ABSTRACT

HUDSON, TARA DAWN. Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference: A Grounded Theory of the Process of Interracial Friendship Development and Sustainment among College Students. (Under the direction of Dr. Alyssa Rockenbach).

Colleges and universities today must provide their students not only with academic knowledge, but also with “21st century” intercultural skills—such as multicultural competence, appreciation for pluralism, reduction in prejudice, and ability to take others’ perspectives—that are essential for college graduates’ post-graduation participation as citizens, employees, and leaders in our pluralistic society. Students’ diversity experiences in college are critical for their attainment of these outcomes. Diverse peer interactions are a particularly important diversity experience; they contribute to students’ development of intercultural understanding and appreciation for pluralism. Intercultural friendships are a particularly “substantial and meaningful” (Hurtado, 2007, p. 190) form of intercultural interaction because students presumably invest the greatest time, energy, and emotional resources in their close friends, and friendship involves multiple interactions over a long period of time, leading to deeper learning and development than more casual forms of interaction. Furthermore, because of the sustained relational investment it involves, intercultural friendship is an effective mechanism of prejudice reduction, and friendships across race may also mediate the achievement of critical diversity-related learning outcomes. Yet while the weight of the empirical evidence clearly documents the educational gains that result from diverse campuses through the mechanism of diverse peer interactions and friendships, few studies have examined the process by which these interactions occur, and none have elucidated how colleges and universities can intentionally facilitate and support these interactions to ensure students’ achievement of diversity-related learning outcomes.

This study addressed this gap in our scholarly and practical knowledge by generating a substantive theory of the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships, using the constructivist grounded theory method of inquiry. Twenty-one students from a large, public research university in the Southeastern U.S. participated in interviews and completed solicited journals regarding their experiences with a friend of another race or ethnicity who is a fellow student at their university. The process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships is a process of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference; this represents the core category of the substantive theory. Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference is composed of four sub-processes, which are the central processes in which college students engage to develop and sustain their interracial friendships. These four central processes are (1) Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” (2) Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, (3) Exploring Other Cultures, and (4) Bridging Difference to Connect. In addition, although this study was designed to focus on elucidating processes rather than outcomes, the open and inductive nature of grounded theory data generation and analysis enabled identification of two outcomes of interracial friendship: Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism.

The substantive theory developed through this research enhances existing theoretical understandings about interracial friendship. It also provides insight into educational practice and policy, specifically by identifying effective student affairs programming and practices to support interracial friendships among college students as well as how institutional leaders can create campus environments that promote student learning and development through these relationships. Finally, it illuminates critical areas for future research regarding the development and sustainment of college students’ interracial friendships and how colleges

and universities can support these relationships to ensure students achieve the critical learning and development outcomes they facilitate.

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Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference: A Grounded Theory of the Process of Interracial
Friendship Development and Sustainment among College Students

by
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DEDICATION

To Glenn and Tyler, my boys.

Your love means the world to me.

To Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha, and Razan Abu-Salha.

Your light lives on and reminds me why this work is important.

BIOGRAPHY

Tara D. Hudson has worked in higher education since 2002, first at the Center for Gender in Organizations at Simmons College's School of Management in Boston, MA (2002-2006) and then at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2006-2008) and North Carolina State University (2008-2015). Her student affairs experience has primarily been in academic advising, beginning as a graduate assistant while completing her master's degree in 2008.

In addition to her PhD in Educational Research and Policy Analysis (higher education concentration) from North Carolina State University, Tara holds a Master of Education in Higher Education Administration, also from North Carolina State University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Studies in Women and Gender from the University of Virginia.

Tara's research interests include the effects of intercultural interaction and relationships on college student learning and development, college student outcomes, campus climate for diverse cultural groups, experiences and outcomes of women undergraduate and graduate students, and higher education's role in promoting social justice and equity.

She lives in Graham, NC with her partner Glenn Barnes and cat Tyler. When she's not working on academic pursuits, she can be found running, eating, or traveling.

