

## Abstract

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ASIAN AMERICAN RACIAL IDENTITY  
EXPERIENCES IN INTERGROUP  
DIALOGUE: A NARRATIVE STUDY

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The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to explore how Asian American students experience their racial identity in intergroup dialogue. This study addressed the following guiding research question: how do Asian American students experience their racial identity in the context of intergroup dialogues? Two Asian American students from two intergroup dialogues participated in this study. Data collection included semi-structured individual interviews and course documents, such as journal reflections. Data were analyzed using a hybrid narrative approach that combined the analysis of the content as an entire story (inductive case analysis), of the content of themes within each story, and of the structure of a complete story (cross-case analysis).

Full restories of each participant's story were provided. Four themes emerged from these restories to illuminate how students experienced their racial identity in intergroup dialogue. First, racial identities were experienced in a complicated manner that conflated race and ethnicity, within and outside of intergroup dialogue. Second, the salience of racial identity impacted how and what participants shared about their experiences. Third, both participants shared stories of internal conflict related to their

racial identities, which were illuminated by their experiences in intergroup dialogue. Lastly, participants shared similar experiences participating in intergroup dialogue, which included holding back, taking risks, and responding to stereotypes. However, these experiences varied in the ways they were explicitly connected to participants' racial identity.

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DIALOGUE: A NARRATIVE STUDY

By

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“A lot of people wonder how Chinese parents raise such stereotypically successful kids,” writes Amy Chua, a self-identified Chinese American, in her parenting memoir *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (Chua, 2011). The book rose to number four on Amazon sales rankings the week it was released (Amazon.com, 2011). Since the release of her book, Chua has received scrutiny from parents and children, including those who identify as Chinese or Asian American, about her overly strict parenting style that further perpetuates a negative stereotype that Chinese parents are controlling drillmasters that never let their children have any fun (Paul, 2011). At the same time, other individuals, who grew up in immigrant households, supported Chua’s memoir, citing how thankful they were for the push and dedication given by their parents and attributing their successes to their strict parents (Paul, 2011). Largely missing from this national discussion is Chua’s main intent for writing such a memoir. In a question and answer article with *Time Magazine*, Chua shared that this memoir is about the strengths she observed in the “Chinese” parenting style she received as a child and about the mistakes she experienced in attempting to use the same style in raising her own children (Luscombe, 2011).

The recent media fervor over Chua’s book is an example of the danger in listening to a single story, a stereotype, about Asian Americans. The scrutiny against Chua began before her book was released for sale; thus, individuals criticizing her book likely did not have a chance to read her story and hear her voice before establishing their opinions about Chua and about the “Chinese” parenting style. This study was an attempt to dismantle the pervasive model minority myth, a single story impacting Asian American

students across institutions of higher education, by giving voice to Asian American students and their stories about their racial identity experiences.

Racial identity and racial identity development for Asian Americans are complex and require an understanding of how race as a category and as an identity intersects with ethnicity as a category and identity. This complexity coupled with the impact of the model minority myth and a lack of understanding behind self-identification, means the racial identity of Asian American students is multi-layered and misunderstood. A diversity education intervention that challenges Asian American students to explore racial identity is intergroup dialogue, a program in which facilitators endeavor to raise critical consciousness. Asian American students are placed in a particular intergroup dialogue based on their racial identity, with which dialogue facilitators and other students will use in their interactions with Asian American students. This is problematic because the Asian American students may not actually identify as Asian American but are treated as such by others in intergroup dialogue.

To study how Asian American students experience their racial identity as participants of intergroup dialogue, I conducted a narrative study to understand the rich stories of the students grappling with the aforementioned complexity of identity. The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to explore how Asian American students experience their racial identity in intergroup dialogue. In this chapter, I will describe my problem statement, explore the significance of the present study, situate the context in which this study takes place, and clarify important terminology. Prior to doing so, I elaborate further on the challenges facing Asian American college students.

## **Challenges of Asian American College Students**

Establishing identity is one of the most significant issues that Asian American students face during their college experiences (Kodama et al., 2001). Often, Asian American students are simultaneously attempting to explore their different levels of identity and to explain their emerging identity to others in the face of racism and Asian American stereotypes (Kodama et al., 2001). In this section, I will explore the significance of the model minority myth, the complexity of identity development, the interplay between racial and ethnic identity, and the unique context of intergroup dialogue on the experiences of Asian American students. For contextual purposes, I provide the following definition of intergroup dialogue: *Intergroup dialogue* is a diversity education intervention that brings together people from two or more social identity groups with a history of conflict or potential conflict. Elaborated definitions of key terminology, including intergroup dialogue, will be provided at a later section of this chapter.

### **The Model Minority Myth**

Museus and Kiang (2009) argued that the model minority myth is the reason behind the invisibility of research in higher education about Asian Americans. The myth is a stereotype that casts Asian Americans as the “model minority,” who have overcome significant obstacles and barriers to achieve economic and educational parity with their White counterparts (Shih, 1988; Suzuki, 1989). The Asian American student population does not fit into the model minority myth stereotype prevalent on campuses. Museus and Kiang (2009) asserted five misconceptions commonly held about Asian American students attributable to the model minority myth—that Asian American students are a

monolithic group, are not considered racial or ethnic minorities, do not encounter major challenges attributable to their race, do not seek or require resources and support, and consider degree completion equivalent to success. The consequences of the model minority myth stereotype coupled with aggregate data about Asian Americans contribute to the invisibility of pressing issues affecting Asian American students on campus, such as mental health issues and ethnic disparities in degree attainment (Museus & Chang, 2009) and the continual misunderstanding of Asian Americans in higher education (Chang, 2008). An additional consequence is the consistent need for researchers to spend additional time and energy justifying research on Asian Americans, a stereotypically successful and high-achieving student group (Museus, 2009).

Stereotypes of Asian American students, including the model minority myth, appear to remain prevalent among White student affairs educators (Liang & Sedlacek, 2003). In an experimental study examining attitudes of White student affairs educators toward Asian American students, Liang and Sedlacek (2003) found that educators had significantly positive attitudes toward Asian Americans when race was mentioned compared to attitudes toward Asian Americans when race was not mentioned. The authors pointed out that applying expectations to a racial group of people is a form of racism even if the expectations appear positive. These positive expectations further complicate the racial context in which Asian American students develop their identities.

### **The Complexities of Identity Development**

Exploring students' different layers of identities is complex. Students often struggle between being able to define themselves as individuals while simultaneously being able to define themselves as members of a group (Kuo, 2001). In light of Liang

and Sedlacek's (2003) research, the possibility of facilitators and other students in the intergroup dialogue context harboring positive expectations of Asian American students exist, which could impact their interactions with Asian American students. Further, these interactions inform Asian American students about their perceived identity by others.

Students negotiate between their personal internally defined identity and external identities forced upon them by others (Chen, 2009). In a chapter exploring the complex identities of Asian Americans, Chen (2009) listed three factors in identity development, including salience of individual and collective identities, role of context, and internal versus external definition identity. Chen defined salience as the most prominent social identity in any given space and time. The salience of different social identities differs depending on the context, such as social situations and geographical location. The context in which Asian American students find themselves also impacts their behaviors and attitudes related to their social identities.

Asian American students experience varying levels of internally and externally defined identities based on their own identity development (Kim, 2005). An individual embraces an externally defined identity when she or he passively accepts a societal definition of what members of society perceive to be her or his most salient identity (Chen, 2009). For example, Asian American students may passively accept their identity as Asian American because members of society see them as Asian American and do not acknowledge other social identities, such as class or gender, which are dimensions that may have significant impact on students' identities. Contrastingly, an individual embraces an internally defined identity when she or he consciously identifies with a social identity, indicating a developed sense of meaning to that identity (Chen, 2009).

## **Interplay Between Racial and Ethnic Identity**

In addition to understanding an externally and internally defined identity, Asian American students also struggle to make meaning of both their ethnic and racial identities. In a study examining the formation of ethnic and racial identities through narrative essays written by young Asian American professionals, Min and Kim (2000) found that the essayists struggled to come to terms with their ethnic and racial identities, which emerged through years of searching and involved significant inner conflict. The authors also found that the essayists held both strong ethnic identities and varying levels of racial identity, which stemmed from a consciousness of their minority status and expressed as a pan-Asian American or person of color identity. This balance of ethnic and racial identity is unique to Asian American students and is not usually studied (Phinney, 1990).

A context that provides a unique manner to examine identity is intergroup dialogue. The presence of identity factors in an intergroup dialogue setting provides a unique context in which to study Asian American students' racial identity experiences. In intergroup dialogue courses, Asian American students' racial identities are made salient because the dialogue courses, especially those focused on race, primes students to think about their own racial identity or other social identities, such as gender and class. Participants in race intergroup dialogue classes are typically assigned to a dialogue based on their self-identified racial identity on a demographic questionnaire (Nagda et al., 1999). Once in the dialogue, an ongoing challenge to explore the different layers of students' identities exists because of the complex nature of identity. While students learn about both the experiences of being White and experiences of other students of color, the extent to which a student identifies herself or himself as a part of a group depends largely on her

or his relative position in the intergroup relationship (Zúñiga & Nagda, 1993). Specifically for Asian American students, they can learn about the experiences of individuals who are not Asian American while examining their own identity as Asian American. However, while an Asian American student may self-identify as “Asian American” on the demographic questionnaire, the extent to which the student actually identifies as Asian American is unclear.

This intergroup dialogue context is a unique way to understand how Asian American students make sense of their racial identity because further understanding and exploration of identities are outcomes of dialogue courses. Gurin and Nagda (2006) suggested that future research is needed to more closely examine the impact of various diversity education approaches for different ethnic and racial groups of students. Given that Asian American students possess complex racial and ethnic identities, false assumptions made about Asian American student identities coupled with a potential role as a “spokesperson” in intergroup dialogue could affect how they participate in the dialogue and influence how they experience their racial identity.

### **Context of Intergroup Dialogue**

Intergroup dialogue allows students to use critical analysis to explore and understand the intersection of identity, both individual and group, within the systems of power and privilege, and the impact of this intersection on themselves and other students (Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell, 2009). This critical consciousness helps students personalize the connection between their identities and inequalities, encouraging them to take inventory of their experiences as members of an identity group, to examine the origin of existing stereotypes, and to delve into the dynamics of a system of power and

privilege (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002). This critical consciousness and this manner of addressing intergroup relations is a documented outcome of intergroup dialogue (Lopez, Gurin, & Nagda, 1998; Nagda, Gurin, & Lopez, 2003; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003).

A balanced group composition contributes to a sense of safety and group solidarity, especially for minority groups (Anzaldúa, 1990). Nagda et al. (1999) discussed the importance of having a balanced group composition in intergroup dialogue courses. Negative roles, such as being appointed as a “spokesperson” on behalf of their racial or ethnic group, have been documented (Chesler, Wilson, & Malani, 1993). Additionally, the role of minority students (e.g., students of color, female students, students with lower socioeconomic status) has emerged as an ongoing dilemma in intergroup dialogue; this role is “the fine line between exploitation and empowerment” (Zúñiga & Nagda, 1993, p. 247). An Asian American student may feel empowered by sharing a long-silenced voice but could potentially feel exploited if she or he were placed in a teaching role for other students, especially if she or he is the only one or one of few Asian American voices in a dialogue. Additionally, Asian American students may experience difficulty balancing their personal identity and their group (Asian American) identity (Kardia & Sevig, 2001) in this context where they may need to decide between speaking for themselves or speaking on behalf of their racial group.

By studying Asian American racial identity in the context of intergroup dialogue, I hope to understand how Asian American students experience their racial identity in a context where racial identity appears to be salient. As a qualitative study, this study brings a rich narrative to the documented outcomes of intergroup dialogue in quantitative



studies (cite those who have studied this quantitatively). Additionally, this study will illuminate the complexity of Asian American racial identity, involvement in diversity-related activities on campus, and increased understanding and awareness of Asian American issues.

### **Problem Statement and Research Questions**

Asian American identity development is complex for reasons including the prevalence of the model minority myth, the interplay between racial and ethnic identity development, and a lack of understanding the varying aspects of self-identification (e.g., external identification, internal identification). In the context of an intergroup dialogue, Asian American students are placed in a race intergroup dialogue based on their racial identity, which dialogue facilitators and other students will use in their interactions with Asian American students. This is problematic because Asian American students may not actually identify as Asian American but are treated as such by others in intergroup dialogue. Given that these students might be externally identified by others in the dialogues, it is important to understand how they experience their own racial identities. Thus, the purpose of this constructivist narrative study is to explore how Asian American students experience their racial identity in intergroup dialogue. This study will address the following guiding research question: how do Asian American students experience their racial identity in the context of intergroup dialogues?

### **Significance of the Study**

Research on Asian American students and their experiences is largely missing from present-day literature. In a review of the five most widely read peer-reviewed academic journals in higher education, including *The Journal of Higher Education*,

*Research in Higher Education, The Review of Higher Education, the Journal of College Student Development, and the NASPA Journal*, Museus (2009) found approximately 1% of the articles published during the last 10 years gave specific attention to Asian Americans. In this section, I will explore the ways in which the present study is significant: by adding to the existing body of research on Asian American students, on the detriments of stereotypes on Asian American students, on the complexity of racial identity, and on intergroup dialogue experiences.

Chang (2008) suggested that Asian American students are one of the most misunderstood groups on campuses because of this omission of Asian Americans from higher education research and discourse. As the student body becomes increasingly diverse, the importance of developing further understanding of particular student populations increases (Museus & Chang, 2009). This study furthered understanding about how Asian American students and their experiences are related to their racial identity. Such an understanding is important to knowing how to help Asian American students navigate campus environments and resources and to delivering effective services to Asian American students.

Exploring racial identity experiences of Asian American students will shed light on the detriments of the model minority myth. Ng, Lee, and Pak (2007) contested the model minority myth stereotype in education after discovering varying levels of educational achievement among Asian American students. The authors argued that monolithic views about Asian American student successes are damaging to understanding this student population because the rich diversity of this population are aggregated into the Asian American label. Further, Ng et al. urged for more research on Asian American

students, specifically deeper insights into the role of race in educational settings to examine the experiences of Asian American students as they navigate campus environments. The authors argued that such understanding is imperative to avoid essentializing these students in a manner that feeds into an Othering discourse. While adding to the body of literature on Asian American students, this study explored the complexities of racial identity experiences, which could potentially illuminate the role of racial identity in the lives of Asian American students as perceived by the student or by others.

In addition to Asian American student literature, this study added to the existing body of intergroup dialogue research. The present study examined a specific population of students (Asian Americans) in intergroup dialogue. Asian American students are rarely studied in intergroup dialogue as a group because the dialogues usually do not have enough students of color to disaggregate data (Sorensen et al., 2009). Most studies compare students of color as a group with white students (Sorensen et al., 2009). Existing research on intergroup dialogue are largely quantitative studies (such as Gurin, 1999; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003). Qualitative research on student experiences of intergroup dialogue, such as the present study, provides a rich narrative to the existing body of research.

Social identity, especially racial identity, is made salient in intergroup dialogue that set dialogue programs apart from other diversity intervention programs. Rosters of intergroup dialogue courses are constructed around what students indicate as their racial identity. Simply because a student indicates “Asian/Asian American” on their demographic questionnaire does not necessarily indicate that the identification

encompasses her or his full identity (Kodama & Abreo, 2009). For Asian American students, because a strong link between their ethnic and racial identity exists (Kodama et al., 2001; Chen, 2009), intergroup dialogue courses built on racial identity offer partial opportunities to further investigate the role of identity. This study further illuminated if and how these complex identities are discussed in intergroup dialogue. Additionally, this study explored the effectiveness of intergroup dialogue programs as they exist as a form of diversity education for Asian American students.

### **Definition of Important Terms**

I will define several important terms used throughout this proposal. Clarity of multiple variations of the term *Asian American*, *racial identity*, and *racial identity development* provides background on the terminology and a consistent definition used throughout this proposal.

#### **Asian American**

Multiple terminologies are used to refer to *Asian Americans*, including Asian American (AA), Asian Pacific American (APA), Asian Pacific Islander (API), Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA), Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), or Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI). The term *Asian American* refers to both a racial category and a sociopolitical identity. As a racial category, *Asian Americans* is narrowly defined as descendants of immigrants from any part of Asia or are themselves immigrants from Asia to the United States (Liu, Murakami, Eap, & Hall, 2009). According to the 1997 Office of Management and Budget's Revision to Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, *Asian Americans* are defined as "person[s] having origins in any of the original peoples of the

Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam” (Revisions to the Standards, 1997, p. 58786)

While the government definition of Asian American does not explicitly include Pacific Islanders, the term often implicitly assumes inclusion. More recently, terms such as *APA*, *API*, *APIA*, and *AAPI*, are more commonly used to explicitly include Pacific Islanders. *Asian American* is a pan-ethnic term that allows the diverse members of the group to build solidarity in order to fight oppression and demand rights and resources (Chang & Kwan, 2009).

For the purposes of this study, I will use the term *Asian Americans*, as defined by Liu et al. (2009). I recognize that using this pan-ethnic term may not accurately represent the diversity of the Asian American population. I am consciously excluding Pacific Islanders from this term because of their distinct racial experiences in the United States. While I predefined the term *Asian American* for the purposes of the research proposal, this definition changed as the study unfolded and my participants defined for themselves what Asian American means.

### **Racial Identity and Racial Identity Development**

*Racial identity* and *racial identity development* are terms that are inextricably linked and are often confused with each other. The term *racial identity* refers to an individual’s sense of collective identity based on the individual’s perception that she or he shares a common heritage with a particular racial group (Helms, 1993). *Racial identity development*, on the other hand, refers to the process by which individual members of various social identity groups overcome internalized racism to achieve a self-affirming

group identity (Helms & Cook, 2005). In short, *racial identity* describes the content of the identity and *racial identity development* describes the process by which the content changes.

### **Ethnic Identity**

For Asian Americans, racial identity and ethnic identity are critical to understanding who they are because they often negotiate experiences of their ethnic culture, American culture, and racial identity, which includes experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination (Chang & Kwan, 2009). *Ethnic identity* refers to an individual's "attachment to, sense of belonging to, and identification with members from their ethnic group as well as their ethnic culture" (Phinney, 1989, p. 119). Contrasted with racial identity, ethnic identity is not usually conceptually grounded in systems of oppression. Instead, for many Asian Americans, ethnic identity is grounded in the country of origin of their ancestors, the history of their family's settlement in the United States, or the geographical locations in the United States. Often associated with ethnic identity is a perception and expectation that people are knowledgeable and actively practice aspects of their ethnic culture (Chang & Kwan, 2009).

### **Intergroup Dialogue**

*Intergroup dialogue* is an educational intervention that brings together students from two or more social identity groups that have a history of conflict or potential conflict to build relationships across difference, to raise consciousness of social inequalities, to explore similarities and differences in experiences of identity groups, and to bolster individual and collective work to promote social justice and democracy in the larger society (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Zúñiga & Nagda, 1993). Structurally, intergroup

dialogue courses are comprised of 12 to 16 students who meet weekly over a period of seven to fourteen weeks. The curriculum of the intergroup dialogue courses integrates different modes of learning and is typically co-facilitated by peers, faculty, or staff who represent the social identity groups of the students enrolled in the dialogue (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). For example, a People of Color/White People dialogue will have a facilitator who is White and a facilitator who is a person of color. Intergroup dialogue focus on open and reflective communication about difficult topics, and thus, complement structural and curricular diversity initiatives in higher education institutions by providing students with venues to develop meaningful engagement with other students across differences and to strengthen their capacity to work together.

Although this study focused primarily on racial identity in the intergroup dialogue context, I believe that students are whole beings and their experiences are products of their intersecting identities. My hope is that this study was a stepping-stone toward understanding the complex intersectional identities of students' experiences. In this chapter, I have provided a problem statement and research questions, shared the significance of the present study, and defined important terminology. In the following chapter, I will ground this study in the existing bodies of literature of racial identity, Asian American identity, diversity education, and intergroup dialogue.





## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this chapter with a review of racial identity and racial identity development models to lay a foundation of understanding Asian American racial identity. Next, I explore the complexities of Asian American racial identity, including racial identity, ethnic identity, and pan-ethnic identity. To transition toward a discussion of diversity education and intergroup dialogue, I explore the impact diversity programming on Asian Americans in higher education. I begin the second half of the chapter discussing diversity education and the benefits of such programs to lay a foundation to understanding intergroup dialogue. Next, I review literature on intergroup dialogue, including definitions of intergroup dialogue, pedagogical foundations, practice principles, and previous research conducted on intergroup dialogue. This chapter ends with a synthesis of research on Asian American racial identity in the context of intergroup dialogue.

### **Racial Identity**

*Race* as a category in the United States has been historically associated with cultural, material, and physical differences, leaving the term nearly indistinguishable from *ethnicity* as a category (Adams, 2001). This section explores the conflation between the concepts of race and ethnicity and clarifies the definition of race, racial identity, and racial identity development and explores racial identity development models.

There exists an inconsistent and interchangeable use of ethnicity and race, as well as ethnic and racial identity, among researchers and members of society (Cokley, 2007; Quintana, 2007); explicit and implicit definitions of race and ethnicity also exist (Quintana, 2007). In an article discussing issues related to measuring racial and ethnic

identity in psychology, Cokley (2007) concluded that this inconsistency and interchangeability prohibits researchers from identifying structures that differentiate and distinguish the constructs from each other, leading to more questions than answers when studying ethnic and racial identity. Quintana (2007) further argued the problem with using conventional sociocultural terms in research studies is the assumption that participants use ethnic and racial terms similar to the way researchers use the term.

Scholars have made arguments supporting the use of new language when discussing issues of race and ethnicity (Alcoff, 2006; Cross & Cross, 2007; Goldberg; 1993). Cross and Cross (2007) suggested that to capture racial, ethnic, and cultural identities that minority populations experience, sociocultural identities should be referred to as *racial-ethnic-cultural identities*. This hybrid terminology captures the experience of race, ethnicity, and culture more holistically. Goldberg (1993) presented the notion of *ethnorace* as a contemporary concept for race, encompassing the experiences that, at times, race takes on significance in terms of ethnicity. Alcoff (2006) asserted the helpfulness of the concept when understanding Latino identity. Alcoff argued that *ethnorace* brings together the human agency and subjectivity involved with ethnicity and the racialization of physical appearance and culture, suggesting that more than one concept is important for understanding Latino identity. I would argue that this similar conception is applicable to understanding Asian American identity.

There also exist different conceptualizations of race: race as a social construct and race as a biological trait. In an article reviewing the anthropological and historical origins of the concept of race and synthesizing these perspectives with the psychological study of race, Smedley (2005) argued that anthropologists understand human behavior

through terms of cultural phenomena, such as ethnicity and culture, and not through innate biological causes. Because ethnicity and cultural phenomena, such as common language, religion, sense of history, and food habits, are learned and have no intrinsic connection to biological variations of race, Smedley argued that this anthropological perspective saw ethnicity as transmissible to others but differences between races cannot be transcended. In a historical perspective based in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two conceptions of race existed: one that focused on biological variation and based in science and one that incorporated physical appearance and social behavior. Using the latter conception, race essentialized groups of people in social status, behavior, and ranking based on physical traits.

Smedley (2005) posed the question of whether race should be included in national discussions of public policy since race is neither biological nor anthropological. The difficulty in answering this question lies in the fact that individual discrimination is often easier to identify compared to institutional discrimination. *Race* as a concept has been framed to justify inequality in educational and occupational attainment (Adams, 2001) and to create and enforce social order (Smedley, 2005). Although race as a biological concept is not useful in national discussions, race as a social concept is a significant predictor differentiating between groups who have access and groups who face barriers to full inclusion in society. Smedley further argued that as long as biological notion of race exists and continues to emphasize absolute difference among people, racial inequality also remains.

Although a conflation of race and ethnicity exists in larger discussions of both concepts, scholars have identified clarifying definitions of terms used to talk about race

and ethnicity. As aforementioned, *race* has been historically associated with social and biological differences between groups of people (Adams, 2001). *Racial identity* refers to an individual's sense of possessing a collective identity based on the individual's perception that she or he shares a common heritage with a particular racial group, such as White, Asian American, Black, Latino, or Native American (Helms, 1993). *Racial identity development*, on the other hand, refers to the process through which individual members of various racial identity groups overcome internalized racism to achieve a self-affirming group identity (Helms & Cook, 2005). In short, *racial identity* describes the content of the identity and *racial identity development* describes the process by which the content changes. Both content and process are important to understanding racial identity.

### **Racial Identity Development**

A number of racial identity development models have been presented over time to capture the process through which students of color develop their racial identities. Some of these models will be explored in this section to illuminate prevailing assumptions regarding how this process occurs. I will explore the five-stage Minority Identity Model (MID) by Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1989), a racial identity development model by Hardiman and Jackson (1992), Helms' (2005) People of Color racial identity development model, and several core processes of racial identity development identified by Adams (2001).

Atkinson et al. (1989) presented a model of minority identity development based on a combination of the works by earlier authors (Cross, 197; Helms, 1985; Jackson, 1975) and their personal observations of their clients. Their intention behind presenting this model was to help counselors understand the attitudes and behaviors of their minority

clients. This five-stage Minority Identity Development (MID) model identified and defined stages of development that oppressed individuals could experience as they come to understand their identity in terms of their own culture, the dominant culture, and the relationship between the two. Although this model was presented in distinct stages, the authors stated that the process is more fluid and continuous, as boundaries between stages are less clear in practice.

At each stage, Atkinson et al. (1989) provided four corresponding attitudes that further the understanding of how individuals behave during that stage. The attitudes are attitude toward self, attitude toward members of the same minority, attitude toward members of a different minority, and attitude toward members of the dominant group (Atkinson et al., 1989). Although this model drew upon similar processes experienced by oppressed groups and provided insightful attitudes to further understanding, this model was developed using an etic perspective, an external or outsider's view on beliefs and customs. In the counseling context, this view assumes that clients experience a universal culture. In other words, the authors approached the development with the assumption that all minority clients have similar experiences based on their oppressed identity.

Multiple authors have attempted to present models of racial identity development (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992; Helms, 1990; Kim, 2005) to encompass the unique processes that different racial groups experience. Hardiman and Jackson (1992) presented a racial identity development model in hopes of further understanding racial dynamics on college campuses among students. The authors defined racial identity as a sense of self one has in the context of her or his racial group membership and all cultural aspects of that racial group membership. Although this model recognized that a student's

social identity is fluid and changes over time to match the student's experiences, beliefs, and other identities, the model was based on the racial identity development of Black and White Americans (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992). This model served as an example of how race is discussed in terms of Black and White, leaving no space for other racial groups, including Asian Americans.

Over time, models of racial identity development have evolved. Helms' People of Color racial identity development model evolved from her original Black racial identity model through recognition of similarities among racial experiences (Helms & Cook, 2005). She asserted that the collective task for all people of color is to overcome internalized racism in order to develop a realistic collective identity. Helms defined "people of color" as Asian, African, Latino/Latina, and Native Americans (ALANA) and adapted six racial identity statuses for ALANA individuals. These statuses, called "ego statuses," begin with a primitive status requiring very little effort from the person to make sense of her or his own identity. This primitive status, called *conformity*, is characterized by self-identifying by external sources, conforming to White standards, and remaining oblivious to the history of inequality and social construction of race. *Dissonance* is the next status, characterized by confusion when an individual begins to acknowledge feeling out of place among the White standards and culture. Individuals in the *immersion* status begin idealizing their own racial group and denigrating anything perceived as White. *Emersion* is characterized by an individual's euphoric feeling of solidarity when surrounded by his or her own group. Positively committing to and accepting one's own group while objectively responding to members of the dominant group characterizes the *internalization* status. Lastly, individuals in the *integrative awareness* status have the

capacity to value personal identities while empathizing and collaborating with others in oppressed groups.

The goal of this process was for individuals to reach the last status and have the ability to use this status in coping with a society that often threatens an integrated and positive sense of self. Helms and Cook (2005) mentioned that individuals go through more than one status and expression of racial identity is often seen as a blend of statuses. Although this model embraced the social construction and historical implications of race, this model also assumed an individual develops her or his racial identity in a linear fashion.

Another method of addressing racial identity development that surfaced was to identify core processes that affect people of color in similar ways. Adams (2001) proposed five core processes in racial identity development by examining racial (Black) and ethnic (Asian and Latino) identity development models. The author argued that culture, as expressions of racial and ethnic identity, and social status, as subordination from inequality and oppression, are inextricably linked and indistinguishable in analysis. Therefore, both racial and ethnic identity models provided the foundation for these five core processes. Adams warned that these core processes (development of identity) should not be confused with cultural content (identity) that are unique to specific groups. Further, the author explicitly mentioned the delicate balance between analyzing core generic features of racial identity development with an appreciation of the variability among individuals within groups and between groups. After her analysis, Adams proposed core processes that identify generic developmental processes while acknowledging variability within and between groups and individuals. Adams argued

that these processes remain consistent across racial and ethnic identity groups as she explored various identity development models, including Jackson's (1975) Black Identity Development and Kim's (2005) Asian American identity development.

The first process, *transformed consciousness*, described the process by which an individual who has previously conformed to White standards is actively rejecting these standards and embracing the values, beliefs, and culture of her or his own group. Further exploration of these values, beliefs, and culture leads an individual to the second process, *redefinition*. In this process, an individual explores the possibility of having a self-affirming minority identity, which is distinct and separate from the dominant White narrative. The third process, *parallel developmental tasks*, is the simultaneous development of dominant and minority identities, and minority identities with each other. The fourth and fifth processes, *interactions between racial and ego identity processes* and *racial identity functions* of bonding, buffering, bridging, code switching, and individualism, are psychological in nature (Adams, 2001). Racial identity development models range from describing development of people of color as a whole and as specific subgroups. These models provide a basic understanding of the process of racial identity development. The purpose of this study focuses on the content of Asian American racial identity, the topic explored next.

