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