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Writing a dissertation is truly a team effort, even if only one individual gets credit for it. I owe so much to so many people.

I owe the deepest debt of gratitude to Glenn Barnes, my best friend and partner, for always being there through my ups and downs, victories and frustrations during these past seven years of graduate school. You kept me from starving and living in squalor, you picked up all the balls I dropped, you planned amazing vacations for us, you kept me sane, you understood when I had to work during holiday breaks, you listened to my ideas, and you believed in me at every moment. And of course, I have to thank the second most important “person” in my life: my sweet little guy, Tyler. Doing your best to keep me from working and being offended when I did was your peculiarly feline way of supporting me. I love you so much, and I look forward to spending much more time giving you cuddles and serving your needs (inadequately) going forward. My mom, Sharon Hudson, has encouraged me throughout this journey as well as through all of my educational journeys. You’ve always shown interest in my work and reminded me to celebrate my victories big and small, and I am so thankful for your unwavering support over the years. You also deserve special commendation for being the only person outside of my committee who has read my entire proposal.

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Dr. Brené Brown and her 2012 book *Daring Greatly* deserve thanks as well. During the summer when I was working on my analysis, someone recommended that I read Dr. Brown's book *Daring Greatly*. I'll admit I was skeptical at first; I'm not much of a self-help type. But this person was supporting me as I was going through a difficult point in my life, so I gave him the benefit of the doubt and read the book in spurts when I needed a break from my analysis. I discovered that it is an excellent book, but what I connected with most was

that Dr. Brown conducted the research that gave rise to it, and to all her work on vulnerability and Wholeheartedness, *using the grounded theory method*. My skepticism evaporated; she gained instant credibility in my eyes, and I was all ears to what she had to say. In the book's Appendix A she discusses her use of grounded theory and what it means. There, she quotes the Spanish poet Antonio Machado:

Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.

(Traveler, there is no path, the path must be forged as you walk.) (quoted on p. 251)

As she notes, this is the perfect metaphor for both the grounded theory method and for living a Wholehearted life. And as I embarked on my own grounded theory journey, I realized how apt the metaphor was. Doing grounded theory felt, paradoxically, both reassuringly natural and intimidatingly difficult; it was sometimes both of these in a single moment. As Dr. Brown discusses, it's the same with learning to be vulnerable and live Wholeheartedly. And doing grounded theory required me to become much more comfortable with my own vulnerability—my own shortcomings, weaknesses, and struggles—than I have ever been. Sometimes the most courageous I could be was just showing up to *do* my analysis. But I kept walking and forging my path, just as Antonio Machado advises, and eventually it got easier and I became much more confident in my process and abilities. I recalled Barney Glaser's many assurances to novice grounded theory researchers to have faith in the process; my faith was often tested, but it was ultimately rewarded. Doing grounded theory research requires courage and vulnerability, and although *Daring Greatly* would never be categorized as

methodological literature, I encourage anyone embarking on his or her own grounded theory journey to read Dr. Brown's insightful and encouraging book.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xviii
LIST OF FIGURES	xix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
The Diversity Rationale	5
Why Study College Students' Friendships?	9
Purpose of this Study	13
Research Question	15
Approach to Inquiry	15
Constructivist Grounded Theory	15
The Role of the Literature and Extant Theory in Grounded Theory Research	17
Significance of this Study	19
Theoretical and Scholarly Significance	20
Expanding our understanding of college students' interracial friendships through qualitative methods	20
Illuminating the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment	23
Practical Significance	24
Informing changes to institutional policies and programming to improve college students' diversity-related learning and development	25
Preparing college students for citizenship in a diverse society	28
Limitations and Delimitations	30
Clarification of Terms: "Race," "Ethnicity," "Interracial," and "Interethnic"	35
Chapter Summary	40
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	42
A Brief Overview of Student Diversity on U.S. College Campuses	43
Types of Diversity of Campus	46
Structural Diversity	47
Institutional Climate for Diversity	49
College Students' Intercultural Interactions and Friendships	52
Factors Affecting Intercultural Interactions and Friendships	54
Pre-college factors	54
College contextual factors	59
Effects of college contextual factors on intercultural friendship development	67
Outcomes and Benefits of Intercultural Interactions and Friendships	72