### **Asian American Racial Identity**

*Asian American* as a racial identity has been largely treated as though all Asian Americans identify with the Asian American community to the same degree (Alvarez, 2002). The term *Asian American* refers to both a racial category and a sociopolitical identity (Chang & Kwan, 2009). As a racial category, *Asian American* is narrowly



defined as descendants of immigrants from any part of Asia or are themselves immigrants from Asia to the United States (Liu et al., 2009). As a sociopolitical identity, *Asian American* brings together diverse Asian ethnic groups in solidarity in order to address inequality, oppression, and racism (Chang & Kwan, 2009). This section explores why racial identity is a complex identity for Asian Americans through reviewing literature on Asian American racial identity, Asian American ethnic identity, and Asian American as a pan-ethnic identity. I will conclude this section by reviewing implications of diversity education for Asian American students.

### **Complexity of Asian American Racial Identity**

Racial identity for Asian Americans is complex and requires an understanding of how race as a category and as an identity intersects with ethnicity as a category and identity. Further, the use of the term *Asian American* for both a racial category and a sociopolitical identity adds another layer of complexity. This complexity, in conjunction with the impact of model minority myth and the lack of understanding behind varying aspects of self-identification, suggests that the experience of their racial identity by Asian American students is multi-layered and misunderstood. In this section, I review and synthesize literature on these issues to further understand the complexity of the Asian American racial identity.

Before engaging in an exploration of how and why Asian American racial identity is complex, an understanding of factors impacting identity and identity development should be explored. Multiple factors, such as salience of various social identities, the role of context in identity salience, and internally versus externally defined identity affect identity development, affect identity development (Chen, 2009). Chen defined identity

salience as the most prominent social identity in any given space and time. Identity salience differs depending on the context, such as social situations and geographical location.

When an individual embraces an externally defined identity, she or he passively accepts a societal definition of what society perceives to be her or his most salient identity (Chen, 2009). For example, if society sees an Asian American student as Asian American, she or he may passively accept her or his identity as Asian American. This student may not acknowledge her or his other social identities, such as class or gender, which are dimensions that may have significant impact on the student's identity. When an individual embraces an internally defined identity, she or he consciously identifies with a social identity, indicating a developed sense of meaning to that identity (Chen, 2009). This internal definition of identity is characteristic of the mature level (integrative awareness) of Helms' People of Color racial identity development (Helms & Cook, 2005).

*Race* as a category in the United States has been historically associated with cultural, material, and physical differences, leaving the term nearly indistinguishable from ethnicity as a category (Adams, 2001). *Ethnicity* refers more neutrally to a people's culture, inclusive of lifestyles, values, languages, customs, and beliefs (Adams, 2001). Studies have shown that both terms are complexly linked and that Asian Americans have struggled to simultaneously define both identities for themselves (Kodama & Abreo, 2009; Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2003; Min & Kim, 2000).

One study that demonstrates this complexity and struggle is Kodama and Abreo's (2009) quantitative study examining how students self-identify with various social identities and exploring how this self-identification is related to their involvement in

campus activities. Kodama and Abreo conducted the study with the assumption that although students check the “Asian” box on their college application, not all students would select that choice if given other options. The authors hypothesized that students who selected a pan-Asian label would be most likely to be involved in campus activities specifically for Asian American students and to be more aware of and concerned about issues affecting Asian Americans. Contrastingly, the authors expected students who did not choose a pan-Asian label or either ethnicity-related labels to be least likely involved in campus activities and concerned about Asian American issues. Students who selected either ethnicity-related labels will demonstrate involvement and concern somewhere between the two aforementioned groups.

Participants in this study were undergraduate students enrolled in a Midwestern public, Research I institution where Asian Americans comprised 25% of the student population, the largest racial minority group on campus. Students who selected the “Asian” box on their university admission application were randomly selected to participate in the study through the completion of a survey. A multidisciplinary committee comprised of faculty, students, and staff brought together to assess the needs and interests of Asian American students on campus created the survey. Respondents were given the option to select one of five identities by which they primarily identified: (1) Asian American, (2) specific ethnicity (e.g., Korean), (3) ethnicity American (e.g., Korean American), (4) just American, and (5) haven’t thought about it.

The authors found that 40% of respondents self-identified with the specific ethnicity label, 28% identified with the specific ethnicity American label, 21% identified with the Asian American label, and the remaining 11% identified with the American label

or haven't thought about their identity. The authors found that the ethnicity American (e.g., Korean American) group had the most interest in and identified most with their ethnic and racial heritage. However, the authors found no patterns for respondents who identified as Asian American. Potential explanations for this finding included the apparent amorphous and catchall nature of the term "Asian American," the idea that most students might have encountered the term when they arrived on campus, and the unique situation of being Asian American in the Midwest. Kodama and Abreo's (2009) study points to the importance of future research to further understand how these labels relate to identity development theories or fit into these models. From this study, it is clear that a significant and complex relationship exists between ethnic and racial identity.

**Experiences of race and ethnicity.** Experiences of race and ethnicity are often linked for Asian Americans, leaving individuals confused in deciphering experiences that are a result of their ethnic identity and those that are a result of their racial identity. In a qualitative study examining retention of ethnic culture and participation in ethnic and pan-ethnic networks among a group of Asian American professionals, Min and Kim (2000) documented this struggle in 15 young professionals who were post-1965 immigrants. Participants were instructed to write essays focused on four topics related to ethnic and pan-ethnic attachments: (1) experiences of prejudice and discrimination, (2) retention of ethnic culture, (3) ethnic versus non-ethnic friendships, and (4) ethnic and pan-ethnic identities. In analysis of these essays, Min and Kim found that the struggle to make meaning of both ethnic and racial identities was the most significant aspect of the essayists' lives. Most essayists presented a strong ethnic identity but had varying degrees of racial identity, which was expressed as either a pan-Asian or people of color identity.

This study is another example of the complexity between individuals' ethnic and racial identity.

An additional layer to racial identity development is how one sees herself or himself as part of a minority group. Kuo (2001) conducted a narrative study on the identity development process for Asian American students in an attempt to understand how Asian Americans construct and understand themselves as individuals and as members of a minority group. Kuo selected four, second-generation Asian American undergraduate students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) who represented different Asian ethnic groups. After interviewing the students using a semi-formal protocol, Kuo utilized a narrative analysis based in grounded theory to analyze the responses.

Kuo (2001) found that participants struggled to find a balance between the inner and social selves. Additionally, participants' choices, specifically on academic decisions and friendship patterns, were impacted by this tension between their personal self-concept and the group identity. There was a range of experiences that illuminated the difficulty to integrate how the participants saw themselves (self-identity) and how others perceived them (group identity). In attempting to define what their Asian American identity meant, participants also dealt with preconceived notions about their Asian American group identity, such as the model minority myth stereotype.

Kuo (2001) mentioned that she did not explicitly ask students to speak from their ethnic perspective and that the younger student participants may not have had sufficient time to reflect on their college experiences as two potential limitations for her study. However, Kuo's definition of race as physical characteristics is another area of limitation

because her definition only reflects the racial category of Asian American, but not the sociopolitical identity.

**Model minority myth.** As aforementioned in Kuo's (2001) study, Asian American students are attempting to define what it means to be Asian American in the context of preconceived notions of what being Asian American means by non-Asian Americans, specifically the model minority myth stereotype. Museus and Kiang (2009) argued that the model minority myth is the reason behind the invisibility of research in higher education about Asian Americans. The authors further argued that such an absence prevents further learning and understanding of Asian Americans and continues the perpetuation of the stereotype. The result is a vicious cycle that perpetuates ignorance and distorted images of Asian American students. In a chapter attempting to deconstruct the model minority myth, Museus and Kiang suggested that the myth is associated with five key misconceptions.

The first misconception is that *Asian Americans are all the same*, which Museus and Kiang (2009) argued as a result of oversimplifying and racializing various ethnic groups. The frequent reporting of oversimplified aggregated data masks the complexity and diversity that exists among the Asian American student population. The second misconception is that *Asian Americans are not really racial and ethnic minorities*. This misconception is fueled by the exclusion of Asian Americans from definitions of underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities by private and public funding agencies, suggesting that Asian Americans do not face challenges similar to those of other minority groups and therefore do not require similar attention. Further, Asian Americans are often not considered an underrepresented minority group in higher education research and

discourse, even though Asian Americans do experience similar challenges, such as discrimination, racial prejudice, and pressures to conform to racial stereotypes, that other students of color experience because of their minority status.

The third and fourth misconceptions, *Asian Americans do not encounter major challenges because of their race* and *Asian Americans do not seek or require resources and support*, are related and are a result of both preexisting notions of Asian American students' experiences and their infrequent use of campus resources. However, this infrequent use of campus resources could be a result of inadequate cultural competence displayed by faculty and staff. The last misconception, *college degree completion is equivalent to success*, prevails even though Asian Americans with similar levels of education earn lower wages and hold fewer managerial positions than their peers (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Museus and Kiang (2009) demonstrated that the model minority myth is still prevalent in many areas on college campuses.

The detrimental impact of the model minority myth on students' wellbeing has been documented (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Suzuki, 2002). Yoo, Burrola, and Steger (2010) conducted a study examining the validity and reliability of the Internalization of the Model Minority Myth Measure (IM-4), a measure that examines the extent to which Asian Americans internalize this myth. This measure has two subscales, Model Minority Myth of Achievement Orientation and Model Minority Myth of Unrestricted Mobility. The Model Minority Myth of Achievement Orientation refers to the myth of Asian Americans' success associated with their work ethic and drive to succeed. The Model Minority Myth of Unrestricted Mobility refers to the myth of Asian Americans' success associated with their lack of perceived racism or barriers in the classroom or at the office.

Although this measure is an additional resource for researchers to examine the extent to which Asian Americans internalize the model minority myth, the measure has some limitations. The generalizability is limited because validation and reliability were conducted on a group of academically successful, ethnically diverse Asian American college students. The model minority myth typically overgeneralizes success of all Asian Americans; thus, it is important to understand how the validity and reliability of the scale varies when examining the diversity (e.g., ethnicity, geographical location, generational status) within the Asian American community. The generalizability is further limited because the authors were unable to test for ethnic group differences because of the sample size.

### **Asian Americans and Racial Identity**

This complexity of Asian American racial identity can be attributed to blurred experiences of race and ethnicity in a context that embraces Asian American stereotypes. This section will review key literature related to Asian American racial identity development and the implications of Asian American racial identity in higher education. Alvarez's (2002) review of Helms' People of Color racial identity development and its applicability to Asian American students and Kim's (2005) Asian American Identity Development theory are also discussed.

**Asian American racial identity development.** Before the Asian American Identity Development Theory, a model of racial identity development did not exist for Asian American students. In a chapter examining relevance of race and racial identity for Asian Americans in college as well as their implications for student affairs professionals, Alvarez (2002) reviewed Helms' People of Color racial identity development model as a



conceptual framework for examining racial identity development of Asian American college students and used Sanford's (1966) concept of challenge and support to facilitate the application of theory to practice. In the paragraphs that follow, I will summarize how Asian American students may experience each of Helms' six statuses and present corresponding challenges and supports that arise for these students according to Alvarez.

In the *conformity* status, characterized by minimization of race and racial dynamics, Asian American students may idealize assimilation into the White community on campus while rejecting any tie to the Asian American community on campus, including other students, student organizations, and resources. A challenge for Asian American students in the conformity status is the increasing salience of their own race as Asian American as their experiences on campus cause them to think differently about race. A support for an Asian American student operating from this status is to use nonthreatening ways to expose the student to the significance of race, such as revealing positive elements of Asian American culture and history.

The *dissonance* status is characterized by anxiety, confusion, and racial ambivalence. Asian American students begin questioning their idealization of the White community and denigration of the Asian American community on campus. A challenge for students in this status is the recognition of previously denied messages about the significance of race. To support Asian American students in this status, student affairs educators could create environments that allow students to explore their questions about race and culture.

The *immersion* and *emersion* statuses are reactive statuses to the anxiety and confusion experienced in the *dissonance* status. The *immersion* status is characterized by

a dualistic racial worldview that idealizes all aspects of Asian and Asian American culture and denigrates all White people and White culture. The *emersion* status is characterized by a feeling of solidarity with Asian American-related issues, such as involvement in Asian American studies or in surrounding Asian American community, in an effort by students to reclaim their identity as Asian American. A challenge for both statuses is the wide range of emotion experienced by students, who may feel euphoric and prideful when thinking of their Asian American identity and/or anger and resentment when thinking about Whiteness. A support for Asian American students is to normalize their feelings of resentment and anger, and to channel their feelings in constructive ways.

In the *internalization* status, which is characterized by autonomy, Asian American students attempt to resolve the duality experienced in the previous statuses by developing a personally meaningful identity about what it means to be Asian American. A potential challenge for Asian American students in this reflective status is feeling a sense of betrayal of their former pro-Asian American beliefs. Asian American students in this status may need support from student affairs educators to demonstrate their commitment to Asian American issues as they balance personal and group definitions of an Asian American identity.

The *integrative awareness* status, the most mature status, is characterized by a sense of racial self-esteem. Asian American students in this status have developed an integrated definition of personal and group views of what it means to be Asian American. A challenge students may face in this status is beginning to explore social identities other than race. Student affairs educators can support Asian American students in this status by facilitating this exploration through connecting students with resources on campus.

Through the application of Helms' People of Color identity theory, Alvarez (2002) was able to specify the process of Asian American racial identity development and identify ways through which educators can support this process. Although Alvarez provided a framework to apply a broad theory to Asian American students, a racial identity development theory on and for Asian American students was still missing.

Kim (2005) developed the Asian American Identity Development Theory to provide insight on "how Asian Americans resolve the racial identity conflicts they faced as Americans of Asian ancestry in a predominantly White society" (p. 281). Kim identified a five-stage process of acquiring a positive Asian American racial identity. Although this process is sequential in nature, it is not linear as each individual's experience is dependent on the social environment and other factors in the environment that influence the quality and length of the experience.

*Ethnic awareness* is characterized by the discovery of ethnic heritage, a period before which Asian Americans enter the school system and during which individuals experience their ethnicity through family members and relatives. Individuals in the second stage, *White identification*, likely having entered the school system, begin feeling different from peers and start alienating themselves from other Asian Americans, mostly because of painful encounters and experiences. These experiences depict the sense that being different is a bad thing. This sense is significant because of the Asian cultural tendency toward collectivism and fitting in. Because individuals at this stage lack understanding of the historical and social construction of race, individuals personalize their experiences of racism and mistreatment as something wrong with them, instead of an experience resulting from a societal structure. Min and Kim (2000) found that several

young professionals from their study tried hard to be White and associate with White students. However, as these individuals got older, they became increasingly aware that they were not White and would not be accepted as such.

Asian Americans in stage three, *awakening to social political consciousness*, are able to shift their worldview and realize that they are not personally responsible for their experiences with racism, but that society is responsible. This shift in worldview deepens their understanding of themselves and transforms their self-image to encompass a sense of resistance to being subordinated. In this stage, individuals recognize White racism and understand the role this plays in their experiences. In *redirection to an Asian American consciousness*, individuals begin to feel secure about their identity and typically engage in learning about the Asian American experience. This security allows individuals to realize their lack of knowledge about the Asian American experience and propels them to further engage in learning about this identity. Lastly, *incorporation* is characterized by a blending of the Asian American identity with the rest of an individual's identity. Individuals in this stage are highly confident of their personal Asian American identity and realize multiple dimensions of their identity in addition to their racial identity. Individuals at this stage also relate with other groups of individuals, particularly with other people of color (Min & Kim, 2000).

A significant limitation of this model is that the model was created in the 1980s based on a dissertation research project examining the experiences of Japanese American women. Further, Kim (2005) acknowledged that while this model has received anecdotal support of its applicability across different Asian American ethnic groups, it has not been empirically tested. The model is thirty years old at the time of this proposal and is based

on a narrow group of Asian Americans. These two limitations question the applicability of the model and points toward the necessity to further investigate racial identity in Asian American students in the present time.

**Implications of Asian American racial identity.** How Asian American students self-identify has larger implications on their attitudes and beliefs. In a study examining Asian American students' attitudes toward affirmative action, Inkelas (2003b) found support on the link between an individual's racial and ethnic development and her or his views on larger racial issues. The data in this study came from a larger longitudinal study examining student expectations and experiences with multiculturalism and diversity.

The author found that Asian American students tend to agree with affirmative action in principle but not in practice. The college environments that are significant in influencing the support of Asian Americans on affirmative action principles included majoring in humanities and social sciences and viewing campus climate for interracial interaction to be less inviting. Influences on Asian American student support for affirmative action practices included students' personal beliefs, racial and/or ethnic identity, and co-curricular activities in which students participated. Additionally, students who participated more in informal conversations about diversity, and students who reflected more often about their racial and/or ethnic identity were more likely to support affirmative action practices.

Inkelas (2003b) asserted that this relationship between racial and/or ethnic identity and racial attitudes suggest that embracing and promoting awareness of Asian American issues is an effective manner to enhance support for diversity issues among

Asian American students. Although her findings were significant, Inkelas suggested future research is needed to better understand the concept of Asian American racial and ethnic identity and its relationship to Asian American racial attitudes. Further, Inkelas suggested that understanding why increased identity consciousness shapes Asian American students' views on broader racial issues holds important implications for higher education institution administrations in their work to improve interracial relations.

### **Asian Americans and Ethnic Identity**

In addition to racial identity, Asian American students also experience ethnic identity and ethnic identity development. In an article reviewing studies of ethnic identity published between 1972 and 1990, Phinney (1990) found that most studies of ethnicity focused on White ethnic groups and African Americans, with few studies on Asian Americans, Latinos, or Native Americans. In recent years, additional studies on Asian American ethnic identity have emerged. In this section, I will describe Asian American ethnic identity and the various roles ethnic identity plays in the lives of Asian Americans.

**Ethnic identity development.** While other studies have examined ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1993), few specifically address Asian American ethnic identity development. One such study is Yeh and Huang's (1996) qualitative study. The authors conducted a study to understand the process of ethnic identification by allowing Asian American participants to describe their ethnic identity development with an emphasis on minimizing predetermined choices and leading questions. The authors hoped to achieve three goals: to gather descriptive information on the influences, experiences, and other factors involved in Asian American ethnic identification; to

determine patterns of commonalities in the process; and to understand the collectivistic nature of Asian cultures in relation to the process of Asian American ethnic identification (Yeh & Huang, 1996).

Seventy-eight college students from a prestigious California university completed an ethnic identity development exercise, which consisted of a demographic questionnaire and an open-ended section asking participants to describe the process of their ethnic identity development through writing or drawing, including anything they thought were significant in the process. In addition to these basic instructions, participants were also given Phinney and Alipuria's (1987) definition of ethnic identity: "an individual's sense of self as a member of an ethnic group and the attitudes and behaviors associated with that sense" (p. 36).

Using content analysis, these drawings and writings were coded by three separate raters. The authors found that ethnic identity development for participants was not linear, intrapersonal, or individualistic, as previously thought. Instead, the participants described experiences and factors that significantly influenced their ethnic identity as collectivistic rather than individualistic, and external forces, such as relationships and social context, rather than intrapersonal development, motivated their ethnic identification. Additionally, participants indicated that shame, rather than anger as indicated by existing theories, was a strong influence. The authors questioned the applicability of the findings because of a lack of validity or reliability in their instrument and because participants were largely of a middle-class background (Yeh & Huang, 1996). Given the complex relationship of racial and ethnic identity in Asian Americans, it is unclear whether participants expressed their ethnic or racial identity in the study. For example, the authors reported that participants

felt that in order to avoid the embarrassment of being different, participants were motivated to conform to “white society.” While the authors’ report demonstrates the link between racial and ethnic identity, the authors failed to explore its significance.

**Other roles of ethnic identity.** A few studies in recent years have attempted to look at the role ethnic identity plays in the lives of Asian Americans and their experiences of racism. Studies looked at how ethnic identity is a potential protective factor against discrimination (Lee, 2005) and how the combination of ethnic identity and approach-type coping strategies, which are strategies that reflect attempts by an individual to actively engage in negotiation with a stressful environment, moderated the effects of discrimination (Yoo & Lee, 2005).

To address mixed results in empirical literature on the role of ethnic identity in racial discrimination, Yoo and Lee (2008) conducted a quasi-experimental vignette study to examine whether ethnic identity moderated the effects of frequent racial discrimination on the situational well-being of Asian American college students. The authors hypothesized that Asian Americans who imagined multiple incidents of racial discrimination would report lower situational well-being compared to Asian Americans imagining a single incident of racial discrimination.

The participants in this study were 128 self-identified Asian American college students. Participants received one of two randomized survey packets, each containing a demographic questionnaire, an ethnic identity measure, a vignette, and a situational well-being measure. Depending on which packet they received, participants were either instructed to imagine a single incident or multiple incidents of racial discrimination. The authors found that Asian American students who imagined experiencing multiple



incidents of racial discrimination reported lower levels of situational well-being than their peers who imagined a single incident. Yoo and Lee (2008) also found that individuals who identified with their ethnic identity groups might have taken greater offense and became increasingly sensitive to racial discrimination.

### **Pan-Ethnic Asian American Identity**

Pan-ethnicity is defined as a general solidarity among ethnic subgroups, usually the result of categorization (Espiritu, 1992). Pan-ethnic unity is formed through symbolic reinterpretation of a group's subjugated history. Once used against diverse groups, the modern concept of pan-ethnicity is a political tool for mobilizing diverse groups to convince others to be more responsive to their needs and grievances (Espiritu, 1992). The Asian American identity is a pan-ethnic identity, forged in the late 1960s in response to the label "Oriental" by college students of Asian ancestry who wanted to declare solidarity with other Asian Americans and minority groups (Espiritu, 1992). In this section, the definition of a pan-ethnic Asian American identity, controversy behind a pan-ethnic identity, and factors that strengthen or weaken a pan-ethnic identity are explored.

The construction of a pan-Asian ethnic identity involved creating a common Asian American heritage from a group of diverse people (Espiritu, 1992). This common heritage for Asian Americans is based on a shared history of exploitation, oppression, and discrimination. Additionally, the experience of being treated similarly to others based on an arbitrary criterion (i.e., the imposed racial category of Asian) is shared among Asian Americans. Espiritu (1992) argued that such unity is necessary for Asian Americans to fight systems of inequality and oppression in American society that serve to exclude, marginalize, and homogenize Asian Americans as a monolithic group.

This pan-ethnic Asian American identity is not without controversy (Espiritu, 1992). Asian Americans may not necessarily identify as Asian American for numerous reasons. For some Asian Americans, this pan-ethnic identity is their primary identity. For others, “Asian American” is one of many levels of ethnic identity. However, there are trends among those who do identify strongly with this pan-ethnic label. Individuals who are most vocal in promoting and strengthening a pan-ethnic Asian American identity are likely those who identify strongly with the Asian American label. This label has been embraced by students, artists, professionals, and political activists but not usually by Asian ethnic enclaves (Espiritu, 1992).

Since the concept was created, the Asian American population has become increasingly diverse in terms of class, ethnicity, generation, and other social identities. This diversity challenges the Asian American label as divisions among ethnic groups have weakened pan-ethnic coalitions (Espiritu, 1992). This internal diversity calls for the task of identifying ways to bridge differences among Asian Americans by those within the community in order to rebuild pan-Asian solidarity.

In a study exploring which factors strengthen or weakens pan-ethnic group consciousness among Latino(a)s and Asian Americans, Masuoka (2006) found that income and experiences of discrimination strengthened an Asian American pan-ethnic identity. The author found that Asian American pan-ethnic identity and formation resulted from experience. For Asian Americans, the author used data from the 2000 Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS). Although the author used a national survey, the survey consisted of responses representing the six largest Asian national-origin groups (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and South

Asian) in five major cities (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Honolulu, New York, and Chicago). One could argue whether this survey is truly representative of the diversity within the Asian American community. Identity for Asian American students is multilayered and multifaceted as students can identify in a number of ways. This range of identities further complicates diversity programming for and research on Asian Americans in higher education.

### **Diversity Programming and Asian Americans**

The difficulty in coordinating diversity programming and conducting research on Asian Americans lies in the paradox of imposing a definition on a group for which to advocate while refusing to identify who is in that group (Kumashiro, 2006). This paradox is based in the idea that a pan-Asian identity can be powerful in the political arena but can privilege certain voices, as the label “Asian American” is unable to describe the diversity within the community. Authors have argued that there exists an inconsistent and interchangeable use of the terms “ethnicity” and “race” (Cokley, 2007; Quintana, 2007) and suggested new ways to conceptualize ethnicity and race for populations in which these experiences are inextricably linked (Alcoff, 2006; Cross & Cross, 2007; Goldberg, 1993). Authors have also urged for new ways to conduct research on Asian Americans in higher education, including critical race theory (Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009), cultural studies, and queer theories (Kumashiro, 2006). This section explores literature on conducting and applying diversity research and programming to Asian American students.

Teranishi et al. (2009) offered critical race theory as an alternative theoretical perspective with which to use when conducting research on Asian American students.

The authors critiqued current student development theories for not acknowledging race or the impact of racial identity and experiences in the development of students. Kodama et al. (2001) investigated the appropriateness of applying Chickering and Reisser's (1993) model of student development to Asian American students by critiquing the theory and presenting themes related to Asian American students. The authors found that Chickering and Reisser do not address racial or ethnic identity in their theory. For Asian American students, racial and/or ethnic identity and identity development is largely relevant to their development in college. Further, the authors warned that student affairs educators should use caution when applying theories to Asian American students as educators could do more harm than good in applying theories that are potentially exclusive of Asian American student experiences (Kodama et al., 2001). Authors have argued that a binary conceptualization of race as Black and White places Asian Americans outside the discussion on race (Chang, Witt, Jones, & Hakuta, 2003; Green & Kim, 2005; Osajima, 1995), leading to a pattern of Asian Americans being overlooked in research in areas such as campus climate and psychological well-being (Teranishi et al., 2009).

This positioning of Asian Americans has significant impact on the actual experiences and attitudes of Asian American students. In a qualitative study examining Asian American undergraduate student views on affirmative action, Inkelas (2003a) found that Asian American students might feel caught in the middle of the struggle for equality. On one hand, Asian Americans do not benefit from historical advantages afforded in legacy admissions. On the other hand, Asian Americans also do not benefit from government policies that identify underrepresented minority in admissions. The author found that Asian American students might perceive other minority students as

inferior to Asian American applicants, feel threatened by both White students and other students of color in the college admissions process, and have a tendency to self-marginalize Asian American experiences in the discussion of race relations in the United States. Inkelas (2003a) argued that the self-marginalization could be a factor of the Black-White focus in diversity curriculum and programming prevalent on college campuses, urging student affairs educators to look beyond this binary at other ways to engage Asian American students.

In a separate study, Inkelas (2004) examined the relationship between Asian American students involved in Asian-ethnic interest student organizations and students' awareness and understanding of Asian American issues. This *ex post facto* research study used longitudinal data collected from 1990 to 1994 at a Midwestern university. The author found that almost half of the students surveyed experienced gains in awareness and understanding of Asian American issues during their undergraduate education. A significant factor in these gains was participating in ethnic and racial organizations, as well as in university-sponsored events and political activism. The author also found that the extent to which Asian American students thought about their racial and ethnic identity might be an intermediary variable in this relationship.

Although Inkelas' (2004) study found support for the impact of co-curricular environments on understanding and awareness of Asian American issues, the findings suggest that curricular and co-curricular environments may influence students in different ways when paired with other research examining diversity outcomes in the college environment (Antony, 1992; Jones & Hill, 2001). The present study will explore Asian American racial identity experiences, both curricular and co-curricular, in a unique

curricular environment of diversity education, intergroup dialogue. To begin understanding intergroup dialogue as a form of diversity education, a foundational understanding of diversity education, including the different forms of diversity education and the benefits of such programs, is explored in the next section.

### **Diversity Education in Higher Education**

Diversity education exists in multiple forms in higher education institutions. This section will discuss some of these forms, the benefits of diversity education, and intergroup dialogue as a form of diversity education. Gurin, Dey, Gurin and Hurtado (2003) explained three forms of diversity in higher education: structural, informal interactional, and classroom diversity. Structural diversity is the representation of diverse groups on campus through numbers. Structural diversity increases the chance that students will have formal and informal experiences with diverse peers during their college experience. This type of diversity provides an opportunity for actual interaction. Actual diversity experiences are divided into informal interactions and classroom experiences. Informal interaction is the actual experience students have with diverse peers on campus. These interactions include socializing with someone from a different racial or ethnic background, discussing racial issues with a peer, or attending a racial or cultural awareness event. Classroom diversity is the exposure of students to knowledge about race and ethnicity in formal classroom settings (Gurin et al., 2003). This exposure can be in the form of a diversity course or a lesson focused on diversity issues in a course with multiple foci.

Mere exposure to a diverse student body and perspectives is not enough to achieve learning outcomes of higher education or to prepare students for life after college.

Educators must provide students with the experience, understanding, and communication tools to effectively work with diverse others (Sorensen et al., 2009). Multiple studies have examined the relationship between structural diversity and actual experiences of diversity and the benefits of diversity in education (Chang, Denson, Sáenz, & Misa, 2006; Jayakumar, 2008; Nagda et al., 2003; Nagda et al., 2004).