Individual-level outcomes and benefits	73
Societal outcomes and benefits	74
Prejudice reduction and the contact hypothesis	75
The Interrelationship of Pre-College and College Factors with Students' Achievement of Diversity-Related Outcomes	81
Theories and Concepts Explaining Intercultural Interaction and Friendship Development	83
Similarity and Attraction.....	83
Propinquity.....	88
Additional Factors Influencing Friendship Development.....	90
Development and Sustainment of Close Friendships	92
Limitations of Existing Theories of Friendship Development and Sustainment.....	92
Improving Our Understanding of College Students' Intercultural Friendships.....	94
Chapter Summary	98
 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	100
Rationale for Method of Inquiry	100
The Grounded Theory Method of Inquiry	102
The Foundations of Grounded Theory.....	102
Substantive Theory: The Product of Grounded Theory Research	103
Inductive Research Design	104
The Grounded Theory Paradigm Debates.....	105
Constructivist Grounded Theory.....	109
Principles of constructivist grounded theory	110
Social construction of knowledge	110
Researcher position within the research	111
Focus on participants' realities and meanings	112
Relationships with participants	113
The constructivist critique of objectivist grounded theory	114
Sampling Principles and Procedures.....	117
Participant Selection and Recruitment.....	117
Theoretical Sampling	121
Sampling concepts, not participants	122
Maximizing comparisons.....	123
Saturating categories	124
Initial sampling: Purposeful	126
Primary sampling: Theoretical.....	127
Final sampling: Saturation	128
Documenting sampling decisions	130
Data Generation	132
Primary Data Source: Interviews	134

Secondary Data Source: Solicited Journals	136
Supplemental Data Sources	139
Participant questionnaire.....	139
Researcher reflection, ideas from the literature, and institutional documents	139
Data Analysis	141
Generating Theory	142
The Constant Comparative Approach to Data Analysis	145
Coding Procedures	146
Initial coding	147
Focused coding	153
Theoretical integration	155
Grappling with the Vagueness of Grounded Theory Data Analysis.....	155
The Role of Memoing in Grounded Theory Data Analysis.....	157
Researcher Subjectivity and Positionality	158
Statement of Subjectivity	160
Statement of subjectivity in relation to worldview	160
Statement of subjectivity in relation to the grounded theory Method	162
Statement of Positionality	165
Ensuring Credible, Rigorous, and Ethical Research.....	168
Criteria for Assessing the Quality and Rigor of the Product	169
Criteria for Assessing the Credibility and Rigor of the Researcher's Analysis and Conclusions (Interpretive Rigor).....	172
Ensuring conceptual density and saturation of the theory	173
Developing theoretical sensitivity.....	181
Writing memos.....	183
Taking a reflexive stance	183
General Criteria for Methodological Rigor.....	186
Chapter Summary	188
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND THE SUBSTANTIVE THEORY.....	189
Participant Characteristics	189
Racial/Ethnic Identification	189
Supplemental Clarification of Terms: Relevant to my Findings and Informed by My Participants' Experiences	192
Participants' Understandings of Race and Ethnicity	196
"Interracial" and "Intercultural"	205
Relational Connection and Disconnection.....	207
Types of Difference and Diversity.....	208
Overview of the Substantive Theory	209
Comparing Interracial Friendships with Same-Race Friendships	210

Grounded Theory Terminology	212
Concept	212
Category	212
Property	214
Dimension	214
Condition	215
Consequence	217
Core Category: Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference	218
Summary	222
Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”	223
Properties	226
Emotional intimacy	229
Authenticity	230
Relational security	233
Dimensions	234
Recounting a pivotal moment in cultivating trust	234
Being able to rely upon the friend	237
Conditions	241
Required conditions	241
Sharing mutual respect for differences	241
Facilitating conditions	242
Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference	242
Developing memories through shared experiences and	
Exploring Other Cultures	245
Propinquity	248
Strategies	250
Emotional arousal and vulnerability	250
Consequences	253
Security, belonging, and validation	253
Positive challenge	256
Researcher Reflection	260
Summary	263
Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference	264
Properties	269
Focusing on deep rather than surface similarity	269
Never forgetting cultural differences	272
Dimensions	274
Discovering similarity through difference	275
Balancing “forgetting” and “not forgetting”	277
Having (or lacking) pre-college exposure to diversity	285
Feeling more similar to different-race peers than to same-race	
peers	290

Conditions.....	295
Facilitating conditions.....	295
Exploring Other Cultures.....	296
Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”	296
Bridging Difference to Connect.....	298
Exploratory Orientation	301
Propinquity.....	302
Strategies.....	303
Connecting through shared interests.....	304
Developing memories through shared experiences	307
Summary	312
Bridging Difference to Connect.....	314
Properties	317
Maintaining relational connection	317
Dimensions	318
Prevention versus reconciliation.....	319
Approach versus avoidance	321
Conditions.....	327
Required conditions	327
Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”	327
Sharing mutual respect for difference.....	330
Facilitating conditions.....	334
Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference	335
Exploratory Orientation	335
Strategies.....	336
Exploring Other Cultures.....	337
Challenging each other to grow (positive challenge)	339
Choosing harmony over conflict.....	341
Defusing disagreements by moving on.....	345
Respecting separate spheres.....	346
Summary	351
Exploring Other Cultures.....	352
Properties	355
Learning through cultural exploration	355
Taking action to explore other cultures	357
Dimensions	359
Foregrounding versus backgrounding cultural differences.....	359
The “visa-sherpa” dynamic.....	361
Acculturating through interracial friendship.....	363
Bidirectional versus unidirectional cultural exploration.....	366
Pre-college exposure to diversity.....	371
Conditions	375

Required conditions	375
Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”	376
Facilitating conditions.....	377
Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference	378
Exploratory Orientation	380
Consequences.....	382
Composing the friendship story	382
Converging of interests	385
Researcher Reflection	387
Summary	388
Facilitating Condition: Exploratory Orientation.....	389
Properties	392
Dimensions	395
Two spectrums: Seeking alternate perspectives and belief about the role of difference in relational connection	395
Pre-college exposure to diversity.....	400
How Exploratory Orientation Facilitates Interracial Friendship	
Development and Sustainment	403
Exploratory Orientation as a Possible Outcome of Interracial Friendship ..	408
Researcher Reflection	410
Summary	411
Outcomes of Interracial Friendship	413
Outcome: Integrating the Self.....	415
Properties	416
Dimensions	417
Reflecting on the self in relationship	418
Gaining interpersonal confidence	420
Developing a sense of belonging	421
Discovering one’s boundaries.....	423
Summary	425
Outcome: Valuing Interculturalism	426
Properties	429
Appreciating and seeking cultural diversity	430
Valuing difference as well as similarity in relational connection....	432
Appreciating and seeking cultural diversity in interpersonal relationships	435
Dimensions	437
Improving one’s ability to relate to culturally diverse peers	437
Furthering interculturalism through action	441
Summary	445
Chapter Summary	446