### **Benefits of Diversity Education**

Henderson-King and Kaleta (2000) conducted a study to examine the effects of a semester of general undergraduate education on intergroup tolerance and social beliefs. Henderson-King and Kaleta paid particular attention to the effects of specific diversity courses and to student participation in diversity-related campus organizations. The authors hypothesized that students who were not taking a diversity-related course would be less tolerant of marginalized social groups and would exhibit less awareness of sexism and racism as important social issues by the end of the semester. However, by the end of the semester, students taking diversity-related courses and students who were involved in diversity-related organizations did not show any decline in tolerance or in awareness.

Henderson-King and Kaleta (2000) sampled all students who were enrolled in one of four race and ethnicity courses and conducted a random stratified sample of 100 female and 100 male students not enrolled in any race and ethnicity course in the current semester. Students were given a survey packet with three measures, including a feelings thermometer, a Beliefs about Sexism index, and a Beliefs about Racism index. Students were surveyed twice, once at the beginning of the winter semester of 1995 and once at the end. The difference between the two survey packets is that the first packet asked for

demographic information while the second packet asked for students' involvement in campus groups and organizations.

The authors found that students who were not enrolled in a diversity-related course became less positive toward marginalized groups. Although diversity-related courses did not increase tolerance, they acted as a buffer against diminishing tolerance. At the end of the semester, students did not differ in their awareness of sexism. However, the authors observed a small marginal increase in awareness of racism among students who were enrolled in a diversity-related course. This finding suggests that diversity-related courses may serve more than a buffering function. Students who were involved with diversity-related groups and organizations on campus showed no change of their feelings during the semester. Students who were not involved in such groups became significantly less positive toward marginalized groups. An interesting finding was that White students who were involved in a diversity-related group became more aware of racism at the end of the semester. This finding suggests that involvement in diversity-related co-curricular activities impacts intergroup tolerance and awareness of social issues. Although this study provided significant findings on the potential role diversity plays in higher education in a semester, the study is limited by not acknowledging the relationship between the role of diversity and the ways diversity contributes to achieving the long-term goals of higher education.

A study that attempted to illustrate this connection is a longitudinal survey study conducted by Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002). The authors explored the relationship between students' experiences with diverse peers in college, and the educational outcomes of such experiences. The authors hypothesized that the presence of



diverse peers and perspectives, equality among peers, and civil discussion foster diversity outcomes for students to become citizens and leaders. These diversity outcomes include perspective-taking, civic participation, and acceptance of conflict as a normal part of life. To test their hypothesis, the authors used two longitudinal databases: a single institutional survey (the Michigan Student Survey) and a national institutional survey (Cooperative Institutional Research Program). The authors compiled variables from both databases to construct five measures: student background information (i.e., gender, SAT scores, and racial composition of students' high schools), institutional characteristics (i.e., selectivity of the institution, institutional type, percentage students of color), diversity experiences (i.e., informal interaction, classroom diversity, and diversity events/dialogues), learning outcomes (i.e., active thinking and academic skills), and diversity outcomes (i.e., civic engagement and perspective-taking).

The authors found that actual diversity experiences impacted important learning and democracy outcomes. The authors found this effect consistent across the national and single institutional datasets and across different groups of students. Diversity experience explained a large portion of variance in the outcomes between students. The authors also found that students' educational experiences were enhanced when a diverse student body was paired with meaningful informal interracial interaction. With this finding, the authors argued that a diverse study body was a necessary condition for engagement that contributed to the educational goals of higher education. A context in which diverse participants is paired with meaningful interracial interaction is intergroup dialogue.

## **Intergroup Dialogue as a Form of Diversity Education**

In addition to providing student engagement that contributes to achieving the goals of higher education, diversity education directly contributes the learning outcomes and skills necessary for students to become global democratic citizens. A form of diversity education focused primarily on this goal is intergroup dialogue. Gurin, Nagda, and Lopez (2004) demonstrated positive benefits of diversity and intergroup dialogue in two studies, with a quasi-experimental study comparing students in a curricular diversity program (intergroup dialogue) with students in a matched control group and a second study examining other forms of diversity education in a longitudinal survey of University of Michigan students. Overall, the authors hypothesized that first-year students who participated in the Intergroup Relations Program (IGR) compared to matched non-participants as seniors would show greater skills needed in a plural democracy: perspective-taking, understanding that difference is not necessarily divisive, perception of commonalities in values between their own and other groups, mutuality in learning about their own and other groups, interest in politics, participant in campus politics, commitment to civic participation after college, and acceptance of conflict as a normal part of social life.

In the first study, the authors examined the impact of an intergroup dialogue program, a curricular program for first-year students that incorporates important diversity and democratic conditions. Using a longitudinal field study method, students were surveyed at the time of entrance to the university, at the end of the term when participants took the intergroup dialogue course, and again in their senior year. The experimental sample were those who elected to take the course and the control sample was matched

non-participants. Survey items included measures written specifically for the Michigan Student Study, including non-divisiveness of difference, perception of commonalities in values across groups, mutuality in learning about own and other groups, acceptance of conflict as a normal part of social life, and interest in politics. Only seniors completed the following measures: participant in campus politics, participation in community service, and commitment to post-college civic participation.

Using multivariate analysis of variance and regressions, the authors found that almost all predicted relationships were supported, except for taking part more frequently in community service activities. It appeared that participants were more committed to helping their group or community and helping to promote racial/ethnic understanding (both were measures of post-college civic participation). The authors found the latter two results to be a result of self-selection, and not a result of participating in intergroup dialogue. Regression analysis showed that students who participated in the intergroup dialogue program were already more predisposed toward post-college civic participation than the control students when they entered college.

Based on these positive findings, the authors were interested in examining whether or not other educational activities had similar effects to intergroup dialogue in fostering democratic sentiments among undergraduate students. These educational activities included: an intergroup dialogue-like program, participation in campus-wide educational events about the cultures, histories, and politics of various groups in American society, and exposure to knowledge about race and ethnicity in formal classrooms. Using a longitudinal study design, students were surveyed upon college entrance and at the end of the senior year. The survey instrument included measures

inquiring about students' experience with diversity (i.e., how much exposure they had in classes devoted to understanding other racial/ethnic groups), asking the level of involvement with five annually-held multicultural events that students attended during the four years of college, and asking if students participated in an intergroup dialogue program offered by a group, class, or organization on campus.

The authors used multiple regression to analyze relationship of diversity experience index to democratic sentiments and civic activities. The authors ran separate regressions for each group of students. The authors found that the diversity experience index was significantly related to perspective-taking and to a sense of commonality in values with African Americans and Latino/as for White students. For White students, the diversity experience index was also related to having learned about both other groups' and own groups' contributions to American society and to actual participation in the activities of their own groups and of other cultural groups. For African American students, there was significant relationship between perspective taking and participation in dialogue groups as well as participation in multicultural events. Relationships were not found for Latino(a) or Asian American students. In contrast, diversity experiences were not significantly related to the expression of commonality with White students by three groups of students of color.

In their analysis of why perceptions of commonality differed for White students and students of color, the authors asserted that a possible reason for this difference was that the experience with White students was less novel for students of color than experience with students of color was for White students. The authors argued that institutions of higher education must go beyond structural diversity and attend to actual

quality interactions among diverse students (Gurin et al., 2004). A way to model interactions among diverse students is through intergroup dialogue.

### **Intergroup Dialogue: A Different Type of Diversity Education**

Intergroup dialogue is a channel for thoughtful discussion, inquiry, and action that might not be available in other forms of diversity education (Zúñiga et al., 2002). In this section, I will define intergroup dialogue, explore pedagogical foundations for intergroup dialogue, review practice principles, and synthesize prior research conducted on intergroup dialogue. Zúñiga and Nagda (2001) provide the following rationale for intergroup dialogue: “meaningful dialogues across differences offer participants experiences that can be subtly or dramatically different from their usual way of interacting with people different from themselves at school, at work, or in their community” (pp. 310-311). Participants are challenged to position their experiences, both individual and social, in a large and complex social context. A goal of intergroup dialogue is to engage across difference. Conflicts that emerge in this type of engagement are taken as learning opportunities for deepening understanding, rather than as a sign of a failed intervention (Nagda & Gurin, 2007).

Intergroup dialogue has evolved to use a critical-dialogic model that embraces the notion that dialogue is much more than talking or discovering similarities and differences between social identity groups (Zúñiga et al., 2002). A critical-dialogic model typically uses both a diversity and a social justice approach to examine social and cultural differences (Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001). A diversity approach acknowledges and values differences and recognizes that relationships between groups are estranged because of a lack of meaningful understanding and a prevalence of stereotypes. A diversity approach

challenges stereotypes and prejudices by bringing together individuals for face-to-face interaction to share personal experiences and build relationships. A social justice approach builds upon a diversity approach by also addressing social inequities and power relations as a context for conflict to occur between groups. This approach recognizes that individual experiences in the dialogue context or in a larger community are impacted by systems of oppression. Although other models of dialogue exist in schools, communities, and organizations (Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001), such as collective inquiry models, community building and action models, and conflict resolution and peace building models, I will focus on a critical-dialogic model, which is most prevalent in higher education institutions. I chose to examine this model because of the focus on exploring group differences using a social justice perspective with goals to enact individual and systemic change (Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001).

A critical-dialogic framework is a combination of two theoretical understandings pulling from the works of Freire (1970), Delgado and Stefancic (2001), Bonilla-Silva (2003) and Bakhtin (1981). The “critical” portion of the framework represents an intentional effort to connect between individual and group experiences, and how these intertwined identities are situated in systems of power and privilege, affording members of different groups privileges and disadvantaged that result in enduring group-based inequalities. The critical component of intergroup dialogue, based on critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), allows students to use critical analysis to explore and understand the intersection of identity, both individual and group, within the systems of power and privilege, and the impact of this intersection on themselves and other students (Sorensen et al., 2009).

Specifically, facilitators ask students to examine their personal experiences and understand how these experiences are connected to a system of socialization by society, including parents, teachers, and other community members. By using a variety of readings, in-class activities, and group work, facilitators ask students to understand their group social identities and how these identities are positioned within systems of power and oppression (Sorensen et al., 2009).

The “dialogic” portion of the framework focuses on interactions and communication taking place between students of different groups within intergroup dialogue. Drawing particularly from Bakhtin’s (1981) communication theories on dialogue, the goal of this dialogic component “is not to present one’s opinions and simply hear others (discussion) or to defend one’s positions in order to reach resolution about which perspective is right or wrong (debate)” (Sorensen et al., 2009, p. 16). The goal is to understand one another through exploring other’s experiences, identifying one’s own assumptions, and recreating one’s perspectives through this dialogic exchange. Specifically, the goal is to explore how students from two social identity groups co-create their identities and relationships through communication tools such as active listening, asking questions, learning from others, active participation, and personal sharing (Sorensen et al., 2009).

A key component of the critical-dialogic framework is the intentional and explicit emphasis on identity. Identity, both group and individual, is made salient by asking students to explore how their perspectives and the perspective of others reflect group identity. In doing so, intergroup dialogue is a proactive to take a multicultural approach against a colorblind approach (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). The colorblind approach assumes

few racial disparities exist and the few that do exist are attributed to alleged deficiencies in certain racial groups instead of structural inequality.

### **Intergroup Dialogue Defined**

Intergroup dialogue is a facilitated, face-to-face diversity intervention program that brings together students from two or more social identity groups with a history of actual or potential conflict in meaningful engagement to raise critical consciousness regarding issues of power and inequality, to bridge differences across groups, to build community within and across groups, and to strengthen personal and collective capacities to take action (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Zúñiga & Nagda, 1993). Other goals of intergroup dialogue include: developing self-awareness of personal membership in a social group embedded in systems of power and privilege; examining the impact of group differences at personal, interpersonal, community, cultural, institutional, and societal levels; and to practice dialogue skills to address social justice issues and conflicts between groups (Zúñiga et al., 2002).

Intergroup dialogue courses typically meet weekly over a period of 10 to 14 weeks with 12 to 16 students and two facilitators whose social identities represent the students in the dialogue (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). For example, a dialogue on race would involve a White facilitator and a facilitator of color. Intergroup dialogue encompass opportunities for students to engage with each other across difference and to enhance their ability to work together through encouraging open and reflective communication (Zúñiga et al., 2002). As an intervention, intergroup dialogue can complement other curricular and co-curricular diversity initiatives in higher education institutions.



## **Pedagogical Foundations**

The approach to intergroup dialogue is grounded in an educational practice model incorporating sustained communication, consciousness-raising, and the bridging of differences (Zúñiga et al., 2002). These pedagogical foundations of intergroup dialogue impact the structure of dialogue and support the core practice principles, often generating a more complex understanding and design of intergroup dialogue. *Sustained communication* is a process of interaction using communication skills such as listening, sharing, and questioning to develop mutual understanding and community (Gurin et al., 2004; Gurin, Peng, Lopez, & Nagda, 1999; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003; Nagda, 2006). This community in intergroup dialogue would simultaneously value separate social group identities and the development of a common group identity to build alliance (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). An important skill that emerges from sustained communication and is encouraged among students is conflict engagement. Conflict engagement deepens this dialogic relationship between students by expanding their understanding of why conflicts occur and helping them work through conflicts in a productive manner.

Conflict engagement also emerges from *consciousness raising* in intergroup dialogue. This process encourages students to actively and critically recognize, question, and challenge individual and institutional beliefs that perpetuate strained intergroup relations (Zúñiga et al., 2002). Critical consciousness would help students personalize the connection between their identities and inequalities, encouraging them to take inventory of their experiences as members of an identity group, to examine the origin of existing stereotypes, and to delve into the dynamics of a system of power and privilege (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Zúñiga et al., 2002). This critical consciousness and this manner

of addressing intergroup relations is a documented outcome of intergroup dialogue (Lopez et al., 1998; Nagda et al., 2003; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003).

*Bridging differences* is a pedagogical foundation focused on building connections across difference to develop empathy and understanding, and to construct collaborative action for change (Zúñiga et al., 2002). Moving from dialogue to action outside of the dialogue often strengthens this process of bridging difference (Nagda, 2006). Although these three pedagogical foundations are imperative to understanding intergroup dialogue and are inextricably interwoven together, intergroup dialogue is also influenced by social psychological theories focused on intergroup relations and intergroup harmony.

### **Integration Of Social Psychological Theories**

Gurin and Nagda (2006) explored the way in which the model of intergroup dialogue draws from an integration of the social psychological theories of decategorization, common in-group identity model, and separate groups model. In decategorization, intergroup dialogue incorporates readings and activities that encourage students of each identity group to personalize other students as individuals. When students in intergroup dialogue engage in joint learning and collaborative action, they achieve a common in-group identity frame as an expression of separate identities. For example, White students and students of color could potentially share a common in-group identity as individuals committed to social justice and explore how each could work toward a more just future. By maintaining a salience of separate identities and exploring the importance of intragroup solidarity, students are encouraged to forge collaborations across groups and build intergroup alliances.

## **Practice Principles**

The combination of the aforementioned pedagogical foundations and integrated social psychological theories result in three guiding practice principles of intergroup dialogue: maintaining a social justice perspective, balancing process and content, and engaging in praxis (Zúñiga et al., 2002). Maintaining a social justice perspective requires attending to two considerations: connecting students' individual experiences to historical and institutional systems of power and privilege and considering students' different developmental processes.

To balance process (how learning and dialogue occur) and content (what topics are covered in dialogue), activities to encourage learning must be well aligned with the topic of the dialogue session. Zúñiga et al. (2002) discussed the explicit attention paid to integrating process and balance results in the use of multiple learning modes based in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning, such as concrete experiences, observations, reflections, and abstract conceptualizations.

Praxis in dialogue is reflection and action (Freire, 1970) and is depicted when students bring experiences from outside the dialogue for personal and group reflection, and vice versa, by applying what they learn in the context of dialogue to contexts outside the dialogue (Zúñiga et al., 2002).

## **Stages**

The successful actualization of these practice principles is achieved through intentional stages of the intergroup dialogue model. The four stages of intergroup dialogue are: (1) group beginnings and the developing of a climate for meaningful dialogue; (2) exploration of differences and commonalities for talking across race and

other social identity boundaries; (3) focus and exploration on hot topics to deepen the dialogue experience; and (4) action planning and alliance building to grapple with the question “where we do we go from here” (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Zúñiga et al., 2002)?

Zúñiga et al. (2002) illustrated the objectives and what happens during the four stages. The objective for stage 1 is to establish foundations for communication and for a climate conducive to dialogue. Students would begin building relationships by discussing hopes and fears they have for the dialogue, identifying their needs and expectations, and developing ground rules for the course. The objective for stage 2 is to further students’ self-awareness as being members of different social identity groups embedded in systems of power and privilege. Students would explore the impact of stereotypes and prejudice on intergroup relations through engaging in activities for sharing individual experiences and perspectives. This stage is often challenging as students from both privileged and oppressed groups begin to grapple with how their individual experiences have been shaped by systemic inequality.

Stage 3 offers students an opportunity to explore specific questions or issues and to examine how these issues are situated in personal, interpersonal, cultural, institutional, and historical factors, leading to tension between social identity groups. During this stage, students are asked to pay attention to how they communicate with each other. In stage 4, the focus shifts from dialogue and exploration to planning action and building alliances. This stage is also designed to bring closure to the dialogue experience for students and to prepare for life beyond the dialogue. Students are encouraged to envision a future, to identify realistic next steps toward that future, and to affirm others’ contribution and participation in the dialogue.

## **Prior Research**

The bulk of research on intergroup dialogue has concerned intergroup dialogue outcomes, such as raising awareness (Alimo, Kelly, & Clark, 2002; Gurin et al., 1999; Lopez et al., 1998; Nagda et al., 2001; Sorensen et al., 2009; Zúñiga & Sevig, 1997), attitude change (Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004), communication skills, conflict management, perspective-taking (Gurin et al., 1999; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003; Zúñiga et al., 1995; Zúñiga & Sevig, 1997), interest in taking action (Gurin, Gurin, Dey, & Hurtado, 2004; Zúñiga et al., 1995), and fostering community (Nagda et al., 2004; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003). Several empirical studies and scholarly articles have examined the processes that occur in intergroup dialogue, including the active learning pedagogy and learning process (Lopez et al., 1998) and the dialogic engagement process (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Gurin-Sands, & Osuna, 2009; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003).

Nagda (2006) examined the communication processes that occur in intergroup dialogue to further understand the role of these processes in bridging differences. The author hoped to answer two guiding questions: (1) What are the communication processes occurring in intergroup dialogue and (2) How can these processes help explain the impact of intergroup encounter on bridging differences? Nagda hypothesized that intergroup dialogue communication processes will mediate the effect of encounter intervention, which is the level of involvement a student has in intergroup dialogue, on bridging differences.

For question 1, Nagda (2006) conducted factor analyses of communication processes using data from a pretest/posttest design with three measures: pedagogical processes, psychological processes, and communication processes. For question 2,

Nagda conducted multiple and hierarchical regression to examine mediation effect of the four communication processes on the relationship between the encounter and bridging differences. *Encounter* was operationalized as the level of involvement in the intergroup dialogue. The author identified four communication processes that illuminated the complexity of intergroup dialogue: alliance building, engaging self, critical self-reflection, and appreciating difference. These four processes were shown as related through path analyses. Further, a theoretically informed path analyses revealed that the four processes explained how the pedagogical process of intergroup encounter impacts the psychological process of bridging difference.

Although Nagda's (2006) study serves as further evidence of the complexity of intergroup dialogue and the profound effects the experience has on students, the complexity of the students' identity was not recognized. Nagda classified biracial and multiracial students who indicated white/European identification as students of color using the rationale that these students are often treated as racial/ethnic minorities. However, this rationale is problematic because it does not recognize that multiracial and biracial students often feel in-between and belonging to neither group (Nishimura, 1998). This study is an example of how previous research on intergroup dialogue was not inclusive of all student racial identities and experiences.

**Multi-University Intergroup Dialogue Research.** To build upon strengths of existing research on intergroup dialogue and to address documented limitations (Nagda & Gurin, 2007), Sorensen et al. (2009) authored an article introducing a critical-dialogic model and testing the effects of such a model. The documented limitations of previous studies on intergroup dialogue included the lack of random assignment in

research design, the sampling of single institution students, and the assessment of effects of a single semester (Sorensen et al., 2009).

In a multi-university intergroup dialogue research study with nine colleges and universities (Arizona State University, University of California - San Diego, University of Maryland - College Park, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, University of Michigan - Ann Arbor, University of Texas – Austin, University of Washington, Occidental College, and Syracuse University), Sorensen et al. (2009) conducted a random experiment utilizing a standardized intergroup dialogue curriculum across the institutions. After completing an online application to take an intergroup dialogue course, 1500 students were randomly assigned to dialogue group (race or gender) or to a waitlist control group. Groups sampled in the study were women of color, men of color, White women, and White men. The authors found that students in both intergroup dialogue courses demonstrated greater increases in outcomes compared to students in the waitlist control group. Specifically, students showed greater increases in their awareness and structural understanding of racial or gender inequality. These effects were found for members for all four sampled groups and were found to be significant one year later.

The authors addressed several limitations in their study. A large limitation is the role of self-selection. Although randomizing students who applied to enroll in a dialogue control for potential change in interested students who did not take a dialogue course, this randomization does not address the issue of self-selection. It is possible that these findings do not apply to students who did not express interest in intergroup dialogue. Another limitation the authors addressed is their choice to aggregate data for students of color instead of disaggregating the data to assess for effects for various racial and ethnic

groups. They asserted that sampled institutions did not have enough interested students to assess effects by pairing White students with each of the ethnic or racial groups, or pairing the ethnic or racial groups with each other.

In their implications for practice, the authors mentioned that more students want to enroll in dialogue courses than can be accommodated yet addressed a limitation to not disaggregating data because institutions will not have enough interested students of color in each racial or ethnic group. If it is true that there are not enough students of color in each ethnic or racial category to create an intergroup dialogue that is equal across racial identity, it is important to look at whose voices are present or missing from these courses. Often, for Asian American students, they feel invisible at higher education institutions (Osajima, 1995). I would imagine that this feeling would have significant implications on their learning and experience in dialogue.

### **Asian American Racial Identity in an Intergroup Dialogue Context**

Intergroup dialogue is an opportunity for students to become engaged with other students from different social identity groups through a process to capture the emotional and experiences of individuals while contextualizing and legitimizing those experiences in the content of assigned course readings and other media sources (e.g., videos) (Schoem, 2003). Intergroup dialogue works to understand how individuals affect and are affected by their group affiliations (Kardia & Sevig, 2001). A unique feature of intergroup dialogue is the balance between seeing and speaking of oneself as an individual and as a member of a group by participants (Schoem, Hurtado, Sevig, Chesler, & Sumida, 2001). This experience emphasizes the importance for each participant to acknowledge her or his social group identities and those groups' roles in society, to affirm her or his own



individuality, and to recognize commonalities across social groups (Schoem et al., 2001). For Asian American students, this process of acknowledging her or his group identities as an Asian American or ethnic-specific American or specific ethnic identity is complicated as mentioned in the previously discussed literature on Asian Americans

An important component of critical dialogic framework is an explicit emphasis on identity. Specifically, identity is made salient by challenging students to consider how their personal perspectives and the perspectives of other students impact group identity (Sorensen et al., 2009). Self-definition is an integral part intergroup dialogue for participants to see the heterogeneity within groups and to help participants grapple with their own identity (Kardia & Sevig, 2001). For Asian American students, the ability to self-identify is important as they experience varying levels of externally and internally defined identities (Kim, 2005). This process of making identity salient in intergroup dialogue represents a multicultural approach rather than a colorblind approach to discuss issues of race (Sorensen et al., 2009).

Asian American students are placed in the context of their social identity groups in intergroup dialogue with the purpose to examine relations between and among Asian American and other groups present in the dialogue. Additionally, it is important for Asian American students to confront issues on personal and social levels by discussing their own upbringing and socialization and seeing their identity as a member of the Asian American racial identity group as self-directed and imposed by how others perceive them. Specifically with this critical balance, it is important to give voice to each student as individuals as well as their membership in a social identity group to fully explore the complexity of identity and other identity-related issues in intergroup dialogue.

Intergroup dialogue experiences can impact how Asian American students racially and/or ethnically identify. In a quantitative study examining the effects of participation in interracial/interethnic dialogue courses and the impact the learning process has on these effects, Nagda and Zúñiga (2003) found that students more strongly considered race as an important social identity in how they thought about themselves. Students also thought more frequently about being a member of a racial group at the end of the dialogue. Students of color considered race as a more important identity when thinking about themselves, thought more frequently about their racial group membership, and had a higher level of comfort when communicating across difference. Intergroup dialogue may offer students of color a process that gives them voice and recognizes their experiences to constructively address racial issues (Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003). Participants also reported learning more about their own personal beliefs, group identity, group social history as well as other groups. Participants realized that groups were not monolithic and recognized differences between groups (Schoem et al., 2001).

Both of these findings are important for Asian American students and their peers in combating a monolithic stereotype of Asian American students. In her study examining Asian American undergraduate student attitudes towards affirmative action, b (2003) suggested that understanding why increased identity consciousness shapes Asian American students' views on broader racial issues holds important implications for higher education institution administrations in their work to improve interracial relations. By studying Asian American racial identity in the context of intergroup dialogue, I hope to understand how Asian American students experience their racial identity in a context where racial identity appears to be salient. This study will examine specific group

experience in intergroup dialogue. As a qualitative study, this present study brings a rich narrative to the documented outcomes of intergroup dialogue in quantitative studies. Additionally, this study will illuminate the potential link between Asian American racial and ethnic identities, involvement in diversity-related activities on campus, and increased understanding and awareness of Asian American issues. I provide further details about the present study in the next chapter.



### **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to explore how Asian American students experience their racial identity in intergroup dialogue. This study addressed the following guiding research question: how do Asian American students experience their racial identity in the context of intergroup dialogue? In this chapter, I will describe the qualitative approach I used to conduct my study. I hope to achieve the following goals with this chapter: (1) provide an overview of narrative inquiry to include key concepts important to understanding this methodology; (2) share who I am as a researcher; (3) situate my role and background in relation to the topic of interest; (4) discuss data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation methods; (5) review strategies to ensure trustworthiness in this study; and (6) introduce how I propose to present the findings in the subsequent chapter.

#### **Characteristics of Qualitative Research**

In this study, I used a constructivist epistemology, which recognizes that “knowledge is found within the individual” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 18). This epistemology seeks to understand human activity from the perspective of the individuals who experience the activity themselves and recognizes social and historical backgrounds of these experiences. I used qualitative research methods to conduct this study because qualitative research embraces the subjective perspectives of the researcher and the participant including class, race, gender, and ethnicity into the process of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This research paradigm approaches the world with a multicultural process (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), allowing the researcher to situate herself or himself through a set of interpretive practices that make the world visible (Denzin &

Lincoln, 1998). The qualitative interpretation of the world is seen in a series of field notes, interviews, conversations, recordings, and memos to oneself.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research requires an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world, allow qualitative researchers to study their interests in participants' natural settings and to attempt to make meaning of phenomena based on what participants bring. Participants in qualitative research can offer stories about what they did and why with regards to the phenomenon of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Qualitative research methods were appropriate for the question this study sought to answer due to my interest in eliciting stories from Asian American students about their experiences of their racial identity in the context of intergroup dialogue. With this approach, the subjective worlds of the participants are valued and embraced (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Specifically, I used a narrative inquiry methodology to investigate the students' stories. Using constructivism as the guiding epistemology of the study was appropriate for narrative inquiry because narrative focuses heavily on the stories and experiences of individual participants and on the attempts of the researcher to make meaning of these stories and experiences. In the study, selected participants were co-creators of knowledge when they shared their stories with me.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is an appropriate methodology to explore the racial identity experiences of Asian American students because of the focus on stories and voice. As discussed in the literature review, Asian American student voices are largely missing from research on intergroup dialogue. A narrative form of inquiry will provide the participants a chance to tell their own stories in their own words. In this section, I will

define narrative inquiry, describe characteristics of narrative inquiry, and discuss the limitations of narrative inquiry.

### **What is Narrative Inquiry?**

Narrative inquiry is the study of stories, or human experience as expressed through stories (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Researchers use this methodology to investigate the ways that people experience the world depicted through their stories and to highlight these understandings (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquirers embrace the notion that the story is one of the fundamental aspects that account for human experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The general procedure for using narrative inquiry consists of focused study on selected individuals, gathering data through collecting their stories, reporting individual experiences or a series of related experiences, and ordering the meaning of those experiences (Creswell, 2007).

In this form of inquiry, narrative is both a method of study (methodology) and a phenomenon of study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Narrative as a phenomenon of study is a text or discourse of human experience, or stories, while narrative as a method of study is the analysis and understanding of stories lived and told (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In constructing narratives, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss “a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story” (p. 71). In both constructing narratives and studying narratives, Clandinin and Connelly suggest creating a three-dimensional narrative space that is occupied by personal and social matters in a balance appropriate to the topic of interest (interaction), temporal dimensions of past, present, and future (continuity), and place or places in which narratives occur (situation). Narrative inquiry

can move in four directions: inward (toward the internal to include feelings and hopes), outward (toward the external to include environment and surroundings), backward, and forward (through past, present, and future). For narrative inquirers to research an experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), they must experience it simultaneously in the four aforementioned ways and ask questions that point in each way. In this manner, the researcher's experience is two-fold: experiencing the experience as told to her or him by her or his participants and being a part of the experience itself as the story is being retold.

### **Characteristics of Narrative**

The grand narrative, defined as an unquestioned way of looking at experiences, in education has become heavily connected with a science of education, a science based in observations and numbers. "In the grand narrative, the universal case is of prime interest. In narrative thinking, the person in context is of prime interest" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 32). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identified tensions with a grand narrative using Dewey's two criteria for experience: continuity and interaction. The resolutions of these tensions are key characteristics of narrative inquiry. These characteristics are context, temporality, people, action, certainty, place of theory, and place of the researcher.