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	448
Summary of the Substantive Theory.....	448
Significance and Implications for Theory.....	453
Broad Implications for Theory.....	453
Implications for Specific Theories and Concepts	454
Similarity-attraction	454
Propinquity.....	458
Contact hypothesis.....	462
Emotional connection and vulnerability	466
Significance and Implications for Educational Practice and Policy	468
Supporting Students in Developing and Sustaining Intercultural Friendships.....	469
Leveraging the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.....	469
Equipping students to engage in positive intercultural interaction and friendships.....	480
Additional considerations for practice	493
Creating Campus Environments that Promote Student Learning and Development through Intercultural Friendship.....	500
Implications for Educational Outcomes: Facilitating College Students’ Learning and Development through Intercultural Friendship	507
Outcome: Valuing Interculturalism	508
Outcome: Integrating the Self.....	515
Relationship of interracial friendship outcomes to college students’ broader learning and development	517
Summary of Implications for Practice: A Metaphor for Interracial Friendship	519
Implications for Methods.....	521
Implications for Future Research.....	525
Future Research at the Institution Level	525
Future Research at the Student Level	528
Future Research on the Outcomes of Interracial Friendship	534
Conclusions.....	538
Chapter Summary	543
REFERENCES	544
APPENDICES	578
Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter	579
Appendix B: Recruitment Email to Program Contacts.....	580
Appendix C: Consent Form	582
Appendix D: Interview Guide.....	586

Appendix E: Participant Questionnaire	589
Appendix F: Prompts for Solicited Journals	591
Appendix G: Email to Participants for Member Checks	593
Appendix H: Email to Practitioners for Practitioner Checks.....	594
Appendix I: Participant Vignettes.....	596

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1.</i> Institutional Contextual Factors Affecting Student Intercultural Interaction	61
<i>Table 2.</i> Selected Initial Codes and Illustrative Data Excerpts.....	149
<i>Table 3.</i> Criteria for Assessing the Quality and Rigor of a Substantive Theory	171
<i>Table 4.</i> Techniques for Interpretive Rigor.....	174
<i>Table 5.</i> Criteria for Methodological Rigor	187
<i>Table 6.</i> Aggregated Participant and Friendship Characteristics.....	190
<i>Table 7.</i> Selected Demographic Characteristics by Participant.....	193
<i>Table 8.</i> A Typology of Strategies for Bridging Difference to Connect	337

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1. Increasing Strength of Different Forms of Interaction on College Students' Learning</i>	11
<i>Figure 2. Factors Influencing Intercultural Interaction on Campus</i>	82
<i>Figure 3. The Progression of Theoretical Sampling in a Grounded Theory Study</i>	130
<i>Figure 4. The Progression of Coding in Constructivist Grounded Theory Data Analysis..</i>	154
<i>Figure 5. Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference: A Substantive Theory of College Students' Interracial Friendship Development and Sustainment.....</i>	222
<i>Figure 6. A Model of the Process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract"</i>	226
<i>Figure 7. Properties and Dimensions of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract"</i>	240
<i>Figure 8. A Model of the Process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference</i>	269
<i>Figure 9. Properties and Dimensions of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference</i>	295
<i>Figure 10. A Model of the Process of Bridging Difference to Connect.....</i>	317
<i>Figure 11. Properties and Dimensions of Bridging Difference to Connect</i>	326
<i>Figure 12. Rachel's Metaphor For and Illustration of Her Interracial Friendship</i>	347
<i>Figure 13. A Model of the Process of Exploring Other Cultures.....</i>	355
<i>Figure 14. Properties and Dimensions of Exploring Other Cultures.....</i>	375
<i>Figure 15. A Model of the Facilitating Condition Exploratory Orientation.....</i>	392
<i>Figure 16. Properties and Dimensions of Exploratory Orientation.....</i>	403
<i>Figure 17. A Model of the Two Outcomes of Interracial Friendship.....</i>	414

<i>Figure 18.</i> Properties and Dimensions of Integrating the Self	425
<i>Figure 19.</i> A Properties and Dimensions of Valuing Interculturalism	445