For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), *context* is always present and is necessary for making sense of any person, event, or thing. *Temporality* is the concept that any event has a past that is known, a presence that is the way it appears, and an implied future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In narrative inquiry, *people*, who shape and are shaped by their context, are seen as the vessels of lived stories. At any point in time, people are in the process of personal change; therefore, it is important to narrate the person in terms of the process through which she or he is going.



In narrative inquiry, *action* is seen as a narrative sign and must be given a narrative interpretation before meaning can be attached to it (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In narrative inquiry, it is important to look at history and other factors to aid in the interpretation and meaning making of that sign. *Certainty* represents a sense of tentativeness about the meaning of an event. This tentativeness is usually expressed as uncertainty, leaving room for an alternative perspective. The attitude in narrative inquiry is one of doing “one’s best” under the current circumstances with the understanding that other interpretations are possible (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The *place of theory* in narrative inquiry is a source of tension during the course of research. In narrative inquiry, researchers should begin with experience as expressed in lived and told stories rather than with a theoretical framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In narrative inquiry, because all individuals possess their own views, attitudes, and ways of thinking about research, the *place of researchers* intersect with the actual research. Therefore, it is important for researchers to reconstruct their own narrative histories to bring awareness to any tensions between those histories and the research they conduct.

### **Limitations of Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry largely revolves around obtaining and reflecting on people’s lived experiences, which is a heavily relational endeavor (Josselson, 2007). Therefore, narrative researchers have an ethical duty to this research relationship by protecting the privacy and dignity of participants. Limitations of narrative inquiry are centered on ethical issues that arise from this research relationship, including reciprocity, the dual role

of the researcher, anonymity, and ownership (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Josselson, 2007).

Narrative researchers are able to effectively do their work by entering people's lives and requesting their assistance to help them learn something about the human experience (Josselson, 2007). Although participants usually illuminate the phenomena of interest, narrative researchers need to be intentional about what the participants actually get out of the research process, especially because of the dual role the researcher holds (Josselson, 2007). This dual role is an intimate relationship with the participant and a professional role in the large academic community.

Interpersonal ethics demand responsibility to the dignity, privacy, and well-being of those who are studied, and these often conflict with the scholarly obligation to accuracy, authenticity, and interpretation. Fulfilling the duties and obligations of both of these roles simultaneously is what makes for the slippery slopes (Josselson, 2007, pp. 538-539).

Further, this dual role illuminates the explicit and implicit contracts between the researcher and the participant (Josselson, 2007). In the explicit contract, the relationship between researcher and participant is a professional relationship. In the implicit contract, subtle interpersonal cues about the researcher, such as her or his capacity to be empathic, nonjudgmental, and emotionally responsive, impacts and reflects the degree of openness and self-disclosure the participant feels is appropriate. Josselson (2007) suggests that one of the only solutions for this dual role is for the researcher to show a clear understanding of the inherent dilemmas in narrative research.

Issues regarding anonymity typically arise as participants' contexts change and shift over the course of the research. For example, participants may choose to be named or remain anonymous at the beginning of the research and may change their minds at any

point of the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A limitation of narrative inquiry is the issue of who owns the stories. Because of the intimate researcher-participant relationship, researchers typically need to be aware of how the findings of the study are read. Researchers may find that they are personally more cautious about how participants are presented and re-presented than the participants are themselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that narrative researchers engage in *wakefulness* throughout the course of the study to proactively respond to dilemmas and limitations. The authors define *wakefulness* as ongoing reflection about all inquiry decisions made during the course of the study. The language of wakefulness allows narrative researchers to proceed forward with research in an alert state, aware of risks, dilemmas, simplistic plots, and one-dimensional representations of the participants under study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

### **Who I Am As a Researcher and Gaining Access to Participants**

Although students have other identities, such as being a sister, a math major, or an artist, I focus on identities and relationships that are embedded in systems of power and privilege. I am an aspiring student affairs educator invested in social justice work that empowers long-silenced voices and encourages agency among students. I am invested in understanding how to better serve and engage students about social justice issues. In crafting this study, I believe in what Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined as the *counterstory* as a means for students to gain agency. Solórzano and Yosso defined *counterstory* as “a tool for exploring, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” (p. 32). I come to know and understand knowledge through

experiencing these stories told by first-hand accounts or through personal reflection because sharing lived experiences reveals great depth and richness about an individual's identity.

The idea that Asian American racial and ethnic identity is complex became clear to me during my work with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), a national Asian American civil rights organization. My experience at JACL inspired me to think about the changing nature of identity. The name JACL implies services targeted at Japanese Americans, an Asian American ethnic group, even though the scope of the organization's work is focused primarily on Asian Americans, a racial identity. While working with JACL's hate crimes and hate incidents sector, I learned about how perceived racial and/or ethnic identity significantly impacted the lives of Asian Americans regardless of how they actually identify. This experience at JACL inspired me to continue exploring the complex relationship between ethnic and racial identity, including my own identity as someone who identifies mostly as Asian American (racial identity), and not ethnic-Chinese Vietnamese (ethnic identity).

Although this study focused primarily on racial identity, I believe that students are whole beings and their experiences are products of their intersecting identities. My hope is that this study was a stepping-stone to understanding the complex intersectional identities of students' lived experiences. Part of my interest in conducting research on Asian American identity experiences is to reflect upon my own experiences in developing a strong Asian American identity and a less salient ethnic identity as an ethnic-Chinese Vietnamese American. I am particularly interested in exploring the dynamic racial

experiences of Asian Americans in intergroup dialogue because of a desire to explore the effectiveness of a popular diversity intervention program.

Consistent with narrative inquiry, I will provide reflections on my background on the topics of intergroup dialogue, Asian American students, and racial identity in this section. Additionally, I will provide steps I took to gain entry to the research site, to gain access to participants, to obtain participants' permission, and to protect participants' rights. I will conclude this section with comments on any anticipated sensitive issues I encountered and how I proposed to mitigate these issues.

I became interested in Asian American issues in high school after taking college-level Asian American studies courses at a local university. During one of these courses, I read a book titled *Catfish and Mandala: A Two-Wheeled Voyage through the Landscape and Memory of Vietnam* (Pham, 1999). Through this book and an assignment to interview my immigrant parents, I learned of my ethnic-Chinese Vietnamese American identity. In college, this interest in studying Asian American issues blossomed into action, as I became an active student leader in the Asian American student community. Although I have been interested in Asian American issues for a long period of time, my curiosity regarding racial identity did not fully emerge until my third semester in graduate school when a fellow graduate student asked me how I identify. This question allowed me to reflect on why I identified mostly as Asian American and not as Chinese American, Vietnamese American, ethnic-Chinese Vietnamese, or any other racial or ethnic identity derivative. I pondered about what being Asian American meant to me, what my cultural identity meant to me, and what experiences led me to identify strongly with one and not the other.

I mostly identify as Asian American because of my experience growing up in the Midwest, where there are smaller numbers of Asians and Asian Americans compared to the East and West Coast. My home state of Illinois had a 4% Asian/Asian American population. I thought that I needed to identify with a larger group in order to remain a significant presence in the Midwest and particularly at my undergraduate institution, which had a 12% percent Asian/Asian American student population. Further, my involvement in student organizations were solely with organizations that identified with this pan-ethnic label. As I reflect upon my decision to become involved with pan-ethnic organizations, I begin to recognize that part of this decision also stemmed from feeling that as an ethnic-Chinese Vietnamese American, I did not belong with the Vietnamese American students or the Chinese American students. My experiences were a hybrid between these two identities, and spaces to explore this hybridity did not formally exist. Throughout my life, I could count on one hand the number of individuals whom I have met that identified similarly to me.

This reflection depicts my belief that the context in which an individual grows up and in which an individual is immediately in influences her or his viewpoints. Racial identity development literature, particularly Asian American racial identity development, rarely takes this contextual influence into account. Linear racial identity development models tend to box individuals into a status or stage, indicating that an individual at a lower status is less developed and an individual at a higher status is more developed. For this same reason, I find it difficult to position myself within a racial identity development model. I believe strongly in lifelong learning. To say that I am in the *incorporation*

status of Kim's (2005) Asian American racial identity model seems to connote that I have "arrived" and no longer need to continue to reflect and develop, or, in other words, learn.

Although I find positioning myself in Asian American racial identity development contradictory to my personal beliefs of lifelong learning, my personal Asian American identity heavily impacts how I interact with participants, analyze field texts, and interpret their stories into restories. As I alluded to in the previous paragraph, I would consider myself in the *incorporation* status of Kim's (2005) model as an individual who is confident in my Asian American identity and sees how this identity intersects with others. This confidence and knowledge impacts how I interact with participants.

During my peer debriefing session, I talked passionately about how I internally responded to Kayla's explanation that she does not "self-hate." I noted this powerful internal reaction on my interview protocol. My peer debriefer suggested that it might also be a good idea to explore some of these triggers in my researcher journal and how I might ensure that these triggers will not bias my restory or analysis of the restories. Reflecting on these triggers allowed me to remember my role as a researcher (to restory Kayla's experiences) and the purpose of this study (to give voice to Kayla's story). My peer also shared with me how he could "hear my voice" in the restories. He suggested that I write in my researcher journal about my own Asian American identity and how that might impact how I restory the participants' experiences, including the words I use and which experiences I chose to highlight.

Since October 2009, I have been a research assistant on a research team examining different aspects of intergroup dialogue, including critical incidents that arise from participating in an intergroup dialogue. A subgroup of this research team is

conducting a case study examining what happens in an intergroup dialogue course that leads to documented outcomes. As I learned more about intergroup dialogue, particularly how course rosters were constructed, I began to see a context in which my interest in Asian American racial identity intersected with intergroup dialogue. My participation on this research team has resulted in extended contact with the selected intergroup dialogue program since January 2010.

This extended contact acts as a point of entry to the dialogue program for the purposes of my study. I anticipated working through two levels of gatekeepers to gain access to participants. I met with the coordinator of the dialogue program, who is the gatekeeper to the site, to discuss my interest in understanding the racial experiences of Asian American students in intergroup dialogue. This meeting served as an initial way to gain entry to the site and access to potential participants. I viewed this gatekeeper as a collaborative partner in creating a successful study. At this meeting, I discussed my anticipated data collection procedures (further elaborated in a later part of this chapter) and asked for the gatekeeper's feedback on the feasibility of the procedures. Following this initial meeting and the completion of any adjustments suggested by the gatekeeper, he informed me that there were no Asian American students enrolled in the spring 2011 dialogues.

Although I made plans to go through two levels of gatekeepers (the coordinator and facilitators) to recruit students, the coordinator suggested an alternative plan since there were no Asian Americans students enrolled in the Spring 2011 semester. The alternative plan was to contact past Asian American participants from the previous four semesters. I will elaborate on this alternative plan in a later section of this chapter.



I anticipated two sensitive issues that might have arisen. One issue was that students who were considering being a part of my research might have thought that their participation was a course requirement. A way I anticipated to mitigate this issue when I recruited participants was to be clear, in person, in any written communication, and in the consent form, that their participation was not a course requirement and was entirely voluntary. A second issue that might have arisen was with regards to my previous training in counseling. Participants might have experienced powerful emotions and reactions during my interview with them. I cautiously interacted with participants who were in an emotional state and kept note of any signs that might have indicated they felt like they were in therapy. I will elaborate more about other issues that arise in narrative interviews in a later part of this chapter.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

In this section, I will discuss my procedures for collecting data to answer this study's guiding question. I used a purposeful criterion sampling strategy to select information-rich individuals who have identified as Asian American on their intergroup dialogue course demographic questionnaire. I interviewed each participant three times and audio-record each interview. Additionally, I asked participants to submit any course-related documents, such as reflections and papers written for class. In the following section, I elaborate on how I used purposeful sampling to select participants.

### **Selecting Setting, Actors, and Events**

To best achieve the objectives of this study, I used a purposeful criterion sampling strategy to select information-rich cases as participants. According to Patton (1990), information-rich cases are cases that allow a researcher to learn in depth about issues

central to the purpose of the research and can only be selected through purposeful sampling. In addition to purposeful sampling, I used criterion sampling to review and select participants that meet predetermined criteria—the participants of this study were identified Asian American undergraduate students enrolled in an intergroup dialogue course in the previous four semesters (Spring 2009, Fall 2009, Spring 2010, and Fall 2010).

This study was conducted at a large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region with an established intergroup dialogue course. The intergroup dialogue program at this university is a seven-week program with courses focused on different identity groups, such as People of Color and White, Men and Women, Secular and Interfaith. Each course enrolls up to 15 students and is co-facilitated by graduate students, staff, or faculty at the institution. The co-facilitators' social and cultural identities reflect those of the participants enrolled in the dialogue. For example, a People of Color and White dialogue course is co-facilitated by a facilitator of color and a White facilitator.

Specifically, I contacted the coordinator of the intergroup dialogue program in the fall 2010 semester to discuss my research interest and the purpose of this study and shared my interest to recruit student participants enrolled in the university's seven-week intergroup dialogue course in the spring 2011 semester. After this initial contact, I maintained continued contact with coordinator to monitor the enrollment of Asian American students in the intergroup dialogue courses. Unfortunately, by the first week of the intergroup dialogue courses, there were not enough Asian American students enrolled in the scheduled dialogues. I moved forward with the alternative plan to contact past Asian American participants of intergroup dialogues. To remain consistent with students'

privacy regarding their contact information, a staff member with the intergroup dialogue program forwarded students a recruitment email (see Appendix A: Recruitment Email), which requested students to contact me directly with their interest. Participants were given a \$5 gift card for their participation.

Participants must have identified themselves as Asian, an Asian ethnicity, and/or Asian American on the intergroup dialogue program's registration information. The reasoning behind this criteria of selecting participants who identified as Asian, an Asian ethnicity, or Asian American was to include students who chose to identify more closely with their racial or ethnic identity but would otherwise be considered Asian or Asian American by the coordinators, facilitators, and students of the dialogue program. One caveat is important: the term "Asian" is sometimes used by international or exchange students to self-identify. To gain a clearer picture of the experiences of Asian American students in intergroup dialogue, Asian international or exchanged students were not selected as participants. Using this selection process, two female students were selected to participate in the study. A description of each student will be presented in the next chapter along with her restory.

### **Data Recording Process**

In this study, I referred to my data collected as "field texts," as these texts were created more or less collaboratively by my participants and myself in order to portray aspects of field experience and were interwoven throughout the whole study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I collected field texts in three recording procedures: interviews, documents, and researcher journals. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that one of the first tasks of a narrative inquirer is to position herself or himself in the field by

writing stories of her or his own experience. In a researcher journal, I reflected on where I am positioned in this study, recorded my experience in the field, and documented decisions I made throughout the inquiry.

I selected two student participants and collected data through in-depth interviews and documents. After selecting participants, I spent a large amount of time with them gathering their stories through interviews and documents. As I gathered these stories, I made note of the context of these stories and situated individual stories within the participants' personal experiences (such as their jobs or homes), their background (racial and/or ethnic), and their historical contexts (time and place) (Creswell, 2007).

### **Types of Data Collection**

In this study, I conducted audio-recorded semi-structured interviews and collected documents related to the course and documents completed for course requirements.

#### **Interviews**

I conducted three audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with each participant with different focuses at each interview; the first interview focused on how they came to understand their racial identity; the second interview focused on how they experienced their racial identity in their intergroup dialogue and how this experience affected, if at all, their view of their racial identity; and the third interview served as an opportunity to ask follow up questions stemming from previous interviews or collected documents. I will discuss collected documents in a later section. Czarniawska (2004) characterized interviews as samples of social reality. Interviews offer an opportunity to interact with participants and gain in-depth understanding of their stories (Creswell, 2007). Rapport and trust with the participants are imperative to the researcher's success (Fontana & Frey,

1998). The context and the way in which a researcher behaves, asks questions, and responds to participants in an interview shape the research relationship, which shapes the way participants respond and share their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In narrative interviews, researchers may choose among several tools to elicit responses from participants, including oral histories, family stories, chronicles, and annals (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

I used a semi-structured interview protocol in this study. Semi-structured interviews are interviews involving open-ended questions in which questions and order of presentation of the questions are predetermined (Krathwohl, 1998). However, unlike structured interviews, researchers have the freedom to probe responses with further questions if needed. I constructed three interview protocols for each participant, one for each interview. I used the same protocol for both participants in the first interview (See Appendix B: Interview 1 Protocol). For subsequent interviews, I used tailored protocols (See Appendix C: Interview 2 Protocol - Kayla, Appendix D: Interview 3 Protocol – Kayla, Appendix E: Interview 2 Protocol – Guita, and Appendix F: Interview 3 Protocol - Guita). An interview protocol can increase the comprehensiveness of the data collected and systematize data collection for each respondent to a certain extent while the interaction remains fairly conversational and situational (Patton, 1990). However, because a protocol involves predetermined questions and order, some important topics may be accidentally omitted. The flexibility for the researcher to ask further probing questions may also result in asking differently worded questions that result in different responses (Patton, 1990).

At the first interview, I asked participants a few rapport-building questions that lead into questions focused on how they came to understand their racial identity. Example questions included: “Tell me about yourself,” “How would you describe your identity,” “Growing up, how did you talk about race,” “How do you think about your racial identity,” and “What prompted you to register for an intergroup dialogue course?” To build further rapport with the participants, I engaged in an activity during the interview called a bio poem (See Appendix G: Bio Poem). In this activity, I exchanged my complete bio poem with the participant. The participant selected her pseudonym at this time. During the interview, I took notes of points for future follow up questions as well as any observations of nonverbal behaviors. At the second interview, I built upon points offered during the first interview and asked participants questions on how they experienced their racial identity in their intergroup dialogue course and how this experience affected their view of their racial identity. Example questions included: “What has your experience in this intergroup dialogue course been like,” “When did you think most about your racial identity,” “Tell me about something new you realized about yourself,” and “How has your thinking about your racial identity changed throughout the course of the dialogue?” Before the third interview, I re-listened to the previous two interviews and reviewed documents to generate new or follow up questions into the third interview protocol.

I audio-record each interview using a digital recorder. Recording the interview increases the accuracy of data collection and simultaneously allows me to remain attentive to the participant (Patton, 1990). Recording the interview does not fully eliminate the need to take handwritten notes as the notes can help me formulate new

questions and thoughts through the course of the interview and can facilitate later analysis (Patton, 1990).

After each interview, I listened to the interview to make notes of follow-up questions and initial thoughts before sending the audio files to be transcribed. After receiving the transcripts, I listened to the audio files again to make any changes or additional notes. Interview transcripts in narrative inquiry are helpful to data analysis as I can write, rewrite, and interpret narratives shared by participants in the interview (Czarniawska, 2004).

Ending the interview process with participants requires special attention, as participants may have shared important aspects of their lives and feels a special connection to interviewers, not unlike the termination process in psychotherapy (Josselson, 2007). I followed Josselson's recommendation on how to end an interview. At the end of the interview process, I invited participants to share how they felt about the interview experience and its meaningfulness. A question I asked to start the ending process was "How was it for you to talk to me in this way?" Using this question to begin the process of saying goodbye, I was alert to any signs of hesitation or uncertainty and be ready to empathically respond. As I invited participants to ask questions, I shared my gratitude for their time and contribution to my work. A statement I used was "I appreciate your openness and willingness to share your experiences with me. I feel that I have learned a lot from you that will help me in my work" (Josselson, 2007, p. 545).

**Strengths and challenges of interviews.** As aforementioned, interviews as a form of data collection allow for extended interaction with participants and for in-depth information (Creswell, 2007). Josselson (2007) suggested that good interviewers could

conduct intensive and extensive interviews, which can encourage participants to share sensitive areas of their lives. In this context, “it is not uncommon for people to tell us things they have never told anyone else” (Josselson, 2007, p. 546).

Although interviews provide intensive and extensive data, they are not without challenges. These challenges often focus on the mechanics and ethical considerations of conducting the interview (Creswell, 2007). Some mechanical challenges include unexpected participant behavior and reactions, the ability to craft, phrase, and negotiate questions, and the ability respond to sensitive issues during the interview (Creswell, 2007). Researchers should be comfortable with their own inner process and in dealing with complex and potentially painful emotions (Josselson, 2007). When talking about issues regarding race and identity, painful emotions and experiences may arise. Traditional ethical concerns include the participant’s right to privacy and protection from harm. In interviews, the degree of involvement on the part of the researcher is a potential challenge (Fontana & Frey, 1998) because interviews are similar to therapy in that interviews reveal painful emotions and experiences (Josselson, 2007).

## **Documents**

In addition to three interviews, I collected documents related to the course and documents completed for course requirements from each participant. Documents related to the course included the course syllabus and any documented activities from the course. Documents completed for course requirements included four reflections and a reflection on an out of comfort experience. Hodder (1998) stated that documents are prepared for personal reasons and include diaries, memos, letters, and field notes. Hodder further asserted that texts can only be understood as a form of artifact created under specific



conditions that are embedded in larger social systems. Especially because I collected documents from multiple individuals who were enrolled in different dialogues, the context (i.e., dialogue topic) was always relevant (Hodder, 1998). Thus, interpretation of documents must include the context in which the document was produced. Collecting documents was another point in triangulation. Documents also allowed participants the freedom of time and space to reflect on their thoughts. However, because documents occur in specific contexts, their use in analysis and interpretation is limited.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In the following sections, I will describe my method of analysis and interpretation of data collected through interviews and documents. I used a combination of inductive content case and cross-case analysis (Patton, 1990) and narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to analyze the interviews and documents. I first analyzed the field notes as individual cases per participant and then analyzed the field notes as a group by cross-case analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

“The qualitative data analysis [for narrative inquiry] may be a description of both the story and themes that emerge from it” (Creswell, 2007, p. 56). Narrative inquirers typically use a hybrid narrative approach to analyze data, as there is no uniform approach to analyze data in narrative inquiry (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilbert, 1998). Some inquirers may analyze the content of a narrative as a complete story while others analyze the content of a category or theme within a narrative or across narratives. Others may also analyze the structure of a narrative, such as plot progression or gaps and silences. I desired to study the content of each participant’s story while also comparing the content

among each participant's story. I used a hybrid approach that combined the analysis of the content as an entire story (inductive case analysis), of the content of themes within each story, and of the structure of a complete story (cross-case analysis). In the next chapter, I provide a full restory of each participant's story. In Chapter 5, I incorporate the analysis of the content of themes within each story and across both stories as well as structural analysis, paying particular attention to silences, gaps, and the interweaving of storylines, in a discussion of themes. In this section, I will describe specific steps I took in this hybrid approach to analysis.

To analyze these field notes, I used a combination of Patton's (1990) inductive content case and cross-case analysis for qualitative research and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative analysis to analyze the field notes (i.e., interview transcriptions and documents). Some steps of analysis are present in both methods, such as careful reading and rereading of all field texts. Inductive analysis is a key component of qualitative inquiry. Inductive analysis means that any patterns, themes, and/or categories emerge from the data, rather than being imposed onto the data prior to collection and analysis (Patton, 1990).

I began the analysis process by reading and rereading all field texts and began organizing them in some manner (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Patton, 1990). Patton's (1990) content analysis includes reading through all field notes and making comments in the margins; beginning coding content into topics for one or two pieces of data; and developing a codebook to code the remaining pieces of data. To enhance this richness of this process for narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest using a careful narrative coding of the field texts, including notation of dates, contexts in which

participants composed field notes, characters or individuals involved, and topics the field notes cover. For each field text (transcript and document), I created a cover sheet with this initial narrative analysis.

I continued with this initial analysis focusing on other narrative components and codes, such as the names of characters that appear in the texts, places where events occurred, story lines that interweave and connect, any apparent gaps or silences, emerging tensions, and continuities and discontinuities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A potential code I paid particular attention to was the presence and content of critical events within and outside of intergroup dialogue. A critical event is critical because it has significant impact on the participant, almost always resulting in a change experience that is identified after the event occurs (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Further, a critical event will likely have challenged the participant in her or his worldview, informing future behavior and understanding. Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested identifying critical events through the impact an event had on the storyteller. Critical events have several qualities. Critical events are unplanned; are identified after the event; exist in particular contexts; are personal and emotional; and typically have life-changing effects. Further, Webster and Mertova emphasizes a focus on the effects, rather than on the content, an event has on the individual involved. Using these narrative codes, I developed a codebook (See Appendix H: Codebook) with one transcript. As I proceeded through the field texts, I incorporated additional codes.

After the initial coding process, I embarked on two separate but related analysis strategies: case analysis by “restorying” the coded stories and cross-case analysis by grouping together different perspectives of emerging themes. I analyzed these stories and

“restoried” them into a chronological framework for each participant, using Patton’s (1990) definition of a case analysis. A case analysis allowed me to fully understand their story and provided me with an opportunity to “restory” their stories. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), a story includes a three-dimensional space, consisting of the personal and social (interaction), the past, present, and future (continuity), and the place (situation). “Restorying is the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework” (Creswell, 2007, p. 56). This process can include gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements (such as place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting the stories to place them in a sequence.

Polkinghorne, an academic researcher and a practicing psychotherapist, suggested that there can be two types of narrative: *descriptive narrative*, a form of narrative with the purpose to produce an accurate description of narrative accounts in order to make meaning of the sequence of events; and *explanatory narrative*, a form of narrative with the purpose to make connections between events and to provide a meaningful narrative for these connections (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The restories from this study combined Polkinghorne’s descriptive and explanatory narratives. The narrative for each participant described individual racial identity experiences in chronological order with explanatory statements dispersed in the narrative to make connections between experiences.

After this “restorying” process, I engaged in what Patton (1990) calls “cross-case analysis.” By grouping together answers from different participants to common questions, using codes that appeared multiple times between both participants, and analyzing different perspectives on emerging themes, I explored the place of larger

themes among the participants. I detailed these themes that arise from the stories to provide more detailed discussion of the meaning of the stories in Chapter 5.

Czarniawska (2004), a postmodern writer, suggested adding another element to the analysis: “a deconstruction of the stories, an unmaking of them by such analytic strategies as exposing dichotomies, examining silences, and attending to disruptions and contractions” (Creswell, 2007, p. 56). Czarniawska (2004) adapted analytic strategies in deconstruction from Martin (1990). These strategies became additional codes in my codebook. I also used these strategies on a cross-case level by comparing the presence or absence of the codes between participants’ restories. Czarniawska (2004) suggested beginning the process of deconstruction by dismantling dichotomies and exposing them as false. Following the dismantling of dichotomies, Czarniawska suggested paying particular attention to and examining silences, disruptions, contradictions, any elements in the text that stand out, and use of metaphors.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), researchers should actively involve participants in the research. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) suggested focusing on the relationship between the researcher and the researched so that both parties learn and change in and from the encounter. This process allows both parties to discuss the meaning of the stories and add credibility by engaging in member checking. Further methods to increase the trustworthiness of this study will be discussed in a later section.

### **Data Interpretation**

The interpretation of data often raises multiple ethical dilemmas. A prominent ethical dilemma is the type of authority to give to participants: should participants be given transcripts and/or final reports for verification and comments (Josselson, 2007)?

Collaborative authority would provide participants with a voice in the research process while interpretive authority would provide researchers with the authority to interpret data as the meaning emerges. According to Josselson (2007), most researchers want a balance of both. Josselson (2007) suggested that a way to mediate this dilemma is to focus on the tasks of the researcher at different phases of research. In the data-gathering phase, the researcher's task is to "clarify and explore the personal meanings of the participant's experience" (Josselson, 2007, p. 549). In the interpretation phase, the researcher's task is to analyze the implications of findings in the scholarly world. In the latter phase, Josselson further suggested that the goodness of narrative research rests in the researcher's reflexivity. By stressing that the written report is the researcher's interpretation of the text, the researcher can clearly state her or his biases, positioning, and the circumstances under which the interpretations were created. Using this standpoint, "the report is not 'about' the participants but 'about' the researcher's meaning making" (Josselson, 2007, p. 549).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) dissented slightly from this standpoint, arguing that researchers run the risk of producing disconnected text if they write without enough attention to the experience in the field and the field texts. Additionally, the authors suggest that researchers cannot focus too heavily on capturing personal experience in the field and the interpretations drawn from those experiences without keeping in mind whom they write for and what meaning the writing might have for them. Josselson (2007) would agree with this point, urging researchers to maintain respect and consideration of research participants, an ethic to which researchers are bound.

For the purposes of this study, I provided participants with transcripts and multiple drafts of the restories during the data-gathering phase to ensure that I captured their sentiments and stories. I maintained a research journal through the entire research process, reflecting on my thoughts, biases, and emerging themes during interpretation. At the end of the interpretation process, I wrote individual sequential narratives, called a “restory,” for each participant and to have overarching themes among all the narratives. The resulting narratives and themes will reflect a balance between individual and group racial identity experiences. My hope with presenting individual and collective narratives will convey helpful stories applicable to the general Asian American student population while emphasizing the uniqueness within each experience. I will discuss this presentation of narratives in detail in a later portion of this proposal.

### **A "Good" Narrative study**

Creswell (2007) outlined several characteristics of a “good” narrative study. A good narrative study focuses on a small number of individuals (usually one to three), collecting stories about a significant issue related to their lives. The researcher develops a chronology of these stories to connect different aspects of the story in order to restory the story of the participant(s). This restory is told in a persuasive and literary way. Themes that emerge from a single story or multiple stories tell a broader analysis of stories. The researcher manages to accomplish these steps while reflexively bringing herself or himself into the study. In this section, I will discuss strategies I used to bolster aspects of trustworthiness, or goodness (Creswell, 2007), of this study, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

## **Credibility**

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument and should report any personal or professional information that may affect data collection, analysis, and interpretation to ensure credibility of the researcher (Patton, 1990). To ensure credibility of the research, Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggested strategies for data collection, such as prolonged engagement and peer debriefing, and strategies for data analysis, such as member checking and triangulation.

To ensure credibility during data collection, I engaged in prolonged engagement and peer debriefing. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggested that prolonged engagement could overcome effects of misinformation while establishing rapport to build trust and understanding the context of the inquiry. Since the study was focused on the narratives of Asian American students, I spent substantial time with the participants in person through three interviews and in figurative space through reviewing their course documents. I also recorded the interviews to ensure I document what participants said. Guba and Lincoln (1989) described peer debriefing as a process of engaging a disinterested peer, a knowledgeable peer who has no vested interest in your research, to discuss preliminary findings, conclusions, and tentative analyses. I engaged an individual who works with Asian American racial identity to read initial drafts of the “restories” and emergent themes from the “restories.” After this peer had a chance to read through the documents, we met to discuss the documents, the peer’s initial thoughts, and the research process. This peer also pointed out two potential areas for me to reflect upon as a researcher. These areas were discussed in a previous section of this chapter.



To ensure credibility during data analysis, I engaged in member checking and triangulation. Guba and Lincoln (1989) described member checking as a process of taking the research back to the original participants. This process provides an opportunity for participants to correct errors in their interviews, transcripts, and interpretations of the researcher. In this study, I sent completed transcripts and secondary drafts of the restories back to the participants for their viewing. Participants did not note any changes. Triangulation is the process of comparing and checking the consistency of information across qualitative data sources that have been created at different times by different means. In this study, I used interviews and course documents to engage in triangulation. However, I recognize and embrace multiple truths and realities so the first layer of triangulation occurred within the field texts for each participant, and a second layer occurred across participants.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the ability to apply or connect the results of the present study in the present research context to another context, such as a reader's personal experiences. To ensure transferability, I provided sufficient detail and thick description of the site and participants. A thick description provides detail, context, emotion, and complex relationships (Patton, 1990). I also used multiple participants and data points (e.g., interviews and course documents) to gather sufficient data.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is the ability to account for the changing conditions of the study and the changing environments of the study. I engaged in three strategies to ensure dependability: (1) providing a codebook and emergent themes in the Appendix of this

report; (2) memoing throughout the research process to document research formation, data collection and analysis, and any other research-related thoughts; and (3) writing in a researcher journal to document personal reflection through the research process.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is concerned with assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I use direct quotations from participants through their interviews or course documents to support emerging themes and assertions. I also solicited an inquiry auditor to review my data collection, data analysis, and interpretation process and findings to ensure that findings come from the data, and not from my personal thoughts. This process also illuminated areas of my written report, restories, and emerging themes that needed clarification.

### **Presentation of Narratives**

Based on the nature of my analyses through focusing on individual stories in a first layer of interpretation and then focusing on all stories in a second layer of interpretation, I used Czarniawska's (2004) feedback method to present findings from this study. The feedback method presents a narrative that moves backward in time, identifying key events relevant to the present story of the student. From there, the feedback method allowed me to focus each student's story before zooming out to examine all of the stories. For this study, I present "restories" for each participant in the next chapter. After, I will present emerging themes from the "restories" by providing supporting quotations and thick descriptions and corresponding interpretations in Chapter 5.

In these stories and themes, I will use thick description and quotations to engage readers to enter into the worlds of the student participants (Patton, 1990). Thick description goes beyond surface level appearances to reveal complex context, emotion, relationships, history, and significance of events. “In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 83). These thick descriptions can be presented in anecdotes, which are crucial events that provides a variety of interpretations, or in vignettes, which are brief depictions of important moments of learning (Ely, 2007). These thick descriptions and quotations will be balanced by analysis, leading into interpretation (Patton, 1990).

### **Limitations**

This study is not without limitations. I divide these limitations into two categories of thinking: limitations regarding the conceptualization of this study and limitations regarding how this study was conducted. One conceptual limitation of this study is that the findings are limited to intergroup dialogue programs that use a critical-dialogic structure. This structure focuses largely on relating individual experiences to issues of power and privilege (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). My findings might look different at an intergroup dialogue program using a different pedagogical structure. Further, my findings might look different at an intergroup dialogue program using the same critical-dialogic structure if dialogue aspects, such as facilitator training and length of the dialogue, were different.

Another conceptual limitation of this study is related to the critique of intergroup dialogue programs and other diversity intervention programs that appear to further colonize participants who are underrepresented (Gorski, 1999). Gorski (1999) argued

that intergroup dialogue rarely occurs among groups of individual with equal access to power and that research on how dialogue actually eliminates or mitigates systemic inequity is largely missing (DeTurk, 2006). He reasoned that part of this missing literature is because intergroup dialogue is focused on providing an opportunity for privileged and oppressed groups to hear each other's voices, when in reality, oppressed individuals do not need additional organized opportunities to hear privileged voices because these voices exist in media, education, and other parts of society (Jones, 1999).

One limitation of how my study was conducted is related to the selection of intergroup dialogue participants. I selected participants enrolled in any intergroup dialogue, not necessarily participants enrolled in a race intergroup dialogue. The intergroup dialogue in which a participant is enrolled may affect the salience of her or his racial identity. Further, this salience may affect the richness of the stories a participant tells about her or his experiences. Another limitation of this study was selecting participants who had previously enrolled in intergroup dialogue as opposed to participants currently enrolled in intergroup dialogue. One participant, Kayla, was enrolled in the previous semester while the other participant, Guita, was enrolled over a year ago. Although this passage of time might point to the longitudinal impact of intergroup dialogue, the amount of time that passed since her involvement may impact her recollection of her experiences in intergroup dialogue.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings that emerged from the data analysis in the form of restories for Kayla Lim and Guita Pineda. In each restory, I bring together verbatim quotations from the participant's interviews and written reflections in the participant's journals to create a story of how each participant experienced her racial identity in her intergroup dialogue. I also bring myself as a researcher into the restory by stating relevant observations I made of the participant's nonverbal behavior and relevant personal emotions or emotions I observed in the participant.

To construct these restories, I focused primarily on critical events, defined by Webster and Mertova (2007) as unplanned and unanticipated events that have an impact on the storyteller. Critical events typically have some of the following qualities: existence in a particular context, impactful on the individuals involved, possess life-changing consequences, reveal patterns, identified after the event has occurred, and are intensely personal accompanied by strong emotional involvement. I situated these critical events in contextual influences, such as family background, peer culture, norms, and stereotypes (Jones, 1997), and provided accompanying content, or substance of how participants understand their identity. All names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

The restories follow a similar structure of four general sections: (1) an introduction to the participant; (2) a "growing up" section highlighting significant experiences leading up the participant's enrollment in her respective intergroup dialogue course; (3) experiences from the intergroup dialogue course; and (4) experiences after the participant's enrollment in the intergroup dialogue course. Although I used this general

structure to provide a framework for understanding the participants' racial identity experiences in intergroup dialogue, I understand that each participant's experience is unique. This uniqueness remains within the general structure as actual experiences highlighted vary between the participants.

### **Kayla Lim**

Kayla Lim is a second-year student majoring in communications at a large public institution on the East Coast. Although her family is from the local area, she currently resides in her sorority's house on campus. Kayla characterizes herself as "very independent," "very trusting," and "a people pleaser." She further describes herself as someone who often wonders what people think, attempts to overcome stereotypes of others, hates arguments and debates, and makes friends based on personality. Kayla used two mantras often during our time together: "my life is my life" and "it's just who I am."

I first met Kayla in early February 2011 during the first few weeks of the spring academic semester. She walked into the interview room with a slightly red nose from the winter cold, her shoulders back, and head held high. I asked her if she would like something warm to drink from the coffee shop nearby. After promptly replying with a courteous, "No, thank you," she looked to me with eyes eager to begin our work together. This response was typical of Kayla at our subsequent meetings: prompt, eager, and at ease. Throughout our time together, Kayla described her personality as someone who is "very loud, outgoing, loves to talk." Kayla shared openly, often wondering aloud with me as she pondered how to answer a question.

Throughout the field notes, Kayla referred to herself explicitly as Christian, upper-middle class, and implicitly as female and heterosexual. When asked about how

she would ethnically or racially identify, Kayla said that she would not use the terms “Asian American” or “Chinese American.” Rather, she would say “Chinese”:

I would just say I’m Chinese...I’m also American by the way I act but what makes me different from [others] is I’m Asian. So if they ask, “What are you?”, I know they don’t want to hear that I’m American because obviously I was born here and stuff. I tell them the different parts of my ethnicity are. If someone says, “What ethnicity are you?”, I would be like, “I’m Chinese.”

Kayla always knew that she was Chinese, indicating her ability to speak Chinese, her love of bubble tea, and where her parents were from as characteristics of what makes her Chinese. However, “the way [she] acts,” the people she made friends with, and the way she was raised were very “Americanized.” I found it interesting that Kayla thought that the fact that she was born in the United States was “obvious” to others, perhaps referring to her outgoing and personable personality. Ironically, Kayla brought up her physical appearance multiple times during our time together as a reason for her to “work hard” and “compensate for features [she] was born with” in social situations where physical appearance plays a large role, such as joining the cheerleading squad in high school or rushing for a sorority in college. I noticed Kayla’s sense of confidence continued as she shared that her Chinese look is not the “ideal ‘beauty’ in our society...the all-American look.” In her intergroup dialogue course, Kayla realized that these feelings “may have caused [her] to become stereotypical towards [herself] and looking down on what [she] was born with.”

In this section, I will present a restory of Kayla’s racial identity experience in her People of Color/White intergroup dialogue course (further referred to as “dialogue course”). To contextualize her experiences in the dialogue course and provide a sense of continuity, I will provide restories of other experiences she shared leading up to her

intergroup dialogue experience (e.g., the role of her family and parents, her experiences in a Chinese church and school, and the impact of working with sleep away camp for inner city youth) and experiences after her dialogue course, including her experience as a participant in the present study.

### **Growing Up**

Kayla often talked about her family and the role her family played in her life. Kayla's younger brother is six years her junior and will be beginning high school soon. Because he is younger, Kayla found that her parents came to her for parenting advice, which she felt brought her and her parents closer. In describing her parents, Kayla pointed to the presence or lack of an accent as an indicator of assimilation into American culture. Kayla described how she viewed her mother's experience in the United States as taking "longer" because of her accent. During a visit to her mother's place of employment, Kayla noticed that "people kind of look down upon [her accent] because she's harder to understand." Kayla highlighted how her mother's accent impacts how others treat her mother, is an indicator of how her mother "isn't as connected to the American culture," and is a disadvantage against her mother. As Kayla spoke about her mother's accent, she also shared about her mother's personality with a large smile, as "the sweetest person [she] knows." For a class project, Kayla explored her father's immigration experience in the United States. She was not surprised when her father said "everything was smooth for him" because of the "way he raised us and his way of life. It's not too ethnic Asian Chinese or anything." In describing her father, Kayla highlighted how his lack of accent was indicative of his assimilation into American culture, as being "Americanized."



Kayla talked about how her father raised her and her brother in a “very not typical Asian parents kind of thing.” She characterized typical Asian parenting by describing her friends’ experiences in being told they had to learn piano, aim for a near-perfect score for the SAT exam, and take additional SAT exams. She contrasted this typical Asian parenting with her father’s parenting style, which she described as “not even the Chinese way of doing things”:

I think I was raised differently... I used to talk back to my parents a lot, and I would stand up for what I believe in. I don’t do the “submit to authority” thing very well when it comes to my parents... He never told me what to do or what to take. He goes, “You go out and you make your own mistakes and you’ll learn from it.” His way of teaching us [was] “your life, your consequences.” My dad gave me, I think, enough space so I can grow myself but also too much space where I wanted to do everything by myself.

Kayla further described her parents’ atypical Asian parenting style when reflecting on the impact of a car accident in which her family was involved the summer before. She described a contrast in her parents’ expression of love and appreciation before and after the car accident. Before the accident, her parents never hugged her or said “I love you” because it was an “ethnic thing, a cultural thing” to assume love is there even if not expressed. After the car accident, she observed her family, especially her father, appreciating life and others in the family in a different way. In describing the first time her father said “I love you” to her that summer, Kayla laughed and shook her head, expressing how “weird” it was to hear that from him for the first time in 19 years.

After her family moved, Kayla grew up in a mostly White neighborhood, where she felt her “whole life was different.” At school, she never felt like she was ever singled out for being different or “being Asian.” She made friends with individuals who possessed “similar personalities and not a culture similarity or anything else or ethnic.”

In high school, Kayla observed a small number of Asian students who made friends with non-Asian students:

I'm so against Asian only hang out with Asians. In my high school there were only two Asian girls who hung out with non-Asians and everyone else was just in their own little group. You see them just only hanging out with themselves. Those are the people who are in the smartest classes and I just didn't want to be associated with that so I didn't.

For Kayla, her classmates from Chinese Sunday school were the only Asian people with whom she was friends throughout middle and high school after her parents moved.

One aspect that continued through the move was Chinese church and the affiliated Chinese Sunday school. I inquired about Kayla's experience as I shared my brief personal enrollment in Chinese Sunday school. She indicated with a slight smile that she often received questions and laude for her involvement and proceeded to shared that she started attending Chinese Sunday school in preschool and remained there for eleven years. Here, she learned Mandarin Chinese and engaged in cultural Chinese events, such as planning Chinese New Year celebrations. Her classmates were children of other Chinese families who attended the church. Kayla described her experience at Chinese Sunday school as:

just something I went to every Sunday and passed the test by cheating on erasers. I didn't really learn anything. It wasn't a big deal or anything. It was just something that we were forced to do but at the same time I went because my friends were all there and none of us really learned anything.

Kayla began to illuminate the important role of people and friends in her life when she shared that her friends were the main reason she continued attending Chinese Sunday school.

Kayla felt a similar motivation to continue attending services and being involved in her Chinese Church. During high school, Kayla was involved with the teens

congregation, eventually becoming an officer of the congregation and planning all of the Friday night activities. However, at one point, Kayla felt that “the Church depended on me so much but it was kind of in a lukewarm way, where they needed me because I helped lead the teens group but I wasn’t there for myself anymore.” Similar to her motivation to continue attending Chinese Sunday school, Kayla felt that she continued her involvement in the teens congregation because of her friends:

I grew up in this church and made my best friends there. I loved everyone there, but for me, it’s like you don’t go to church for the people. You go for the faith and for spiritual reasons. I didn’t feel, spiritually, that’s what I needed. So I left looking for that.

This desire to search for spiritual connection became stronger when she felt tension with conservative ways the Church operated. She described tension she felt with the Church as being the result of a “cultural difference”:

One of the reasons I left that Chinese church was because of cultural difference. They are very conservative...there was a board of elders and they were the ones that ran the church because, you respect your elders. That’s a very Chinese cultural thing. So they ran the church and they made all of the decisions and we just saw the effects of it. They were just very set in their ways and there was no way out of that and I didn’t like that at all because it was just a bunch of old men running a church.

As Kayla talked about this difference, her eyes lit up when she connected her experience with something she learned in an Asian American history course in college. She discovered that this observation of cultural differences was characteristic of an Asian cultural church, “a center for immigrants and their families to come and so they have resources.”

Religion and faith are large parts of Kayla’s life. She defined her relationship with God as dependent on how much quiet time she spends with Him. This deep belief in her faith further guided her values and behaviors, apparent in her experience in a sorority:

I want to be different than these girls. So one of my values is because I'm underage I don't drink. I don't go out a lot. I'm not going to sleep with guys because I believe that because in the Bible God told us those are sacred things.

Her faith also guided her four-year involvement during high school as a camp counselor at Camp Hope, a week-long sleep away camp for inner-city Washington, D.C. middle school youth who were part of an after school program called Little Lights. This program, run by a Christian organization, provided a space for mentorship and afterschool activities for youth. Camp Hope spawned from this organization in partnership with the Chinese church as a way to reward a small number of dedicated students at the after school program. These students, who are usually Black, are paired in a one-to-one ratio with a counselor. Counselors typically started with generic questions to build trust with the students, who, because of complex settings at home, were “tough” and “distrustful.” Reflectively, Kayla talked about her last experience as a counselor for Camp Hope. At the beginning of the week, during their daily one-on-one time, Kayla asked her mentee generic questions, such as her favorite color or favorite animal. On the last night of the camp, Kayla asked her mentee what was her worst fear and what she worried about most. The mentee responded, “I'm scared of the gunshots outside of my house. I hide under my blanket because I'm scared it's going to come and get me and stuff like that.” Kayla's eyes widened as spoke of this experience, characterizing the student's reality as “scary.”

Separate from our interviews, Kayla reflected on the impact of her Camp Hope involvement in a journal entry for the dialogue course, characterizing her experience as “eye opening” by exposing her to a world outside of her suburban “bubble” neighborhood and reminding her that the world is “not all about us.” Kayla connected

her Camp Hope experience with Beverly Tatum's (2010) "Who Am I?" article in a journal reflection for the dialogue course, writing about how a dominant group often takes their dominant identity for granted. She mentioned her family's upper-middle class socioeconomic status; she grew up fortunate, living in a "typical suburban neighborhood, going to one of the best school districts in [the] area, and feeling safe in my neighborhood." After working with Camp Hope, she realized she took these comforts for granted. Further, she wrote about how her privileged identity from an upper-middle class status balanced with her oppressed identity as being Asian. In all, Kayla wrote five journal reflections for the dialogue course, highlighting topics and experiences to guide our meeting times and capturing her thoughts and sentiments in a specific context and time.

### **People of Color/White Intergroup Dialogue**

I engaged Kayla in an exercise during one of our meetings. I asked her to imagine that I was someone who did not know anything about intergroup dialogue and that she was to explain to me what it was like to be in the dialogue course. She said:

It's a time for people to be completely honest with each other...there are, of course, ground rules, and not to attack people but people said what they thought. It was more like people sharing how they felt and other people who aren't in that race category to be like, "Wow I had no idea you felt like that" or to help them and "Maybe you should look at it this way." I felt like it was a very give and take sort of thing. We sat in a circle...you are sharing with each other and not just talking at the instructor or anything. You're not trying to sway anyone's opinion. You're just trying to be able to see other people's perspective on things in a very safe place.

In the semester prior to her participation in the current study, Kayla enrolled in two courses with a diversity focus, including a human diversity course and an Asian American studies course focused on Asian American history. To fulfill a final project

requirement for the human diversity course, Kayla enrolled in the Words of Engagement People of Color/White intergroup dialogue course focused on race (further referred to as “dialogue course”) with four other classmates. She chose this option because of her interest and curiosity in other people’s perspectives. In a journal reflection, Kayla felt partially prepared for the dialogue course because of the focus of her human diversity course. The human diversity course required students to bring a “mindset of being open and open-minded.” Further in her dialogue course experience, Kayla reflected on how her increased comfort with being open-minded could have been a bad “thing” as she felt like she was “los[ing] a filter for not saying stereotypical things,” particularly during an activity in which students voiced their assumptions about the details about the facilitators’ social identities (e.g., race, ethnicity) and life (e.g., marital status, dog or cat owner).

Kayla identified the demographics of this particular dialogue course: two Black men, two Asian women (including herself), one Asian man, and all the other participants were White. After enrolling in the dialogue course, she watched the documentary, *Color of Fear* (Lee, 1995), in the human diversity course and summarized the film as “a group of men using this idea of dialogue to communicate with each other their deepest feelings, thoughts, and discriminations on the topic of race.” In one of her journal reflections, Kayla shared she doubts how much she would enjoy the dialogue course:

I signed up for this class before watching that documentary in class, which honestly I’m not sure I would have. Only because I remember thinking how I would hate to be in the position of some of those men, where their ideas and basically entire mindsets were completely flipped. Personally, I am a person who does not like to get caught up in conflict, so when hot topics come up, I am usually the first one to take a step back. I hold back during hot topics, but I definitely speak my mind when it is the right time of place.

Kayla revealed a tension between her personality (“does not like to get caught up in conflict”) and a practice principle of intergroup dialogue (“hot topics). This tension impacted how she participated in the remaining classes. Kayla often held back from participating in the discussion of hot topics and noted her thoughts in her journal reflections. This example is one of several tensions that surfaced throughout our time together and throughout her journal entries.

### **A Testimony In Class**

Within the first ten minutes of our first meeting, as Kayla was speaking about her growing up experiences, she abruptly revealed that some of her experiences, particularly having only White friends, led to internalized racism. As someone familiar with the term, I inquired deeper about her feelings and returned to this term several times throughout our time together. Kayla first read about internalized racism in the human diversity course but did not find personal meaning with the terminology until the dialogue course:

When we were first given this assignment to give a testimony and told to specifically talk about our racial identity and one other important identity, my initial reaction was that I could easily talk for a long time about these topics. I ended up talking about my race as being Chinese. When I started talking, I tried to keep to the surface things like my parents wanted me to maintain my culture so they sent me to 11 years of Chinese school and, at home, my mom would cook Chinese food every night. We celebrated all the Asian holidays, but as I grew older my parents started teaching us in a way, their parenting techniques was in a way that wasn't very Asian. It was more like you follow, you go whichever path you decide, and you take the consequences if you do take the wrong path. The thing that was different about me is that when I got to middle and high school, I started hanging out only with the White people in my classes. To this day, I am still like that.

I then admitted how I have internalized racism and oppression as I read about in our weekly readings. I shared about how I realize that I had gotten to the point where I do have internalized racism because I grew up in an environment and had that mindset that White people are better. I came to this conclusion because I

look down upon and unconsciously try to stay away from large groups of Asians, especially Asian sorority girls. I am also one to make my own Asian jokes and when others joke around with me about it, I always just laugh it off and I have never been one to try to defend my Asian culture. It is almost like I'm too embarrassed to be grouped together with that image.

I asked her how she felt after she shared this testimony with the class. She brought both hands to the side of her face, cupping both cheeks, and expressed how embarrassed she felt. She silently wished that no one would remember what she had said and refrained from looking at anyone. The testimony in class was the first time Kayla admitted to herself that she was “not always proud of her culture and heritage,” let alone admitting it aloud to a group of individuals she barely knew.

After everyone shared their testimony, a classmate asked Kayla “to clarify why it is [she] unconsciously stay[ed] away from Asian sorority girls.” Kayla was surprised that she did not need a lot of time to answer that question, “I wanted to be a part of the privileged majority. And to be a part of an oppressed group like the Asian girls, I am sticking myself lower on the privilege pole.” Another classmate followed up with the question, “If the majority was another group, would [she] still be only friends with the White folks?” Kayla replied, “No, for some reason, I am drawn to the group that is privileged, and in this society that happens to be the White people.” Kayla observed that the facilitators and her classmates “didn't think it was a big deal at all.” Although she observed that they appreciated her openness, she was in shock that she shared such a sentiment in class.

I noticed that Kayla continued reflecting on the roots of her sentiment since sharing that testimony in class. In our time together, Kayla shared other examples of how she harbored internalized racism. She openly shared that she always thought her White



friends were better than her Asian friends and that she always looked down upon large groups of Asian people. Kayla resolved that she was “more comfortable with [her] White friends because if we’re doing something stupid you can’t stereotype us based on race.” In the middle of sharing these words, Kayla paused and changed direction to talk about how she does not “self-hate” and is proud of her Chinese heritage. In the moment, Kayla named the conflict she was feeling: “I am proud that I am Chinese but at the same time I still think that in my head for some reason I feel like I’m not in that group because of what I’ve grown up around.”

Kayla’s trusting and curious nature became apparent in this moment as she openly explored this conflict with me, a person she knows very little about but who also identifies as Chinese:

That’s why now that I think about this. I realize that I am confusing myself because I don’t know where I get the desire to stick with the White people. I just wonder where it came from. I still don’t really know. I know I’m different [from my friends] but at the same time, the way I act and the way I hold myself is different than the nerdy Asians you see or the Asian sorority girls that just only hang out with each other. I’m really proud...that I am different. Part of me is not proud of it but kind of like I’ve gone away from the typical Asian stereotype and now I have an internal problem with it but I still did it. I’m still very prideful of the fact that I am different than everyone. If anyone says anything like Asians are good at math, I’m proud of the fact that I suck at math and that I suck at science. I’m not good at math and my friends aren’t all Asian. I can’t play piano; I can’t play violin, all that stuff. It’s like I’m different and not everyone is the same. I’m only one person that breaks the stereotype a little bit. I’m still exploring, in the middle of it.

Kayla spoke about a desire to be different than the persistent Asian stereotypes (e.g., “all Asians hang out together,” “nerdy Asian”) and about her pride when breaking those stereotypes (e.g., “not good at math,” “my friends aren’t all Asian”). However, according to Kayla, this desire and pride led to internalized racism, a realization she is still exploring.

## **Perpetuating and Breaking Stereotypes**

Kayla's desire to break stereotypes drew her to a particular participant in the dialogue course. When I asked Kayla if any participants stood out to her during the dialogue course, she immediately brought up a classmate named Xavier, who identified as Black. She described him as someone who spoke up often in class and was experienced in participating in intergroup dialogue courses. Xavier stood out to Kayla because of a particular dialogue in class regarding the perpetuating of stereotypes. Xavier shared that he and friends would sometimes "go around living out the stereotype that some Black teenagers are up to no good, or that they should be feared" by putting "their hoods up, add[ing] a little more swagger to their walk just to scare people off, even though they know that people may potentially view them negatively because of that."

Xavier's story struck Kayla in two ways by (1) revealing the harsh reality of Xavier's life to her and (2) questioning the intention of Xavier's behavior, which further perpetuated a negative stereotype. With disbelief, Kayla shared that as a "little Asian girl," she could "never imagine walking down the street and for someone to walk away from [her]." She felt for Xavier because of this lived reality, causing her to reflect on the stereotypes that Asians live with (e.g., "bad drivers," "good at math," "model minority"). In this reflection, Kayla felt that the stereotypes were "not especially offensive" and were not significant forms of discrimination in contrast to Xavier's daily experience. During this moment, I found myself internally questioning if Kayla's comparison of Asian and Black stereotypes is an expression of Kayla's belief in the model minority myth or another expression of Kayla's internalized racism. Instead of engaging Kayla in this conversation, I noted my thoughts.

Kayla similarly noted her thoughts as Xavier shared his experience in class. After class, she reflected in her journal about her desire to ask Xavier if he realized that by “acting out those stereotypical actions just for fun, it reinforces people’s negative perceptions.” She felt that by following this stereotype, his actions were “just making it worse.” Kayla received a comment from one of the facilitators wondering why she did not ask Xavier her questions. Kayla shared with me that she held back from engaging Xavier in further conversation because it was an earlier class in the course and she “didn’t want to offend him” or “challenge him on something that he’s really sensitive about.”

Holding back became a norm for Kayla as the dialogue course continued. She revealed to me that as the dialogue course progressed, she no longer wanted “to be a part of it anymore” and that the “deeper [they] got, the more [she] backed out of it.” In one of her later journal reflections for the dialogue course, she reflected on this feeling as it unfolded:

I can feel myself becoming like one of those cartoons where the real me is floating somewhere over my own head...The harder and the more hot topics that are thrown at me, the less I want to share. I can see this difference and now reflecting on it, I can see what has become of the once outspoken person that stepped inside the [dialogue] class on the first day. I came into that class wanting to speak my mind and share my thoughts, but learning about all this discrimination and prejudice has made me so extremely cautious and almost scared to say what's on my mind. This class has taught me so much about what it's like to step inside someone else's shoes that I no longer want to even risk being the oppressor in any situation.

Kayla shared that this feeling of disconnect is related to the impact of the material she learned in the course. I sensed that Kayla might have felt overwhelmed, or even powerless, to effect change, as she learned more about prejudice and discrimination experienced by others in her class.

At the same time, Kayla shared instances where she felt empowered to address stereotypes and prejudice. She spoke of becoming aware of Asian jokes that she and others made since coming to college. In her human diversity course, Kayla became aware of how hurtful these jokes were and how making her own jokes were “helping the stereotypes.” She also became aware of her responsibility to name and act against these jokes, by noticing “little examples of how Asians are oppressed” and “say[ing] something or show[ing] I wasn’t okay” with Asian jokes. This awareness followed her into the dialogue course and beyond, illustrated by an example of when she corrected her best friend’s boyfriend about an expectation that Kayla should know something because she was Asian as the three individuals were waiting at the theater for a popular movie:

I don’t remember what exactly he said but that’s when I was actually, that was really annoying and that’s when I called him out on it. Before I would just be okay whatever and just brush it off but for me to stand up for myself and put him in his place he was just kind of like, “I’m so sorry and I didn’t mean it.” I told him, “It’s not funny to me. How would you feel if I made jokes to you?” So ever since then he has stopped.

This example reveals the impact of the human diversity and dialogue courses and indicates a potential return of Kayla’s connection to addressing stereotypes and prejudice. Kayla shared another example of how she noticed real-life examples of prejudice and discrimination outside of the dialogue course and was driven to break a stereotype about others. This particular experience also prompted Kayla to further investigate the roots of her own prejudice against others, including other Asians.

In the middle of the 2010 fall semester, in the middle of the dialogue and human diversity courses, Kayla and her mother went shopping for clothes at the Greenbelt Plaza mall, an area Kayla described as “a little sketchy but not that bad.” When Kayla and her mother first pulled into the parking lot, Kayla’s mother warned against Kayla going to

this mall by herself, “You have to be careful. You never know what’s going to happen.” Kayla brushed off the comment by sharing that the area was “not that bad.” The sun was already setting when Kayla and her mother exited the mall to return to their car. Because the sun was still in the sky, Kayla remembered feeling comfortable. As Kayla and her mother walked in the parking lot, Kayla noticed “three Black people standing around a car.” Her mother “almost stopped to look at them and she whispered to [Kayla], ‘Should we wait until they leave?’ in Chinese.” Kayla proceeded forward and responded, “No, Mom. Don’t be ridiculous. They’re not going to do anything to us.” Kayla could feel her mother “push, kind of nudging [her] to the side.” Kayla nudged back and said, “No, we’re going to go to our car and we’re going to drive out of her.” As Kayla’s mother drove out of the parking lot, she made a similar warning, “Don’t come here by yourself, okay? You need to have a guy with you.”

As Kayla repeated her mother’s warning and finished the story, she gave a small chuckle. When I asked her about the laugh, Kayla shared that her and her mother are complete opposites when it comes to trusting others. Her initial thought as the story unfolded was, “Whoa, my mom is kind of racist and she’s kind of paranoid about this stuff. That’s what I was learning in class.” Kayla shared that she is “very conscious” and did not “want people to think that because of their race [she was] going to avoid them like some of the Black people experience” like Xavier’s story. Part of her personality is “overcoming those stereotypes of other people.” In further reflection, Kayla talked about how “growing up, there was that impression that different races are dangerous.” She “never really realized that until [she] started taking the [dialogue course].” In this particular story, she realized that her mother was paranoid of people who looked different,

especially Black people. This story caused Kayla to ponder if her mother's perceptions influenced her lack of attraction to Black men:

It was always Asian guys or White guys but after seeing what I was raised with my mom and how she thought, I was like, "Wait. Is that me?" Is that something that I was born with and "Oh, I just don't like guys like that or was it my mom who had set such a [thought], even though I am trusting? Is that the part of me that she's given me where I just don't like Black guys?" I wasn't really sure. Are my thoughts like my mom's, very discriminating a fearful of a race I know nothing about? While I won't actively let those thoughts come out, am I thinking those things?

### **Reflecting on Intergroup Dialogue**

Participating in the dialogue course raised a deep question for Kayla. One of these questions, as hinted above, is reflecting on whether she harbors discriminating thoughts as a result of her mother's influences. Kayla asked this question in her last journal reflection for the dialogue course:

I often ask myself the question of why do I say I am not racist, but at the same time I think thoughts that are extremely discriminatory? How can I want to be one thing so badly but act a completely different way?

She went on to share an experience in her human diversity class that brought her to ask this question in her journal reflection for the dialogue course.

Kayla was on a team of three for a group project researching religion and writing about their group process. Her team comprised of herself, a Korean woman, and a Black man, named Calvin. During a group meeting, Kayla asked Calvin where he was from. After Calvin answered, she shared why she was wondering:

I was just wondering because when you first look at him you would think he might be kind of rough around the edges, so to speak. He always has this cap on that looks kind of "gangster." But when you hear him talk, he is one of the smartest, most eloquent students in our class. He comes off as extremely educated with no trace of even talking in Black vernacular. Thank goodness [he] is a very polite, even-tempered guy because he just laughed and said he gets that a lot. He answered that he wears the cap because he is losing his hair and is pretty

embarrassed about it. I felt pretty embarrassed and ignorant myself after that because it showed that I am considerably stereotypical and quickly judge a person just on his appearance.

In reflecting on this story, Kayla shared that she never thought she was prejudiced towards others because she grew up in a White majority environment and worked hard “towards almost total assimilation into the dominant culture at my very White and very Jewish school.” She ended her final reflection with the following: “It was not until I had come to college and taken dialogue and human diversity this semester that I finally realize I am racist.”

### **After Intergroup Dialogue**

Months after the 2010 fall semester ended, Kayla reflected on the impact of the semester, particularly on her enrollment in both a human diversity course and an intergroup dialogue course. She saw the two courses as distinct:

[In human diversity] class, I learned the foundations and the basics and what my eyes were opened to. I saw the oppression but it wasn't as same as the dialogue where people can share how they're feeling and share their experiences in a more open and honest manner whereas in the [human diversity] class it was more you answer questions if you know the answer. There are right answers. The dialogue is like there are no right answers; it's just how you feel and what you have experienced. In dialogue, we are completely encouraged to spill every thought even if it may offend someone. In the human diversity class, honesty was encouraged, but people still censor their thoughts because we do not want to hurt our fellow classmates.

Although the semester proved to be eye opening and impactful, Kayla realized that three diversity-related courses, especially human diversity and intergroup dialogue, was “too much.” She surmised that feeling overwhelmed resulted in her “backing out of” the dialogue course near the end. In addition to admitting to harboring internalized racism against her own identity and questioning whether she is racist, Kayla also realized that her racial identity played a role in her feeling continuously overlooked by men when she

is with her best friends, whom she described as “White,” “gorgeous,” and “all-around amazing”:

It was a very eye opening thing because I said I never noticed my racial identity before and really I knew I was Chinese but it didn’t really play a role, I didn’t feel oppressed... I don’t think I really realized about that outward appearance thing, I never really actually realized it until last semester and maybe that’s why they look at her or those guys hit on her first is because of those things.”

Kayla continued to exercise what I consider critical thinking after the semester was over. In between two of our meetings, Kayla went out on a Saturday night with a group of 15 Asian men, whom were the children and friends of her family from the Chinese Church. The group was at McDonald’s late at night. Almost all of the men were intoxicated and “had the Asian glow.” Kayla described the men as “falling out of chairs, throwing food on the ground, [and] being really loud.” She shared that she was extremely embarrassed at the moment and reflected on why she was embarrassed:

Is it because they’re Asian guys? Is it because they’re Asian or is it just because of their behavior? And while saying this right now I was just thinking if it had been with my White friends would I be embarrassed? I probably wouldn’t be. But it was because it was a large group of Asians and for people to be like, “Wow there are Asians everywhere and they’re being loud and obnoxious” and for me to be like, “Wow I’m so embarrassed I’m with them.” I was so embarrassed to be there with them making a mess, falling out of chairs. I just didn’t want to be there.

I asked Kayla what she thought other people in the restaurant might have been thinking. With a tone of dismay, she shared that others might have thought that Asians could not handle liquor and all hang out together. She felt embarrassed to be associated with those stereotypes, “which [she’s] always worked to stay away from.” Kayla concluded her story with the following resolution: “I’m more aware of my problem but it’s not something that I have completely been able to be like, ‘Okay, I’m okay with Asians and I accept them 100%.’”



## Participating in Research

I felt that our time together gave Kayla an opportunity to reflect on her experiences in the previous academic semester. During our last meeting, Kayla seemed to have come to some resolution regarding the courses and the deep questions she shared with me. She shared that the courses brought a new sense of awareness to her thinking, allowing her to reflect on herself and to learn about other's experiences. Kayla saw opportunities for her to grow, such as realizing she should not make her own jokes and how being Asian affects how others view her. However, she "realized that you can only take that awareness to a certain extent before it makes you paranoid" and "take every little thing to heart":

I was aware of how I need to change personally but not to the point where it was like how it was going to change my entire outlook. It didn't change how I'm going to live my life. I'm still the same person.

In addition to reflecting on her experiences in the previous academic semester, our time together served as an opportunity to make new realizations. As mentioned above, Kayla realized a contradiction between feeling pride with her Chinese identity and behaving in a way that does not align with that pride:

That's what's contradicting. For you to ask me, "Am I proud?", "Of course I am." I'm Chinese; I love being Chinese. I love the food that comes with the culture and everything. But then at the same time when it comes to in society I sometimes don't always act like I'm proud of it. I guess if someone asks me, "Who are you" of course I say, "I'm Chinese" but I've also told you about all of the times when I strayed away from that and been like I'd rather hang out with White people. So it's kind of a very contradicting thing for me, I guess. I never realized it until a minute ago. I'm not sure.

Since we began talking, Kayla also realized that "even though I try to stay away from big groups of Asians, when I'm with my White friends I am so proud of being Asian." I

captured this sentiment in an example she shared regarding her desire to have an Asian woman in the new pledge class in her sorority:

I was like I want my Asian. I need someone to carry on my Asian line and stuff because there are only four of us left, like that's where I'm just being proud of who I am but in a very different way, I guess, where I'm proud I'm Asian but more, well I guess I am saying that. But it's only when I'm the minority in the majority.

This quotation reflects how Kayla would often openly wonder out loud with me during our meeting times. At our last meeting, although Kayla appeared tired and was slightly less descriptive in her answers, she perked up with a nostalgic reflection. In thinking about the experience of talking with me, Kayla shared that she saw our time together as time to reflect:

It's also kind of cool to see that in college you hear that this is the best four years of your life and you grow the most. This is stuff that I've all discovered while in my time in college and I've discovered about myself and about the people around me. I've only been here for a year and a half and this is already how much I've learned and it's really cool. I think that's really neat to bring that all together.

### **Guita Pineda**

Sampaguita "Guita" Pineda graduated at the end of the 2010 fall academic semester with a degree in Anthropology and a minor in Religious Studies. As I write her restory, Guita is completing an internship at the Smithsonian Institution. After corresponding through email, I met Guita for the first time during our first meeting. She wore her hair in two braids, as she did in subsequent meetings. On top of slightly flushed cheeks sat a pair of gold-rimmed glasses, which Guita often pushed up when thinking of how to answer a question. Guita still had her Smithsonian name badge on when she removed her coat. Sensing she might have walked in the cold, we went to the coffee shop nearby my office for a warm drink. Surprisingly, Guita ordered a mocha chiller. I

later learned that this was characteristic of Guita: she is not afraid to do or say what she wants, even if others expected her to do or say different.

As an anthropology major, Guita frequently provided context for what she shared. She also disliked the term “politically correct” because a “sugar-coating” and limiting connotation exists with the term. She spoke often about her family. Guita is an only child but grew with a large family so she “might as well have brothers and sisters because not a week goes by where” she does not see her cousins. Both of her parents emigrated from the Philippines. Her father has nine other siblings, who all have children, and some of whose children have children. Her paternal side of the family has two generations of cousins: the older cousins and the younger cousins, to which Guita belongs. She referred to her paternal grandfather and grandmother as Papa and Mama, respectively. Papa is her only living grandparent; Mama passed away when she was in high school. Her mother has four other siblings, most of who remain in the Philippines. She referred to her maternal grandfather and grandmother with the Tagalog phrases *Lolo* and *Lola*, respectively. Guita felt closer to her father’s side of the family simply because of the distance.

Throughout our time together, Guita explicitly identified as Filipino American and Catholic, and implicitly identified as heterosexual. Guita has a boyfriend, who identifies as White. She said:

I identify as Catholic. I do not believe all teachings of the Catholic Church. And I am a Catholic who is Filipino. I don’t know if that’s any different from being a Filipino Catholic. I just can’t worship the same way I’ve seen other Catholic Filipinos worship.

In this section, I will present a restory of Guita’s racial identity experience in her Interfaith/Secular intergroup dialogue course (further referred to as “dialogue course”).

To contextualize Guita's experiences in the intergroup dialogue and provide a sense of continuity, I will provide restories of the reflections she shared about her identities (e.g., Filipino American, Catholic, Catholic Filipino), experiences she shared leading up to her intergroup dialogue experience (e.g., her experiences in grade school, Mama's passing, attending meetings at the university's Filipino club) and experiences after her dialogue course, including her experience as a participant in this study.

### **Reflections on Different Identities**

On our walk to the coffee shop, Guita began asking me about my research interest. I started to explain how I observed that identity is complicated for Asian American students and terminology of racial and ethnic identity vary from disciplines and actual experiences. Sometimes Asian American students might not identify strongly as Asian American but are treated as such, I told her. At the same time, other identities, such as religion and sexual orientation, may have an impact on how a student views herself. I seemingly struck a chord with Guita as she started to tell me about her experiences with varying terminology.

#### **Both Hispanic and Asian: "I know what you mean but that's not what it is."**

As Guita began to tell me about her experience, it was clear that she has done a lot of thinking behind terminology and that she was a scholar in anthropology. She often described how "technically" a term or experience can be generalized, but also provided a context in which the term or experience might be differently viewed. She told me about the difference between federal and dictionary definitions of race, using herself as an example, illuminating a rather complex understanding she had of how definitions are problematic:

Federal definitions are totally different from dictionary definitions or scholarly definitions... The dictionary definition of Hispanic means indigenous population plus Spanish population. Technically, that would fit into Filipino and my Filipino heritage. But there is implication of Hispanic being from either South America, Central America, Mexico, and I don't identify with that at all, so I don't want to create that confusion. For the most part, I just say, "I'm Asian American or Filipino American." So, I guess culturally I am Asian American, but technically I am Hispanic.

Guita shared that she becomes intrigued by demographic questionnaires and has "a little debate" about "what [does she] feel like more today." She understands what the questionnaires mean with the terms "Asian American" and "Hispanic," even though the terms do not accurately encompass the experiences:

I know what [they] mean but that's not what it is. Usually I'll go for "Asian American" because I think that's what they mean. But sometimes, when I just want to have fun, I'll put "Other." But it's more complicated if they separate Pacific Islander and Asian because technically the Philippines are in the Pacific and there are a bunch of islands, it's like an archipelago about 7,000 islands, so what does that mean? And Pacific Islander usually means of the Malay people or group, or in a bit of the Samoan area. So even then, I just tend to go Asian American because I think when they say Pacific Islander they are probably thinking about the Samoan area. So it's one of those things that I know what you guys mean but it doesn't translate in terms of what it actually is.

Here, Guita provided an example of how identifying her racial identity is complicated. Further, she shared that she tends to avoid using "race" because the term is too general and not applicable outside a given context. She preferred to use "ethnicity" when identifying herself or others, defining "ethnicity" as "shared characteristics of a group of people, like geographic area where they're from, shared language or shared culture, shared traditions, beliefs, [and] so on." In contrasting the two categories, Guita felt that although "ethnicity" is still vague and can mask differences within the group, ethnicity is better than "race" because it is more specific.

Yet, even when talking about ethnicity, a level of complexity emerged. I asked Guita, “If someone asked you, ‘What is your ethnicity,’ what would you say?” She responded, “Filipino American because I don’t identify myself as fully Filipino.” She proceeded to tell me about her excitement when she saw a Filipino option on the 2010 Census survey. “I know what they mean – they mean what’s your ethnicity or what’s your heritage?” However, in conversation, she would find it difficult to identify herself as Filipino:

Saying I’m Filipino sort of implies that I understand what it means to be Filipino, what it means to have lived in the Philippines, to have experienced the structure, or organization, or whatever life in the Philippines, and I don’t know any of that. I cannot identify at all with people who are actually from the Philippines. I do not speak Tagalog, which is predominantly the language spoken in the Philippines. I think that language gap really separates me from other people who identify as Filipino, and especially within the Filipino American people, or people who identify in that. It’s so much simpler to just say “Filipino American” because “Filipino” implies it’s in Asia and “American” implies that either you’re not born from the Philippines or you’ve spent most of your life living in America, so you’re Westernized.

Guita’s above reflections points to the complexity of racial and ethnic identity for her, as she prefers to identify with her ethnicity but does so differently on paper and in person.

Further complicating her experiences is her physical appearance. Guita shared that when she identifies as “Asian” to others, she often feels obligated to add a qualifier (e.g., “I’m Asian but I’m Filipino”) because she does not look Asian and looks more Hispanic, with curly hair and darker skin. In response to the number of Spanish-speaking individuals approaching her and speaking Spanish, she learned the phrase, “I’m sorry, Lo Ciento No Habla Espanol.” Guita also shared that others ask her “Where are you from?” often because she looks “Hispanic but not completely”:

People are like, “Where are you from because I’m not quite sure, I can’t really tell.” It’s such a complicated question for me. “Where are you from?” I was born

in DC, I lived here all my life, but I'm pretty sure that's not what they mean, but I'm from here. Usually you can see it in their face, or in the conversation we're leading up to something, "Oh where *are* you from," or something like that. Usually when people ask that question, they mean "What's your heritage?" The follow-up is usually "Where are your parents from?" I'll say, "The Philippines." They'll say, "Oh, the Philippines" with a light bulb, like they've been trying to think about that's my heritage."

As Guita gave me an example of being asked, "Where are you from?" I thought about the multiple contexts in which one can be asked that question and the intentions behind that question. In my knowledge of Asian American issues, being asked "where are you from?" is a microaggression, in which the speaker unconsciously questions the "American-ness" of the individual being asked the question. In my knowledge of multiracial issues, being asked, "Where are you from?" (or sometimes, "What are you?"), is an attempt by the speaker to categorize the individual using existing racial labels. Although Guita does not identify as multiracial, I believed she likely experienced the question from the multiracial issues perspective.

Guita reasoned that because she is "Filipino," in a "weird in-between area between Hispanic and Asian" and does not look fully Asian, she might have been spared from being stereotyped as Asian. Aside from one early school day memory, she did not recall stereotypes being much of a problem. As Guita reflected on her identity in such complexity, I found it surprising that she did not think that many "revolutionary or life changing" events contributed to her "being Filipino American."

### **Being Catholic: A Loose Definition**

During our time together, Guita spoke significantly about being Catholic. Although she identified as Catholic, Guita has a "loose definition of what it means to be Catholic." Guita shared that she does not necessarily believe in every teaching of the

Catholic Church. As a religious studies minor, Guita learned that Catholicism is practiced differently in different regions of the world and in the United States. Her definition of what it means to be Catholic is the following:

I would say that I conform to the dogma, which is basically “Do you believe that Jesus is God?” And I say, “Okay, yes, I can say yes to that.” Beyond that, it’s like, “I don’t know.” To me, what it means to be Catholic is to understand the teachings of Jesus and try your best to follow. I don’t take things so literally, like in the Bible so literally. There’s history to the Bible. The writers had an agenda that was relevant in the context of that history. I sort of have a little elbowroom when it comes to what does it mean to be Catholic just because I don’t agree with everything. Sometimes I don’t agree with what the official doctrine is. That’s okay.

However, Guita did not begin to come to this definition of what it means to be Catholic until she arrived at college. Guita and her family have a close relationship with her Church because she attended an affiliated Catholic school from kindergarten to eighth grade. She continued to attend Catholic school in high school. Although some students who were not Catholic attended her school, she found little space to explore religion and to expose herself to “other beliefs, and really taking the time to consider other beliefs, or even respect them to a certain extent, especially when it came to controversial issues like euthanasia, or gay rights, or abortion, or whatever.”

College was the first time she attended a non-religiously affiliated institution. Guita shared that she was extremely excited because of the possibility of being exposed to “more things, more viewpoints,” beginning her religious exploration:

I think I started more with the questioning. I talked to people who I find to be very good people but do not necessarily believe the same way I believe but live like good people. I did let people influence me. That’s a good thing. In terms of trying to look at issues from the other side as well, because I didn’t do that before, not to any extent anyway. I talked to my own family. We identify as Catholic but we do a lot of things that are not considered to be very Catholic-friendly, too, mostly the pre-marital sex part. I had to realize, “Okay, just because you don’t



live this really rigid way doesn't mean you're a bad person." So there has to be another side to this I'm not considering.

### **Being Catholic Filipino: "Filipinos are known for being so devoutly**

#### **Catholic"**

Guita talked about a young man she met in a college class who was Filipino but not Catholic. She "found that to be the most bizarre thing ever." This gentleman attended a Filipino non-denominational Christian church:

Apparently it was a Filipino church for non-Catholic Filipinos. I didn't even know there was a whole community. Maybe it's just an American phenomenon but it just seemed really weird to me that he was Filipino, came from a Filipino family, and there was a whole community who weren't Catholic. Filipinos are known for being so devoutly Catholic, and yet they [didn't] identify themselves as such.

For Guita and others in her family, "being Catholic is a very big deal." Guita believed there is "an extra cultural element that Filipinos bring to being Catholic that does not translate in other context or other cultures." One such element is an emphasis on praying within Filipino culture, where Guita feels "like Filipinos equate praying more with being more devout," "especially the older generations." Guita reflected on a memory she has from college when she observed her roommate praying. Her roommate identified as non-denominational Christian, something Guita found foreign since she "was Catholic since forever." Guita contrasted how she was taught to pray before bed but her roommate prays because she wanted to. She found deep respect for her roommate "coming into her own spiritual beliefs on her own." Because Guita was brought up with spiritual beliefs, she felt that she needed to "work harder to really ground [herself]," and "reexamine what [she's] been taught and see if [she] really believe that or not."

Partially influencing Guita's desire to reexamine her beliefs are "Catholic" "rituals" that she suspected were created in her family. She described an example of such a tradition:

During New Year's, my aunt picks a child and tells him or her to open all of the doors, and open all of the drawers, and all the windows, and she goes around with incense and she prays. The idea is that she's blessing the house so that God may enter, and so the house will be blessed for the New Year. I'm sure that tradition had an origin someplace, but I think she made up most of it, like the whole incense part. I think that's made up. It sounds pretty cool but I have never heard any other Catholic family do that for New Year's. I think it's actually also family-based because I've never heard of any Filipino Catholic family do that either. Maybe I need to ask more Filipino Catholic families. But I think we equate doing rituals like that with being more devout. It's really important to Filipinos.

Guita asserted that this particular "ritual" might be family-based, suggesting that there is a connection between her experience of the Filipino culture and the Catholic faith.

### **Growing Up**

Guita attended a Catholic school she described as "pretty diverse but not so much for Asian people." When she was young, she looked "far different," with straighter hair and lighter skin. It was during this time that Guita experienced prejudice. Guita was about five or six years old at the time and was heading to recess with her classmates. At her school, the younger students stayed on upper playground while the older students moved to the lower playground. Guita was walking towards her friends when a boy a grade or two above her walked by her and said, "Hello, Chinese girl," and continued to his respective playground. Although Guita did not know much about her heritage at that time, she knew that she was not Chinese.

Guita's memory of this incident is vague. She does not remember whether she responded to him but guessed that she probably did not because she was shy. "Every time I was walking to recess, this happened to me." Eventually, all of the boy's friends

started calling her the “Chinese girl.” Guita recalled mostly the feeling of “no, that’s not it” and “that’s not right.” As Guita shared this story, she shook her head slightly to depict those sentiments, as if attempting to respond to the boy in the past. Reflecting back, Guita recognized that she did not know she was Filipino but had an idea that her family was from somewhere else. She felt as if she was too young to make a distinct connection to the Philippines. She recalled feeling “frustrated that they’re labeling [her] something that [she] definitely wasn’t, that they couldn’t get it into their heads that I[she] was not that.”

Guita learned that her heritage is Filipino through her family. They often talked about being Filipino by mentioning behaviors (e.g., “haggle for your food,” “take care of family”) and comparing life in the United States to life in the Philippines. Although Guita was unsure of when she “made that connection that [her] ethnicity and [her] heritage was from the Philippines” but the connection was made by the sixth grade. In the sixth grade, Guita and her classmates participated in the international lunch, where all students presented projects on a particular country. The students would pick a country, make a map of the country, and share characteristics of the country. Instead of allowing Guita to choose a country, Guita’s teacher chose a country for her, the Philippines. When she wanted to change the country, the teacher said, “No, you’re going to do the Philippines.” Guita responded, shrugging her shoulders, “Alright, ok. I’m Filipino, that will make sense.” Guita recalled that the teacher did not choose countries for other students and even students “who came from multiple backgrounds or were not sure of their heritage because maybe they just identified as White or something like that, they were able to choose their own country for their project.”

Growing up, in addition to hearing about what it means to be Filipino, Guita also learned about the significance of speaking Tagalog from her family. Guita's large family is informally divided "in terms of generations when we get together, like all of the cousins tend to hang together and aunts and uncles tend to hang together." However, within the cousins, there is a subtle informal separation between the few cousins who could speak Tagalog and those who could not:

I feel that the cousins who are able to speak Tagalog have a more Filipino-ness as to the ones who are more Americanized, and, for this purpose, can't speak Tagalog. There's a division there like, "Why don't you learn' like it's so easy," or it's like, "Why didn't your parents teach you?"

Recognizing the importance of language, Guita wished her parents taught her Tagalog when she was young. Another informal separation Guita noticed is between the cousins who emigrated from the Philippines and the cousins who were born in the United States. These "separations" during family gatherings illuminates how Guita might have come to her definitions of "Filipino" and "Filipino American" as described above.

When Mama passed away, Guita learned more about this disconnect between herself and her family members who were born in the Philippines. Mama was the matriarch of the family. The fact that she was such a prominent individual in the family coupled with the difficulty of seeing her ill made her passing a "really big deal." When Mama passed, everyone was looking for support from each other. In the following months after Mama's death, almost every Sunday, Guita and her family would visit her grave, bringing flowers and saying a prayer.

Guita spoke about a specific memory she had when her and her father went to visit Mama's grave. Both said a prayer and stood in silence after. Guita's father said, "Does Mama want us to leave now?" Guita, who was in high school at the time,

responded, “How should I know? She’s dead.” Her father encouraged, “Listen, listen, really listen and see if you can understand what she’s saying.” Guita tried to listen. Not hearing anything, she guessed, “Yes.” He responded with, “No, she wants us to stay some more.” Guita and her father stayed at Mama’s grave a little longer in silence before returning home.

Guita felt she did not understand what her father was attempting to do at the time. Reflecting on this memory, Guita now understood that that was “one of the ways my family was trying to grieve, by trying to keep that communication line open, trying to listen to what she wants, if she had any last wishes that we would carry them out for her.” Guita identified this connection between life and death as:

An example of a spiritual aspect apart from the official religion that Filipinos bring to the faith, and I think it comes from the culture. I think the cultural element and the extraordinary elements are more linked than I know, but apparently Filipino Catholics know. I think that’s generational and cultural gap that I couldn’t connect to as well as my father could. I think me being an American born generation separates me a little bit.

Further, similar to tenets of the Catholic faith, Guita chose to not examine this “extraordinary element too much because [she] want[ed] to believe it.” She desired to learn “these cultural aspects of religion” known to “older generations of [her] family”.

Like other first-year college students, Guita explored “[student] clubs to see what [she] like[d].” The Filipino Club was larger than Guita imagined. Guita’s memory of the first meeting was vague, recalling that she felt that the group was “cliquey.” She said, “Filipinos, around this area, we all know each other somehow, except for me because I don’t know how I didn’t make those network connections when I was younger.” Observing that the other students already made connections, Guita felt like she “had a hard time identifying with other people” or “introducing [herself] and being interactive.”

Reflecting on this first meeting, she felt that her disconnect came from her own insecurities, not from an inability to “identify as being Filipino or Filipino American.”

Guita decided to give the Filipino Club another try and attended a second meeting. She remembered this meeting in detail because the meeting was focused on Filipino American issues. “I didn’t know that we had any, like substantial ones anyway.” Guita remembered discussing three “controversial” issues: (1) a TV show made a joke about the worth of a diploma from the Philippines, (2) an anti-contraception law passed in the Philippines, and (3) the process of immigration. Guita felt as if the students were “preaching to the choir because there was no opposition at all.” Some of her thoughts (e.g., did not feel offended by the joke if based on truth) were dissimilar to the favored opinion (e.g., the joke was really offensive). Guita held back from sharing something “too opposite” because she felt that “people would just shoot [her] down.”

Guita’s thoughts about the anti-contraception law is an example. The Philippines passed a law that banned all birth control. The favored opinion was for contraception. Although Guita disagreed with the law (and therefore, agreed with the favored opinion), she understood that banning contraception is aligned with the Catholic doctrine, a doctrine that the Philippines followed. Being an Anthropology major, Guita “believe[d] in understanding a culture with its own terms; and their culture is contraception is a sin.” Further, she questioned whether or not the students, who come from a different culture and background, had to right to tell an entirely different culture that its members were “doing life wrong.” Guita felt that this view was not represented and would not be welcomed if she shared this view with others:

I didn’t feel like if I had a different opinion that I would be really welcomed. They would not consider what I’m saying or listen to me. They probably would

just let me say what I wanted to say and then forget it. I don't think they would kick me out or anything like that, or look down at me, but probably would not listen. That's what I felt. Maybe it's not the reality but that's the impression I was getting.

Guita concluded that she had a hard time enjoying herself at the meeting and did not return to any additional meetings thereafter.

### **Interfaith/Secular Intergroup Dialogue**

Guita enrolled in the Interfaith/Secular intergroup dialogue course (further referred to as "dialogue course") in 2009 fall academic semester. Her desire to acknowledge bias and move beyond bias to understand others as an anthropologist spurred her enrollment in the dialogue course:

Part of being in Anthropology is that you have to look at somebody's perspective through their own eyes. I'm going to be biased no matter what. I acknowledge that I will always be biased as a woman, as a Roman Catholic, as Filipino American. I will always have that bias but I acknowledge that. Let me see if I can understand where this person is coming from and how close I can get to their understanding, or how much I can understand, or at the very least, put my own bias aside enough for me to listen to what someone else says and to understand what they believe through their own perspective.

Guita described her experience as putting her "religious beliefs on a hanger so [she could] really listen to other people and try to understand the reasoning behind other people who are not of [her] faith." She felt that the point of the class was not to justify one's spiritual beliefs but to understand how and why an individual believes a certain way. Guita saw this dialogue course as "a step toward the right direction" of what she hopes "to do in the future in terms of religious studies." She described her hopes, "This class was sort of an exercise of how can I really listen to people and understand people, or at least attempt to, while I'm still holding on to my own beliefs. They're just on a hanger for a while."

In addition to sharing why an individual has a certain belief, stereotypes of different religions were also shared in the dialogue course. Although she did not experience being personally stereotyped as Catholic in the dialogue course, generalizations about Catholics and Catholicism did occur; and when they did, Guita became angry. The facilitators assigned “an article about how the Archdiocese of Washington was threatening to remove funds to help feed the homeless because of the civil union bill in DC.” Aware of society’s stereotypes of Catholicism (e.g., “all priests molest little boys” and “we hate the gay people”), Guita became worried that others in the dialogue course would “generalize [her] again based on this article, not just [her], but Catholics everywhere.” Her worry turned into anger against the article, as it painted an ill picture of the Catholic faith. During class, Guita “talked a lot about it, because [she] was really trying to say, ‘People, this is not how it is for everyone.’” She felt that her classmates understood her point but “really wanted to make sure.” As she shared this story with me, I could sense anger rising in her voice and on her face. This was a particular moment in the dialogue course that stuck out for Guita, as it brought strong emotions.

### **Talking About Mama’s Passing: “It was really hard”**

Another dialogue course experience that brought up strong emotions for Guita was when she talked about Mama’s passing in connection with a dialogue on the morality of euthanasia. Guita was on the fence about the topic when she began sharing her story about Mama:

Mama was basically the matriarch of this dynasty. We all had our own closeness to her. She had Alzheimer’s. In addition to Alzheimer’s, she was not all that healthy to begin with. It was so jarring to see pictures from the past, how beautiful she was and how lively she was. And then see her then when she was



sick, how much she changed physically. To see that, you're like, "Oh, Mama, you're not like this before." It can be a very long process to see someone die, and it was a long process for her. And she suffered a lot. It was really hard. It was really hard.

Guita recalled this story aloud to me, her voice softening in contrast to the passion she felt when talking about Catholic stereotypes. I asked Guita if she remembered what she was feeling when she shared this story in the dialogue course. Guita responded:

I was really surprised how emotional I got because I was just saying how hard it was to see her deteriorate. I think I was just going explaining my experience of watching my grandmother and her sickness. I didn't realize how I was getting real emotional until at the very end, and I started crying a little bit. I just remember, I'm talking, I'm talking, I'm talking, and then all of sudden [snaps fingers], I feel really emotional, not distraught, sad, I suppose. I felt really sad. I remember I was saying, "It was really hard," and I couldn't think past, "It was really hard," because I remember repeating that phrase. And so, I had to end my conversation right there.

I connected with Guita as she shared about Mama's passing, as my own grandmother passed away two years before I heard Guita's story. I wondered why Guita was surprised by how emotional she became as she talked about Mama in the dialogue course. Before the dialogue course, Guita always talked about Mama in a nostalgic manner, in a "loving way, like...remembering all the good things about her." She was taken back to how much Mama was suffering in the dialogue course because the class was talking about euthanasia. Before sharing her story, Guita felt that she was on the fence about euthanasia. However, afterwards, she was leaning toward the notion that "euthanasia is probably not all that bad, because you want to end that suffering for someone. They deserve better than that. They did so much. They don't deserve to suffer." Sharing her story in dialogue course allowed Guita an opportunity to connect to a controversial issue with a personal story and to reflect on the meaning of this

connection. In this case, Guita's position on euthanasia shifted as she recalled Mama's suffering.

I noted the sensitive nature of this story and wondered what happened after Guita shared the story. How did the participants and facilitators respond?, I asked. Guita recalled that a facilitator nodded and said, "Thank you for sharing." "No one ever said something about when I shared" as the class moved on to talk about "someone else's experience." In the moment, Guita thought to herself, "Geez, don't make me cry for nothing." She felt that she "poured [her] heart [out] and nothing much happened after it." In reflecting on that moment, Guita would have liked to receive a bit more acknowledgement (e.g., "Wow, that must have been hard" and "'If I was in your position, I would understand how you're feeling") about her story. However, "nothing like that happened."

### **Connecting with Others**

In a journal reflection, Guita mentioned that she could relate to another Filipino Catholic woman, named Amy, in the dialogue. During our time together, I asked her to tell me about this young woman and why she felt she could relate to her. Guita asserted that she could have related to another individual simply if she or he was Catholic and not Filipino. "Even without the culture, there's still common belief there. But I felt that because of the culture, I was able to relate to her more." Although Guita did not feel especially close to Amy, she felt she could relate to Amy when Amy shared about her experiences being Filipino and Catholic because "that's not so far from what my family would be."

Guita remembered one particular experience Amy shared. Amy did something bad and was being punished. Her punishment was to kneel in front of a crucifix or a little shrine. Guita remembered this story because it was a “common thing in Filipino Catholic homes to have a tiny little ‘altar,’ basically, a table with a Bible and a crucifix on it, and maybe a candle, just a little corner of the house for prayer.” She further connected with Amy because she imagined that if she “did something bad [growing up], [she could] imagine that being [her] punishment.” Guita characterized this “altar” and “punishment” as something “another Catholic family who is not Filipino would do,” a “characteristic Filipino thing to make your child do.” Guita reflected with me, “I don’t think [our connection] was too significant...it didn’t revolutionize how I approached the course or how I viewed religion...but, I know it was nice to have someone I could relate to as well.”

Guita felt an “interest toward people who did not identify with [her] religion at all or with people who started off not having a specific religion but then decided to join a church by their own decision.” She contrasted this self-driven path toward spiritual discovery with her own:

I’ve been Catholic since I was baptized into the religion. I didn’t have a choice. I was really interested in their choice process, their thought process as to how do you decide what to believe spiritually. I was really interested with what they had to say. Sometimes I didn’t agree with their viewpoints or how they came to their decisions. But as long as they explained how they got there, and if I thought that it was a logical way to make a decision, then you know I could at least respect why they decided to make that decision, or why they decide not to make that decision.

Guita disagreed with the Catholic confirmation, “what you take when you are considered an adult,” like you’re saying, “This is me deciding that I want to stay in the church.” She disagreed with how confirmation works because confirmation occurs so early in the

teenage years with few opportunities to explore other religions, especially when individuals typically grew up in a Catholic environment.

### **Reflecting on the Dialogue Experience**

The dialogue course provided Guita with new perspectives on different aspects of her Catholic faith. Before participating in the dialogue course, Guita shared, she was aware that others had different beliefs than she did about religion. “The dialogue [course] challenged me to understand others with beliefs and morals different from my own Roman Catholic upbringing.” Guita thought that a distinct difference exists “between learning *about* a religion and the learning *of* a religion.” The dialogue course blurred this distinction as Guita struggled to learn about others’ beliefs while maintaining her own. She shared an example of this blurring:

The discussion of euthanasia in Terry Schiavo case tested my own stance on the issue. I was on the side that it was the moral thing to do to let her go. When David opposed this stance, I realized that I neglected to really consider the views of a parent. It is easy for me to brush off this case since I am outside of the situation. Yet, part of the dialogue is trying to understand why others believe the way they do. This case, in addition to others, challenged aspects of my faith that up until now I had thought to be unwavering.

Furthermore, Guita discovered why “religion is so difficult to talk about.” Even in dialogue, Guita “often times found [herself] reconsidering participating because [she] did not want to offend anyone.” She found a necessity to “take those risks” and “talk about one’s belief without fear of offense” because “nothing can be accomplished if no one is willing to speak.” Guita reflected that sharing about Mama’s passing, something she kept private in the past, with others in the course was an example of her taking a risk. Although Guita forecasted that she would “still be hesitant to take risks in handing

similar topics in the future,” she felt confident that she would be able to take risks “when the situation calls for it.”

### **Minority Awards Internship: “At conflict with myself”**

During our meetings together, Guita experienced internal conflict regarding her internship at the Smithsonian Institution. I had asked a question about a time when she noticed something about her identity but remained unresolved. Guita began telling me about applying for and accepting an internship provided by the Smithsonian Institution for minority individuals. As she told me about her dilemma, I sensed that Guita was still in the processing of reflecting and resolving her conflict.

In the 2010 fall semester, Guita applied to the Minority Awards Internship program at the Smithsonian Institution. She reasoned that she would not have received an internship if she was not considered a minority. However, she was in “conflict with [herself] because [she has] always hated the idea of affirmative action,” which stems from the idea that a White individual more qualified than she would not have an opportunity. Guita strongly believed in “judging on your skills and your credentials more than ethnicity.” At the same time, Guita understood that “the point to the program is that to give minorities the opportunity to have an internship; had this program not been around they would not have that opportunity.” However, Guita felt that the program “should be more directed to students who really don’t have opportunity at all.”

Using herself as an example, Guita described the ways she did have opportunities:

I was not raised in an environment where I didn’t have opportunity. I did not fancy my family being wealthy, but we’re certainly well off. My family has been very supportive, and I’ve had every opportunity as any White student I’ve met. I’m in conflict with myself because I know that I’ve never been in a situation where I did not have the opportunity to progress. But at the same time, I’m not going to complain because now I have this internship. This is a way for me to

move up in the world, to move up in my field. But I do not want to do it based on my heritage. I want to do it based on my skills and based on my own work ethic, and stuff like that. So I'm not going to complain saying you should not have this program because at the same time it's helping me out. But it seems contradictory.

As Guita explored her conflict with me, I felt her frustration with wanting to be known for her qualifications and not her identity while simultaneously feeling appreciative for a professional opportunity. Guita's frustration is slightly mitigated by the fact that she "did have a lot of experience before this internship," which she reasoned is why she was awarded an internship.

While exploring her personal conflict with her situation, Guita also began pondering the purpose of such programs for minorities and whether they actually provide opportunities that would otherwise not exist. Guita described the program as "competitive." In order to even be considered for a competitive program, "you need to go to a fairly good college and you need to have already had opportunities to apply and to be competitive to be accepted." Here, Guita illuminated what she believed was a contradiction of affirmative action programs—that affirmative action programs are meant to provide opportunities but some programs require applicants to have had opportunities (e.g., competitive schools, previous internship experiences) in order to be a successful candidate. Additionally, Guita discovered that she does not recall discussing anything related to being a minority in her internship:

One time, we had a meeting where we got together and discussed everyone in the program. We discussed what we were doing, but nothing about how does being a minority relate. I feel like if you're going to have a program called Minority Awards Program, maybe you should have something related. Or maybe it's good that they don't do that because maybe it's just saying, "You're a minority, we need more diversity in the institution because we feel like we need more view points or perspectives, and this is a way we can do that."

Guita remained a bit unresolved as we concluded our time together. She is left pondering about such programs:

Will the program come to me and say will you please answer some questions about your experience as a minority at the Smithsonian Institution? I really don't want to do that because I don't feel like I was put down my whole life and it was their obligation to give me this internship. It's like giving out scholarships just because you're Filipino. I don't understand that either. All I do is write an essay about how proud I am to be Filipino and they give me money? I don't know, I find that's not a good basis to give me money, but if you're going to give me money it's not like I'm going to refuse it. Internally, I do struggle with where do I stand with this.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the findings that emerged from the data analysis in the form of a restory for both participants, Kayla Lim and Guita Pineda. In each restory, I brought together verbatim quotations from participant interviews and written journal reflections to create a restory of how each participant experienced her racial identity in her intergroup dialogue. I made my presence as a researcher in the restories clear by integrating relevant observations of the participants' nonverbal behavior and conveying personal emotions or emotions observed.

I presented the restories in a similar structure that comprised of four general sections: (1) an introduction to the participant; (2) a section highlighting significant experiences leading up the participant's enrollment in her respective intergroup dialogue course; (3) experiences during the intergroup dialogue course; and (4) experiences after the participant's enrollment in the intergroup dialogue course. In presenting the restories in this general structure, I hoped to provide a framework for understanding the participants' racial identity experiences. This general structure was flexible in capturing the uniqueness of each participant's experience.

I presented a restory of Kayla's racial identity experience in her People of Color/White intergroup dialogue course. To contextualize her experiences in the intergroup dialogue and provide a sense of continuity, I provided restories of other experiences she shared with me leading up to her intergroup dialogue experience (e.g., the role of her family and parents, her experiences in a Chinese church and school, and the impact of working with sleep away camp for inner city youth) and experiences after her dialogue course, including her experience as a participant in this study.

I also presented a restory of Guita's racial identity experience in her Interfaith/Secular intergroup dialogue course. To contextualize Guita's experiences in the intergroup dialogue and provide a sense of continuity, I provided restories of the reflections she shared about her identities (e.g., Filipino American, Catholic, Catholic Filipino), experiences she shared leading up to her intergroup dialogue experience (e.g., her experiences in grade school, Mama's passing, attending meetings at the university's Filipino club), and experiences after her dialogue course. In the next chapter, I will focus on four themes I identified from these restories and situate these themes in the current literature. I will also engage in a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the study and provide suggestions for future research.



## **CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to explore how Asian American students experience their racial identity in intergroup dialogue. This study addressed the following guiding research question: how do Asian American students experience their racial identity in the context of intergroup dialogue? In this chapter, I discuss four themes based on Kayla and Guita's restories from the previous chapter. In light of the restories and these themes, I provide theoretical and practical implications for student affairs educators. I conclude this chapter with recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion of Themes**

After writing Kayla and Guita's restories, I identified four themes from their restories that illuminate their racial identity experiences in intergroup dialogue. Remaining consistent with narrative inquiry and the presentation of the restories, the following themes capture the participants' past experiences prior to, present experiences in, and future experiences after intergroup dialogue. First, racial identities are experienced in a complicated manner that conflates race and ethnicity, within and outside of intergroup dialogue. Second, the salience of racial identity impacted how and what participants shared about their experiences. Third, both participants shared stories of internal conflict related to their racial identities, which were illuminated by their experiences in intergroup dialogue. Last, participants shared similar experiences participating in intergroup dialogue, which included holding back, taking risks, and responding to stereotypes. However, these experiences vary in the ways they are explicitly connected to participants' racial identity. In addition to identifying these

themes, I also interpret and situate the themes in existing bodies of literature discussed in this study, as well as new bodies of literature not discussed in Chapter 2.

### **Complicated Racial Identities**

The first theme centers on the fact that racial identities are experienced in a complicated manner, apparent in the stories Kayla and Guita told that interwove racial identity, ethnic identity, culture, stereotypes, identity salience, and physical appearance. Kayla and Guita discussed their racial identities in a manner that conflated race and ethnicity. Both participants also discussed the impact of their physical appearance on how they identified themselves and their racial identity experiences. This theme highlights the importance of labels (Kodama & Abreo, 2009), illustrates the intertwined nature of ethnicity and race (Adams, 2001), and supports the need for new ways to conceptualize race and ethnicity in order to fully capture student experiences (Alcoff, 2006; Cross & Cross, 2007; Goldberg; 1993).

Kayla and Guita discussed their identities in a way that conflated race and ethnicity, particularly around the terminology they used to talk about themselves and to talk about others. Kayla identified as “Chinese,” and not “Chinese American” or “Asian American” because she felt that it was “obvious” she was “American.” Kayla seemed to use the term “Chinese” in a rather positive manner (e.g., “I’m proud to be Chinese”) and the term “Asian(s)” in a negative sense (e.g., “Asian parenting style,” “nerdy Asians,” “Asian sorority girls who only hang out with each other,” “Asian guys who were drunk and falling out of chairs at McDonald’s”). The only exception to this pattern was when Kayla began recognizing that she was proud to be Asian when she was with her White

friends, specifically sharing her desire for a new sister to “carry on [her] Asian line” in the sorority.

Guita identified as “Filipino American” through what appeared to be a process of elimination. She did not feel comfortable identifying as “Filipino” because the term implied that she knew what it was like to be Filipino and what it was like growing up in the Philippines. She disliked racial terms, such as “Asian” and “Hispanic,” because she felt that the terms were too general and not applicable outside of the United States. Although Guita felt that “Hispanic” would have been accurate, she noted the misconception in the United States that someone who is Hispanic is from Central or South America. Guita used the term “Filipino” to describe Filipino culture, especially when she shared stories about being Filipino and Catholic.

This theme is consistent with Kodama and Abreo’s (2009) general finding that students may choose an ethnic label over a pan-Asian label if given the choice, and students may attach particular meaning to these choices. Similar to Guita and Kayla, 68% of respondents in their study identified with an ethnicity-related label (e.g., Korean or Korean American), consistent with other research that persons of Asian descent prefer to identify with their ethnic group to a more pan-Asian group (Kuo, 2001; Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2003).

Additionally, Kayla and Guita discussed the role their physical appearance played in their racial identity experiences. During the dialogue course, Kayla began exploring a potential relationship between her “Asian” look and her feeling overlooked when she is with her White best friends. Kayla extended the role of her physical appearance in her “Chinese” identity by asserting that she can be easily stereotyped if she was seen with a

large group of Asians. Guita, who described her looks as located in between Hispanic and Asian, reasoned that her look was a reason why she did not experience many Asian stereotypes. These experiences are consistent with Adam's (2001) argument that culture, as expressions of racial and ethnic identity, and social status, as subordination from inequality and oppression, are inextricably linked and indistinguishable in analysis; thus, both racial and ethnic identity models are important to understanding an individual's experience.

Kayla and Guita's use of race (e.g., Asian) and ethnicity (e.g., Filipino, Chinese, Filipino American) and talk of racial and ethnic identity experiences supports the argument that the terms are inconsistent and interchangeably used. Further, the manner in which Kayla and Guita conceptualized race and ethnicity, as well as racial and ethnic identity, is different than how I conceptualized the concepts in the construction of this study. However, in anticipation of this difference, I refrained from sharing how I conceptualized the concepts with the participants to allow their conceptualizations to remain free of my bias.

Kayla and Guita spoke of experiences that drew together their race and ethnicity, rendering it nearly impossible to categorize the experiences. Kayla and Guita's stories support the need for a new way to talk about experiences of race and ethnicity in a more holistic way that captures both. For example, using language of *ethnorace* (i.e., racial-ethnic-cultural identities), as suggested by scholars (Alcoff, 2006; Cross & Cross, 2007; Goldberg, 1993), is one avenue to discuss race and ethnicity more holistically.

## **Stories Related to Salience of Racial Identity**

The second theme is centered on the sharing of stories related to the salience of racial identity during intergroup dialogue. Kayla and Guita shared different types of experiences related to their race (or how they have conceptualized race) in different manners, such as the amount of experiences shared about race, whether race was the focus of the experiences or as an added dimension of the experience, and the depth of the integration of race into the experience. This difference can be attributed to the salience of their racial identity (Chen, 2001) in their respective dialogue courses, their personal development of an Asian American identity (Alvarez, 2002; Kim, 2005), and the presence of multiple identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007).

Kayla shared stories focused mostly on race (Asian) and ethnicity (Chinese) in the dialogue course. Kayla also shared stories related to her Christian identity; however, these stories typically took place outside of the dialogue course context. Contrastingly, Guita shared stories focused mostly on her religious identity as Catholic from her dialogue course. When Guita talked about her ethnic identity, these experiences were about being Filipino and Catholic, which occurred outside of the dialogue course context.

Chen (2001) argued that the salience of social identities and the role of the context in which identities are salient affect identity development. I would extend this argument further to include that the salience of racial identity impacts what and how racial identity is discussed. Kayla's racial identity as Asian was most salient in the People of Color/White dialogue course, while Guita's religious identity as Catholic was most salient in the Interfaith/Secular dialogue course. The salience of their racial identity may

have impacted how much each participant shared about their racial identity experiences in intergroup dialogue.

Kayla's experiences support literature on the beginning stages of Asian American identity development (Alvarez, 2002; Kim, 2005). Kim (2005) identified five stages an individual progresses through to acquire a positive Asian American racial identity in a predominantly White society. I would consider Kayla as being in the second stage, *White identification*, with some exceptions. Kayla explicitly stated that she prefers to be with White people than with a large group of Asians, indicating alienation from other Asian Americans; however, it was not clear if she was doing so in response to painful encounters or experiences. Kayla viewed being different from Asians as good, rather than viewing being different from White people as bad, as suggested by Kim. Although Kayla's enrollment in the dialogue course has been significant in raising several deep questions about her identity, Kayla does not talk about understanding the historical and social construction of race, which is consistent with Kim's model.

A different way to examine Kayla's experiences is through Alvarez's (2002) application of Helms's People of color racial identity development model as a conceptual framework for examining racial identity development of Asian American college students. Alvarez used Sanford's (1966) concept of challenge and support to facilitate the application of theory to practice. Kayla appears to be in between the conformity and dissonance statuses. In the conformity status, similar to Kim's (2005) second stage, Kayla idealized assimilation into the White community while rejecting ties to the Asian American community on campus, especially in the form of "large groups of Asians." Kayla's enrollment in the dialogue course, along with the human diversity course,

increased the salience of her Asian American identity and experiences and serves as an example of a support mechanism in this status consistent with Alvarez's (2002) suggestion. In the dissonance status, Kayla experienced anxiety and confusion and began questioning some of her own conceptions about her identity as Chinese. Through her enrollment in the courses, Kayla began to recognize the significance of race in her experiences and to explore her questions.

Because Guita shared less about her racial identity and experiences related to her racial identity in intergroup dialogue, it is hard to interpret the process through which she made sense of her racial identity. Perhaps current models of Asian American identity development do not have a place for someone like Guita, an individual who has done significant and complex thinking about what her racial identity is but felt like her identity has not changed in any revolutionary manner. However, Guita's experiences might be better understood through the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007).

The Reconceptualized MMDI depicts the interaction between context, meaning-making, and identity perception. Contextual influences, such as family influences and stereotypes, are depicted as arrows moving through a filter, which represents meaning-making capacity rooted in Kegan's (1994) work on orders of consciousness. Different dimensions of identity are depicted as rings intersecting around a core sense of self, including personal values and characteristics. The salience of each dimension of identity to the core depends largely on the contextual influences moving through the meaning-making capacity filter, which can vary in "depth (thickness) and permeability (size of openings)" (Abes et al., 2007, p. 6).

For Guita, her detailed sharing about being a Catholic Filipino (e.g., “Catholics equate more praying to being more devout,” “most Filipinos are Catholics”) can be interpreted through the Reconceptualized MMDI. Contextual influences, such as her family culture, norms regarding what it means to be a devout Catholic, her physical appearance, choice of academic major (Anthropology) and experience with the Filipino Club, pass through a meaning-making filter that is relatively simple for influences related to her racial identity (Asian) but fairly complex for influences related to her religious (Catholic) and ethnic (Filipino) identities. In other words, Guita would reinterpret and reshape many influences related to her religious and ethnic identities but leave many influences related to her racial identity unchanged. This would lead to Guita’s religious identity located closer to her core than her racial identity, with her ethnic identity somewhere in between the two.

In light of this theme and the heavily emphasized meaning-making by the Reconceptualized MMDI, Kegan’s (1994) orders of consciousness can be useful in understanding how a student might engage in intergroup dialogue. In a chapter applying Kegan’s orders of consciousness to student affairs practice, Love and Guthrie (1999) asserted that student affairs educators are most likely to encounter students moving from the second order to fourth order of consciousness. Further, the authors concluded that the transitions between orders of consciousness potentially have the most power to intentionally affect college students’ development. In the second order of consciousness, students focus on structures and categories and their thinking is characterized by relating concrete concepts. In the third order of consciousness, students begin to focus on abstract thinking and relationships and their thinking is rather abstract. In the fourth order of



consciousness, students focus on constructing and self-authoring, and their thinking is characterized by relating abstract concepts. The capacity for self-authorship is a key marker of this order of consciousness.

I assert that consciousness raising and bridging of differences, two of three pedagogical foundations of intergroup dialogue, require a student to have at least a third order of consciousness to effectively engage and participate in the dialogue. Raising critical consciousness in intergroup dialogue consists of a process that encourages participants to recognize their own experiences as members of a social identity group, examine the effects and origin of stereotypes, and explore dynamics of power and privilege that establish relationships between groups (Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002). This type of abstract thinking about power and privilege and thinking about relationships between groups is characterized by Kegan's third order of consciousness. Both Kayla and Guita's restories depict their capacity to view themselves in relation to their racial identity rather than as a racial identity itself. For example, Kayla viewed herself as someone who is Chinese but is also different than what others might stereotype as Asian (e.g., majors in communication, hangs out with non-Asian friends). Guita viewed herself as a Catholic Filipino who has a loose definition of what it means to be Catholic and does not entirely subscribe to what her Filipino culture defines as a devout Catholic.

To bridge differences, students engage in a process that moves toward a commitment to social justice and action, which consists of developing understanding, building collaborative ties with other students, and supporting action (Zúñiga et al., 2002). This type of constructing and relating of abstract concepts of commitment and action is characterized by Kegan's fourth order of consciousness. Individuals in this order of

consciousness have the capacity to figuratively stand outside of their values and form a deeper internal identity that provides a context and guide for behavior, especially for when values conflict (Love & Guthrie, 1999). Kayla experienced internal conflict between her desire to associate with others who were not Asian and her pride in being Chinese. This experience of conflict appears to be a precursor to a fourth order of consciousness, as Kayla began to examine how she was able to remain consistent with her values (i.e., desire to be different and her desire to be proud of her culture). Similarly, Guita experienced conflict between her desire to move forward with her career and her belief that affirmative action programs should be designated for individuals who truly need the opportunity. Since both Kayla and Guita experienced conflict but had yet to resolve the conflict, I argue that both women are in transition from a third order of consciousness to a fourth order of consciousness. Intergroup dialogue offers an opportunity for students to explore conflicting feelings and experiences and to engage in a process of community understanding, which is also characteristic of Kegan's fourth order of consciousness.

### **Stories of Internal Conflict**

The third theme identified focuses on stories of internal conflict illuminated by participating intergroup dialogue. Kayla and Guita both shared stories of internal conflict related to their racial identity. Kayla shared two sources of internal conflict, both related to her experience in intergroup dialogue, suggesting that intergroup dialogue is an appropriate venue to share the stories of internal conflict (Nagda & Zuniga, 2003; Zuniga et al., 2002). Guita shared her internal conflict regarding the support of affirmative action programs in principle but not in practice, supporting Inkelas's (2003b) finding

related to Asian American undergraduate students' attitude towards affirmative action. Though both participants shared stories about different topics, the presence of internal conflict related to their racial identity experiences is significant.

Kayla talked about two sources of internal conflict. The first conflict was apparent through her in class testimony, when she shared that she was proud to be Chinese but consciously chose to hang out with White people and distance herself from large groups of Asians. Kayla shared her second conflict in her last journal reflection when she wondered how she could be a person who actively worked toward breaking stereotypes, of her own and of other identity groups, but still harbored racist thoughts. Sharing both of these sources of internal conflict, whether to a group of peers or to a facilitator in writing, were significant events for Kayla, which is consistent with Nagda and Zúñiga's (2003) suggestion that intergroup dialogue offers a process for students of color to express their voice and recognize their experiences. Kayla appeared to think and learn more about her own personal biases against Asians and the roots of this bias and bias against Black men, also consistent Nagda and Zúñiga's finding that participants learned more about their personal beliefs about their own group and other groups.

Guita spoke at length about her internship and revealed her disagreement with affirmative action in principle, but in reality, will not turn away opportunities. Specifically, she believed that affirmative action programs should give opportunities to those truly without opportunity; she did not see herself as someone without opportunity. Further, she desired to be recognized for her qualifications, not for her ethnic or racial identity. Guita's internal conflict is consistent with the findings in Inkleas's (2003b) study on Asian American undergraduate student attitudes toward affirmative action,

particularly the link between an individual's racial or ethnic identity and her or his views on broader racial issues. Overall, Asian American students tended to agree with affirmative action in principle but not in practice. The conflict Guita experienced adds an additional layer to Inkelas's study. Inkelas's constructs of affirmative action principles and affirmative action practices measured student attitudes toward objective items (e.g., "Continued racial and ethnic discrimination within higher education requires that universities aggressively remove institutional barriers that promote inequality" and "The hiring of more faculty of color as a top priority"). Guita spoke of her attitude as an individual who is a recipient of affirmative action programming, suggesting that a deeper layer of attitudes toward affirmative action principles and practices remains to be studied.

### **Participating in Dialogue**

This last theme encompasses three aspects that illuminate how racial identity impacted how Kayla and Guita participated in dialogue. Both participants held back from sharing something or asking a question for a fear of offending others and for a general dislike of conflict and debate, even though conflict engagement is encouraged in dialogue (Zúñiga et al., 2002), suggesting the need to further understand conflict in the Asian American sociohistorical context. Kayla and Guita took risk in sharing personal stories related to their identities to receive fairly little response from peers and facilitators in return, illuminating the potential role sharing personal experience plays in intergroup dialogue (Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003). Both participants shared experiences regarding their reaction to stereotypes presented in dialogue; Kayla tended to want to break stereotypes related to Asians and to challenge stereotypes of other groups while Guita feared being stereotyped for being Catholic when something negative happens that could potentially

paint an ill picture of Catholicism. These reactions to stereotypes can be characterized as a form of consciousness raising in intergroup dialogue.

Kayla and Guita shared stories that displayed a tendency to hold back during their dialogue. Kayla did not want to challenge Xavier on his behavior she felt further perpetuated a negative stereotype because she feared becoming the oppressor in her challenge and offending him about a subject to which he was sensitive. As the opportunities to engage and challenge peers grew, Kayla felt herself withdraw and disconnect from the dialogue course. Guita felt a similar fear to offend but recognized the need to take risks near the end of the dialogue course. Nagda and Gurin (2007) argued that this tendency to hold back is a reflection of the participants' hesitancy to engage in conflict. Nagda and Gurin contended that conflict engagement played a critical role in dialogue to expand students' understanding of issues that influence conflict and build students' capacity to work through conflicts in productive ways. Yeakley (2010) noted that it is important for facilitators to be aware of how different cultures and different personalities view and engage in conflict. Kayla and Guita's seemingly conflict avoidant natures in dialogue, a context they both described as safe spaces to engage in contentious issues, underscores the possibility of cultural and historical contexts influencing how participants view conflict and how they participate in dialogue (e.g. Ting-Toomey et al., 2000).

Kayla and Guita both took risks in sharing rather personal experiences in their dialogue course but received fairly little response from their peers and facilitators. Yeakley (2010) found in her dissertation that sharing and hearing personal experiences played an important role for positive outcomes in intergroup dialogue while

disconnecting in response to intergroup conflicts played an important role for negative outcomes in intergroup dialogue. Yeakley described four levels of connection that resulted from the depth of personal sharing. Kayla's sharing about her internalized racism against Asians and her struggle against thinking racist thoughts represent a level of connection Yeakley labeled as "increased understanding of identity experiences," a level of connection characterized by "sharing personal experiences related to one's social identity" (p. 27). Guita's sharing about her grandmother's passing in relation to her view on euthanasia represents a level of connection labeled as "increased understanding of different perspectives," a level of connection characterized by "sharing different perspectives on controversial issues (e.g., affirmative action, gay marriage), including the feelings and reasons behind the differences in perspectives" (p. 27).

Yeakley (2010) further emphasized the need for facilitators to create a safe and supportive environment for sharing to occur. Although both Kayla and Guita felt that their peers and facilitators did not view the significance of their sharing in a similar manner as they did, neither participant discussed if this feeling further impacted sharing in subsequent dialogues. In light of this finding, it might be helpful to include support systems for individuals who engage in deep personal sharing into the dialogue context; in other words, a safe and supportive environment must exist in order for sharing to occur but a similar environment should exist for students during and after sharing occurs.

Kayla and Guita talked about their experiences responding to stereotypes in their respective dialogue courses. Kayla's desire to challenge Xavier's actions perpetuating a negative stereotype stems from her personal desire to break stereotypes by distancing herself from other Asians and by remaining on the same side of the street and making eye

contact when a Black man is walking toward her. Kayla characterized herself as different but acted similar to her peers in dialogue when she did not challenge Xavier. She attributed her reluctance to challenge him because of the course schedule and a fear to offend Xavier. However, Kayla made no mention of how her racial identity and socialization might have impacted her decision. Interestingly, although Kayla was adamant about not ascribing to stereotypes of others, as exemplified by her story at the mall with her mother, she ascribed to many stereotypes of other Asian Americans (e.g., “Asians are good at math,” “Asians only hang out with Asians,” “plays violin and piano”), symbolic of Kim’s (2005) White identification stage.

After reading an article that portrayed Catholics in a poor light, Guita feared that her peers would stereotype her along with the beliefs put forth by the article. Guita felt urged to ensure her peers understood that not all Catholics are the same. In sharing this story, Guita made no mention of if and how her racial and ethnic identity impacted her belief. Guita’s personalization of and recognition of her Catholic identity propelled her to become aware to situations that further perpetuate Catholic stereotypes, consistent with Naga and Gurin’s (2007) description of critical consciousness. However, both Kayla and Guita failed to discuss their experiences in light of the dynamics of a system of power and privilege, which is an important component to raising critical consciousness.

### **Implications of Study**

This study examined how Asian American students experience their racial identities in intergroup dialogue and used constructivist narrative study as the mode of inquiry. From these restories, four themes were discussed above. Based on these findings, I developed three theoretical implications for researchers and scholars of

intergroup dialogue to consider. I also suggest four implications for student affairs educators to consider in their practice in conducting intergroup dialogues and working with Asian American students.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Three theoretical implications emerged from the findings of this study examining how Asian American students experience their racial identities in intergroup dialogue. These implications draw from an interdisciplinary approach to examine intergroup dialogues and racial identity experiences. If the role of student affairs is to ensure the development of a holistic student, certain sociohistorical contexts, student development theories, and accurate terminology must be considered when thinking about intergroup dialogue.

In connecting intergroup dialogue practice principles to sociohistorical contexts for Asian Americans, further consideration of the role of conflict in intergroup dialogue is needed. Other theoretical considerations include the type of conflict encouraged and the appropriateness of an emphasis on conflict engagement for individuals who may be conflict avoidant or socialized in a way to avoid conflict as a cultural ethic or survival mechanism. Further, researchers might consider if pedagogical foundations and practice principles of intergroup dialogue are appropriate to engage a diverse body of students.

Apparent in my discussion of Kegan's orders of consciousness above, mindfulness to student development theories is needed when discussing practice principles or pedagogical foundations of intergroup dialogue and when constructing dialogues. In the body of intergroup dialogue literature, studies have documented the content, process, and outcome of intergroup dialogues. However, consideration of the



student and the student's development, such as cognitive development, social identity development, and level of self-efficacy, is also needed to ensure effectiveness and lasting impact of diversity education, such as intergroup dialogue. For example, in light of Love and Guthrie's (1999) assertion that student affairs professionals can truly make an impact on a student during the transitions of orders of consciousness, researchers and coordinators of intergroup dialogue can consider the effectiveness of intergroup dialogue at varying points of a student's cognitive development. Another example is to consider the effectiveness of intergroup dialogue at varying levels of a student's social identity development. For this particular study, I wonder how an individual with Kim's (2005) *White identification* status of Asian American identity might experience a People of Color/White People intergroup dialogue differently than a student with Kim's (2005) *incorporation* status.

The conflated manner in which Kayla and Guita spoke about their racial and ethnic identities suggests that a new language is necessary to accurately represent the lives and experiences of individuals who live in a reality where race, ethnicity, and culture are impossible to separate. Cokley (2007) argued that the terms "race" and "ethnicity" include socially constructed connotations. Goldberg (1993) suggested that definitions of social identities and social constructs change over time. Alcoff (2006) suggested the term "ethnorace" to better represent the identities of populations who experience conflated racial and ethnic identities. In light of these arguments, not only is a new language needed to discuss issues of race and ethnicity, but also a theoretical implication arises for researchers and coordinators of intergroup dialogue to consider how dialogues focused on race would change if the dialogues were focused on ethnorace.

## **Implications for Practice**

In synthesis of Kayla and Guita's restories and the above themes, I propose four implications for practice for student affairs educators in furthering how students think about their identities and engage in intergroup dialogue. These implications for practice include being mindful to the importance of terminology, using narrative as a way to understand student experiences, capitalizing on opportunities to engage students in deeper conversations regarding issues of diversity and social justice, and thinking of alternative ways to allow students to reflect on their experiences.

One implication for practice is for student affairs educators to be mindful of complex identities, particularly with terminology. Apparent through previous studies (Kodama & Abreo, 2009; Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2003; Min & Kim, 2000) and through the restories of Kayla and Guita, racial identity is often conflated with ethnic identity. Student affairs educators cannot assume that students' conceptualizations of these terminologies are similar to their own. Mindfulness of terminology extends from identifying individuals as "Chinese" or "Chinese American" to identifying services and programs offered to specific populations, such as "Asian American Heritage Month" or "Chinese New Year." Further, as hinted by the above theoretical implication about reconstructing a race dialogue into an ethnorace dialogue, mindfulness of terminology also extends beyond social identities (i.e., how individuals identify) into social constructs (i.e., how social identities are talked about in society).

A related implication for practice is the use of narrative as a way to understand student experiences. Student affairs educators can use narrative to understand the content of a student's identity, including all social identity dimensions and core characteristics as

suggested by the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes et al., 2007), and the process through which the student came to that particular dimension of identification. Similar to the praxis practice principle of dialogue, which consists of reflection and action, narrative is an opportunity for students to reflect on their identities. With this reflection and with an educator's understanding of such a reflection, a student affairs educator can appropriately serve students.

An implication for practice in intergroup dialogue is to capitalize on opportunities to engage dialogue participants to think deeper about their individual identity and multiple identities, to think critically about how their identities link to a system of power and privilege, and to reflect on race relations among peers within the dialogue space. Apparent in the restories, Kayla spoke more about her racial identity being enrolled in the People of Color/White dialogue while Guita spoke more about her religious identity being enrolled in the Interfaith/Secular dialogue. Both participants briefly highlighted other multiple identities (e.g., socioeconomic status, gender), suggesting that there are opportunities in intergroup dialogue to engage students to think intersectionally about their identities. Andersen and Hill Collins (2006) argue that educators need to move away from educating students about issues of diversity using a difference framework, which emphasizes comparative thinking about unique group experiences, and toward using a matrix of domination, which emphasizes relational thinking about group experiences. This framework would also allow students to think critically about how their relational identities relate to a larger system of power and privilege while applying such framework to discuss race or religious relations within the dialogue and how this impacts how they participate in dialogue.

A practice that might encourage this type of reflection is to engage students in a conversation on the impact of intergroup dialogue and how they make sense of what they have learned in the context of their lives. Journal reflections, already a part of intergroup dialogue, are an avenue through which participants can engage in such reflection, particularly if the students, much like Kayla, are still thinking through their identities. In speaking with Kayla, it became apparent that her experience as a research participant, which consisted of talking about her identity and how she made sense of her identity in the context of intergroup dialogue, served as a way for Kayla to synthesize her experiences and make new realizations. Student affairs educators may consider alternative methods, such as intentional conversations and journal reflections, to engage this type of thinking and sharing.

### **Recommendations For Future Research**

This study provided an in depth look at the racial identities of two young women who were enrolled in intergroup dialogue courses, a context created for critical engagement in contentious issues between social groups. Unlike previous research conducted on Asian American students and on intergroup dialogues, this study used narrative inquiry to illuminate racial identity experiences and drew implications from these stories for theory and practice. Future research is needed to further illuminate Asian American student experiences with regards to their multiple identities and the contexts in which they engage in such experiences. I present three recommendations for future research that will improve upon the current study or further illuminate Asian American student racial identity experiences.

This study was conducted after participants completed their intergroup dialogue, allowing varying time to pass in between the end of the course and the beginning of their research participation. Kayla and Guita's journal reflections served as useful data that captured their experiences in a particular time and context. Future research may consider a real time study to enhance participants' stories about the dialogue course as they experience the course. Kayla and Guita shared relatively little about the intergroup dialogue course itself, such as impact of readings, relationships with classmates and facilitators, and course activities. A study conducted concurrently with participants' enrollment may illuminate rich information regarding how participants experience these aspects of intergroup dialogue in relation to their identities. Future studies should consider selecting participants enrolled in a race dialogue or other dialogues that might have a clearer connection to racial identity, such as gender or socioeconomic status, where participants' racial identity is salient.

Although the current study focused on two women who identified as monoracial, Guita's reasoning for why she may have been spared from stereotypes was because she does not look Asian. Drawing upon the experiences of multiracial students, future studies may examine the impact of physical appearance on racial identity experiences and identity development within the context of intergroup dialogue. Further, future studies may examine the experiences of multiracial students in a race dialogue.

As alluded to in the findings and implications sections of this chapter, future research might consider the framework and practice of an intergroup dialogue that re-conceptualizes race and ethnicity to capture the experience of racial identity groups with conflated racial and ethnic experiences, particularly Latino/a Americans and Asian

American. Researchers might consider conducting an experimental mixed methods study to explore the impact of such a reconceptualization of race and ethnicity.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to explore how Asian American students experience their racial identities in the context of intergroup dialogue. The restories of the participants revealed rich and complex narratives between how students identified, how they came to that identification, and how they made meaning of their identities in the context of intergroup dialogue. These restories illuminated four themes that capture past, present, and future experiences related to participants' intergroup dialogue experience. The participants experienced their racial identities in a manner that conflated race and ethnicity. The salience of participants' racial identities impacted what and how participants shared about their experiences. The participants described how intergroup dialogue illuminated internal conflict they had about their racial identities. Participants participated in intergroup dialogue in ways that were explicitly or implicitly connected to their racial identities. These findings contribute to the growing literature on intergroup dialogues and Asian American students.

The theoretical implications suggest the need for student affairs educators to consider sociohistorical contexts, student development theories, and new language describing racial and ethnic experiences when thinking about intergroup dialogue. The implications for practice include gaining mindfulness to complex terminology for Asian American students, employing narratives as an avenue to understand student experiences, engaging students in more complicated conversations about diversity and social justice,

and including new and alternative methods to engage students in reflection of their experiences.

This study provided a deep look into the lives of two women who appeared to identify as Asian American, but with further conversations, unveiled a complexity behind Asian American identity, built upon a conflating experience and description of race and ethnicity and awareness of Asian American stereotypes. The restories of Kayla and Guita are rich narratives of before, during, and after their dialogue experiences to illuminate some of the documented outcomes of intergroup dialogues but also areas where intergroup dialogues fall short. In an effort to raise awareness of the dangers of a single story and to dismantle the pervasive model minority myth, these restories gave two additional voices to the continually diverse portrait of Asian American student experiences. Although two additional voices are heard through this study, more questions than answers surfaced, including the effectiveness of diversity education interventions rooted in theoretical notions of race and ethnicity instead of students' lived experiences of race and ethnicity. As seen in Kayla and Guita's stories, asking students to share their narratives is a powerful way to challenge assumptions about race and ethnicity and to better understand the complexities around students' social identities.





## Appendix A: Modified Recruitment Email

Dear Past Words of Engagement Participants,

My name is Jacqueline Mac, I am second year Master's Student in the College Student Personnel Program in the College of Education. For my thesis research, I would appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about your experiences as an Asian American participant in the Words of Engagement program. The findings of this research can help me gain a deeper understanding of how Asian American students make sense of Words of Engagement dialogues as they interact with their peers on difficult topics.

I am on a research team with Dr. Stephen John Quaye, an Assistant Professor in the College Student Personnel Program, which focuses on understanding the experiences of those who engage in difficult dialogues, such as the Words of Engagement program at the University of Maryland. As a member on this research team, I am able to offer you a \$5 Starbucks gift card for your participation.

Your participation will include:

- At least, two 45-60 minute interviews with me.
- Submission of your written assignments from your Words of Engagement course you took.

Please contact me if you are interested or with any questions. I can be reached by phone at [773.575.7190](tel:773.575.7190) or e-mail at [jmac0507@gmail.com](mailto:jmac0507@gmail.com). I appreciate your consideration and I hope to hear from you soon.

Warmly,  
Jacqueline Mac

## Appendix B: Interview 1 Protocol

1. Getting to Know Participant
  - a. Bio Poem: 10 minutes or so. Do it together and share with each other.
    - i. Ask participant to make up a pseudonym.
  - b. Tell me about your decision to come to Maryland and the factors in that decision.
    - i. Tell me about who has been influential in your decision to come here.
2. Racial Identity
  - a. How would you describe your race?
    - i. What are some reasons behind the specific way you identify?
  - b. Tell me about a specific moment, the earliest memory you have, in which race was brought up or maybe race was a part of that memory but not explicitly brought up.
    - i. Growing up, how did you talk about race?
    - ii. How did you talk about race in your family?
    - iii. How did you talk about race among your friends?
  - c. Give me some examples of when you think about your racial identity.
    - i. What are some examples of when you don't think about your racial identity?
  - d. Describe your experience in thinking or talking about your racial identity.
    - i. What is easy in thinking or talking about your racial identity?
    - ii. What is difficult in thinking or talking about your racial identity?

Close: In my original recruitment, I mentioned that I was also interested in learning about your experiences in intergroup dialogue. We can pick up from there next time.



### **Appendix D: Interview 3 Protocol – Kayla**

1. Tell me about your family. You mentioned you had a brother, 6 years apart, is he older/younger? What about your parents? How old are they and how much do you know about their immigration history?
  - a. Did you hear any stories from your parents about being Chinese or being Asian?
  
2. Describe Chinese school to me. You said you were there for 11 years. How old were you when you started? When/Why did you stop going? How did Chinese in high school fit in?
  
3. You mentioned that one of the reasons you left the Chinese Church was because it was too cultural. Do you recall the moment when you decided you needed to switch churches? Or the moment you learned about your old church being a cultural church?
  
4. Let's talk about the Greenbelt plaza memory you told me. Bring yourself back to that memory.
  - a. What was the weather like?
  - b. How tall mom is compared to her? Were you walking next to each other?
  - c. Were you holding anything in your hands?
  - d. What were the men doing?
  - e. What sounds or noises did you hear?
  - f. What did your mom say? What did you say?
  - g. What were some of the things you were feeling?
  - h. What did you do?
  
5. Something you said during our first interview keeps coming back to me. You said that sometimes you feel overlooked when you're with your friends. Do you remember the last time you felt overlooked because you were Asian?
  
6. Let's talk a little bit about your EDCP420 class. Do you remember what readings, activities, etc. helped you make the connection that some of the things that happened you (being overlooked) might be because you were Asian?

7. In one of your journals and during our meeting last week, you mentioned that you are someone who does not like to get caught up in conflict. You found yourself taking a step back when the hot topics came up.
  - a. Could you tell me about a time when you sensed yourself take a step back?
  
8. You talk about the Zen Numbers activity in one of your journals, about how you didn't say a word during one of the rounds.
  - a. Tell me about that activity.
  
9. During your first session of dialogue, Dai-An and Alison led the group through an activity where participants were allowed to voice their assumptions about the facilitators. In your journal, you wrote that you were probably one of the ones who were more harsh and honest about your stereotypes.
  - a. Describe that activity to me.
  - b. What was it like for you to share those stereotypes?
  
10. In one of your journals, you shared a bit about the work you did with inner-DC youth.
  - a. Can you tell me more about that experience?
  
11. You wrote about Peggy McIntosh's "Unpacking the knapsack."
  - a. What stuck out for you about this article?
  
12. Closing
  - a. What was this experience in talking to me about your experiences like?
  - b. I appreciate your openness and willingness to share your experiences with me. I feel that I have learned a lot from you that will help me in my work
  - c. Follow up: As I review the audio files and your written assignments, I will be constructing stories from what you've shared with me. I hope to send these to you after I have completed them so that you can correct, take out, add any content. I will also be sending you transcripts of our interviews so you can review them as well.

## Appendix E: Interview 2 Protocol – Guita

1. Read a short re-story to Guita. What would you add to this story?
  - a. Guita was about 6 years old when it first happened. Her and her classmates all anticipated this free period during the day. The teacher called them to line up by the door. As Guita walked toward her line, a classmate, a boy, about her height, calls out, “Chinese girl.” Guita stops mid-stride and looks at the boy. He walks by with a grin. Guita continues on her route.
  
2. Tell me about a time in college that was meaningful to you in relation to your Filipino American self.
  - a. Tell me about a time in college when being Filipino American is important.
  
3. What led you to register for your Words of Engagement class?
  - a. Do you see a relationship between your religious identity and your Filipino American identity?
  
4. If I did not know anything about the Words of Engagement class, tell me about what was that class like.
  - a. What were some memorable experiences in the Words of Engagement class (readings, activities, individuals, etc.)?
  - b. Did the class influence how you see yourself? (If so, how?)

## Appendix F: Interview 3 Protocol – Guita

1. Tell me about your family. You talked a little bit about your parents, your grandfather. What about your parents? How old are they and how much do you know about their immigration history? Do you have any siblings?
  - a. Did you hear any stories from your parents about being Filipino or being Asian?
  
2. In one of your journals, you talked about sharing the story about your grandmother's passing. Take yourself back to that moment. Describe to me what that moment was like.
  
3. It seems to me that your faith is very important to you. Tell me about what it means to be Catholic.
  - a. Tell me about your church and others who go to church with you.
  
4. One of your journals is written about stereotypes that people have about Catholicism.
  - a. What are your thoughts about stereotypes that people have about Filipinos or about Asians?
  - b. Do you have any of your own stories?
  
5. In another of your journals, you talked about feeling similar to Natalia and another Catholic-Filipino woman.
  - a. Tell me about them and how you felt similar to them.
  - b. Did this impact your experience of the dialogue?
  
6. Closing
  - a. What was this experience in talking to me about your experiences like?
  - b. I appreciate your openness and willingness to share your experiences with me. I feel that I have learned a lot from you that will help me in my work
  - c. Follow up: As I review the audio files and your written assignments, I will be constructing stories from what you've shared with me. I hope to send these to you after I have completed them so that you can correct, take out, add any content. I will also be sending you transcripts of our interviews so you can review them as well.

## Appendix G: Bio Poem (For Interview 1)

First name:

Who is (3 descriptors)

Who teaches/plans to teach \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

Who loves (3 descriptors)

Who feels (3 descriptors)

Who needs (3 articles)

Who gives (3 articles)

Who fears (3 articles)

Who would like to see \_\_\_\_\_

Who shares \_\_\_\_\_

Who is \_\_\_\_\_

Last name:



## Appendix H: Codebook

Short Code	Long Code	Description	Examples ([First Letter of Participant Name].[Interview Number].[Transcript Page Number].[Line Number])
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### Narrative Codes

Char	Character	Individuals or groups of other individuals mentioned by the participant	Dad (K.1.2.1); Mom (K.1.2.20)
Places	Places	Places at which events occur or are named by the participant	Maryland (K.1)
Weave	Storyline Weave	Indicates where one storyline weaves with another. Each storyline could be its own story but together, the storyline is further complicated. This code could look like the intersection of two codes (e.g., a critical event and an unusual cultural behavior as a result). This code would not be where one code overlays another (e.g., a critical event about one's ethnic identity).	"We used to argue all the time about that but through that and the really crazy car accident we just appreciate life and each other so much more" [Critical Event] and "It's kind of an ethnic thing, a cultural thing where you don't hug, you don't say I love you; you don't really express that as Asians." [Culture] (K.1.7.3)
Tension	Tension	Situations characterized by the need to balance carefully, otherwise the outcome is a catch-22 feeling.	"We didn't have enough money to pay out of state but we also had too much money to get financial aid." (K.1.2.21) "My dad gave me enough space so I can grow myself but also too much space where I wanted to do everything by myself." (K.1.6.2)
Cont	Continuity	Something used to be one way but remains the same despite time passing or events occurring.	"He never told me what to do or what to take. Then he goes you go out and you make your own mistakes and you'll learn from it...the way he put it was 'this is your, you make your own decision but then you have to deal with the consequences, which is basically the loan.'" (K.1.5.12)
Discont	Discontinuity	Something used to be one way, but is now different.	"I guess you can say he was kind of frugal but ever since then, he realized that you have to live like there is no tomorrow. He never used to be like I love you but now every time he'll be like I love you." (K.1.6.12)

CE	Critical Event	Events that are named an impactful event after it has happened and changes the participant. Typically, a critical event is signaled by a discontinuity. Can sometimes encompass an "ah-ha" moment or a moment where the participant stopped to think about the meaning of the moment.	"Recently we really went through a car accident and some incidents this summer that have really made us realize how important family is." (K.1.6.8)
Dichotomy	Dichotomy	Description of an event or occurrence where the participant creates a dichotomy, or two opposing items.	"If you're in between, if you're upper middle class, then you're just basically screwed because there's nothing you can do." (K.1.3.9) "The way he raised us is kind of weird, very not typical Asian parents kind of thing." (K.1.5.10)
Contradiction	Contradiction	indicates where the participant makes a contradicting statement	

#### Description Codes

CerBeh	CER Behavior	Behaviors that participants identifies as characteristic of their own culture, ethnicity, or race.	"It's kind of an ethnic thing, a cultural thing where you don't hug, you don't say I love you; you don't really express that as Asians." (K.1.7.9)
ACerBeh	Atypical CER Behavior	Behaviors that participants identifies as uncharacteristic of their own culture, ethnicity, or race	"My dad has this weird, the way he has raised us is kind of weird, very not typical Asian parents kind of thing." (K.1.5.10) "If anyone says anything like Asians are good at math, I'm proud of the fact that I suck at math and that I suck at science." (K.1.11.1)
OwnSS	Own Stereotypes about Self	A stereotype the participant has about themselves or about their own group	"The way I act and the way I hold myself is different than the nerdy Asian you see or the Asian sorority girls that just only hang out with each other." (K.1.10.8)
OtherSS	Others' Stereotypes about self	A perceived stereotype that others have about the participant and their perceived or actual identities, and their group	"Asians are good at math." (K.1.11.1)

#### Identity Codes

I - Per	Identity - Personality	A self-described personality characteristic shared by the participant	"I've always been very independent" (K.1.5.22)
I - Man	Identity - Mantra	Sayings or short phrases the participant uses as an espoused value	"My life is my life" (K.1.5.22)
I - E	Identity - Ethnicity	When a participant identifies or describes themselves with an ethnic identity (e.g. Chinese, Filipino, etc.)	"I always knew that I was Chinese." (K.1.9.6)

I - EA	Identity - Ethnic American	When a participant identifies or describes themselves with an ethnic American identity (e.g., Chinese American, Filipino American)	
I - AA	Identity - Asian American	When a participant identifies or describes themselves as Asian American	
I - A	Identity - Asian	When a participant identifies or describes themselves as Asian	"I am the only Asian." (K.1.10.7)
I - SES	Identity - SES	When a participants identifies themselves with an SES or describes their SES	"We didn't have enough to pay out of state but also had too much money to get financial aid" (K.1.2.21); "upper middle class" (K.1.3.10)
I - Rel	Identity - Religion	When a participant identifies or describes themselves with a religious affiliation	
I - Diff	Identity - Different	When a participant describes themselves as different from others who share their racial identities.	"The fact that I am different than everyone. I'm not good at math and my friends aren't all Asian. I can't play piano; I can't play violin, all that stuff." (K.2.19.10)

#### Identity Development Codes

ID - Conform	Conformity	Minimization of race and racial dynamics. May idealize assimilation into the White community and reject any tie to the Asian American community.	
ID - Dissonance	Dissonance	Questioning of idealization of White community and denigration of the Asian American community	"I could tell that I always thought my white friends were better than my Asian friends. If I saw an Asian sorority, they'd be like are you in one and I was like, not of course not. I don't want to do that. Bu why wouldn't i? It's just led to the point where I am proud that I am Chinese but at the same time I still think that in my head for some reason I feel like i'm not in that group because of what I've grown up around." (K.1.9.12)
ID - Immer	Immersion	Dualistic worldview that idealizes all aspects of Asian and Asian American culture and denigrates all White people and White culture.	
ID - Emer	Emersion	A feeling of solidarity with Asian american-related issues in an effort to reclaim identity as Asian American	
ID - Intern	Internalization	Attempt to resolve duality experienced by developing a perosnally meaningful identity about what it means to be Asian	

		American	
ID - Integrate	Integrative awareness	Racial self-esteem, developed integrative personal and group views about what it means to be Asian American.	
Appearance	Physical Appearance	Referring to and the impact of physical appearance	"Yes I look different but that doesn't mean I really am different." (K.1.10.17) "What makes me Chinese is the way I look." (K.1.12.3)
MI	Multiple Identities	Naming or describing two or more social identities	"Not only talked about race but we also talked about socioeconomic stuff. So it was kind of a balance because I grew up very fortunate and so while I was kind of in the oppressed group for being Asian, it was also in the privileged group." (K.1.25.20)

#### Critical Event Codes

CE-Place	CE Place	Place at which the critical event occurs	"Greenbelt Plaza" (K.1.13.17)
CE-Content	CE Content	What happens during critical event	"We were walking in the parking lot and there were three black people standing around a car. My mom was saying in Chinese, "should we wait until they leave?" I said, "No, mom. They're not going to do anything to us." (K.1.13.21)
CE-Char	CE Characters	Who is involved with the critical event	"We" (= Mom and participant)." (K.1.13.21). "Three black people." (K.1.13.22).
CE-Refl	CE Reflection	Thoughts or reflection after critical event	"I think growing up there was that impression that different races are dangerous. I never really realized that until I started taking the class and I was like whoa my mom is very paranoid of people who look different, especially black people. I don't know how it affected me though because I'm still very trusting." (K.1.14.1)
CE-Axn	CE Action	Actions taken as a result of the critical event	

#### IGD Codes

IGD Peer	IGD Peer	Connecting with a peer in IGD, a peer in IGD stands out memory	"The one that always sticks out to me was one of the guys, Jazz." (K.2.6.16)
IGD Act	IGD Activities	Mentions or describes in-class activities	"Zen numbers" (K.Journal 1)

IGD Expect	IGD Expectations	Describes expectations or assumptions about IGD	"One of the guys was like if I hadn't been in Stephanie's class, I wouldn't have had the perspective that I do coming into dialogue. He said that he wouldn't have spoken up as much either because he didn't have the background knowledge." (K.2.8.22)
IGD Part	IGD Participation	Describes the process of participating (or not) during class.	"I remember not saying it out loud and writing it in my journal and the next time I got an email back. One of the facilitators was like you know a lot of people had that question and you should have brought it up but non of us wanted to because it was one of the first classes." (K.2.7.4)
IGD Read	IGD Reading	Highlights a reading in IGD	"As for the article, 'Unpacking the knapsack,' thinking about it now, this reading is a lot like what I experienced doing this activity in class. There are so many aspects we do not think about or take for granted until we actually have to actively think about it and analyze our actions and thoughts. I especially liked Peggy McIntosh's number 21 where she says, 'I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.'
IGD Self	IGD Self Awareness	Highlights increased self-awareness as a result of participating in IGD	"I remember thinking why didn't I speak up if I had something to say. That actually carried on throughout the dialogue because I realized the more, the deeper we got the more I backed out of it." (K.2.7.19) and "I was very aware of that but also with these classes I've realized that you can only go take that awareness to a certain extent before it makes you paranoid." (K.1.24.17)
IGD AO	IGD Awareness about others	Highlights increased awareness about others' experiences as a result of participating in IGD	"I can never imagine walking down the street and for someone to walk away from me and just being like wow he actually has to live through that and he has a stereotype against him." (K.2.7.13)
IGD Desc	IGD Description	Describes the overall experience of IGD	"A time for people to be completely honest with each other." (K.2.5.11)

IGD Impact	IGD Impact	Describes the impact of participating in IGD	<p>"The first thing that comes to mind is no. Both of these classes for me was like a reflection sort of thing. My eyes were open to a lot of the problems that are out there and what people experience but that's as far as it goes. I realize that I shouldn't make my own jokes and how being does affect how other people see you. But it didn't change how I'm going to live my life. I'm still the same person." (K.2.9.16)</p>
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