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities today must provide their students not only with academic knowledge, but also with “21st century” intercultural skills such as multicultural competence, appreciation for pluralism, reduction in prejudice, and ability to take others’ perspectives (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, V. Sáenz, & Misa, 2006; E. L. Dey, Ott, Antonaros, Barnhardt, & Holsapple, 2010; Engberg, 2007; Gurin, E. L. Dey, Gurin, & Hurtado, 2004; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, 2005; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Pike, Kuh, & Gonyea, 2007). Of the Association of American Colleges & Universities’ member institutions that have defined learning outcomes common to all students, 79% consider intercultural learning to be a key outcome of a college education (E. L. Dey et al., 2010). Additionally, a recent survey of 318 U.S. employers representing both the private and nonprofit sectors found that 96% of employers rank a potential employee’s comfort in “working with colleagues, customers, and/or clients from diverse cultural backgrounds” as at least “fairly important,” with 63% ranking it “very important” (Association of American Colleges and Universities & Hart Research Associates, 2013). Students value these learning outcomes as well; for example, E. L. Dey et al. (2010) found that 93% of college students indicated that learning to understand others’ perspectives “should be an essential goal of a college education” (p. ix).

Thus, the learning and development that results from students’ experiences with diversity in college is crucial preparation for their future roles as citizens, employees, leaders, and agents of social change in the pluralistic society into which they graduate (American

Council on Education, 2012; Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005, 2007; V. B. Saenz, 2010). Diversity experiences in college also lead to academic and cognitive growth in such areas as learning and academic performance (Astin, 1993; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; T. Saenz, Marcoulides, Junn, & Young, 1999), psychological development (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; E. R. Cole & Yip, 2008), and critical thinking and problem solving skills (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004, Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2004; Loes, Pascarella, & Umbach, 2012; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students who attend diverse colleges also experience human capital gains such as greater post-college earnings and family income (Wolfe & Fletcher, 2013), an effect that presumably operates through experiences with diversity that are more likely to occur on diverse campuses. In a joint “Dear Colleague” letter issued on May 6, 2014 after the Supreme Court’s decision in *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, et al.*, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education unequivocally confirmed the educational value of diversity from the standpoint of the Federal Government: “The Departments of Education and Justice strongly support diversity in elementary, secondary, and higher education, because racially diverse educational environments help to prepare students to succeed in our increasingly diverse nation.”

However, national data indicate that students do not feel that their ability to take others’ perspectives—one of the key outcomes associated with campus diversity—improved during college (E. L. Dey et al., 2010), and the average student’s commitment to promoting

racial understanding may even *decline* over his or her time in college (Rude, Wolniak, & Pascarella, 2012). Internal as well as external stakeholders are concerned about “self-segregation” (or “balkanization”) of students by race and ethnicity on college campuses, which creates a barrier to diversity-related learning and is often cited by critics as evidence of the failure of campus diversity initiatives (antonio, 2001a; Chang, 2007; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Pettigrew, 1998b; Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005; D. G. Smith, 2009). Indeed, intercultural peer interactions are critical for students’ achievement of diversity-related learning outcomes (Chang, 2007; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2007; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem, Chang, & antonio, 2005; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Rude et al., 2012; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1999). Friendship is an especially powerful form of peer interaction because students presumably invest the greatest time, energy, and emotional resources in their close friends, and friendship involves multiple interactions over a long period of time, leading to deeper learning and development than more casual forms of interaction (Hurtado, 2007; Milem et al., 2005; Park, 2014). Furthermore, because of the sustained relational investment it involves, intercultural friendship is an effective mechanism of prejudice reduction (Allport, 1954/1988; Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011; McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007). Friendships across race may also mediate the achievement of critical diversity-related learning outcomes (antonio, 2001a, 2001b).

Institutional leaders worry, however, that students will not achieve the learning outcomes associated with a diverse student body if they only interact with those similar to them. This problem is particularly pronounced for White students, who are much less likely than students of Color to interact or become friends with students from other races (Chang, 2007; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; D. Cole, 2007; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007; Stearns, Buchmann, & Bonneau, 2009). Furthermore, Pike and Kuh (2006) assert that “the effects of institutional initiatives [to promote diversity] on students’ attitudes and learning outcomes are frequently indirect and relatively modest” (p. 445), making it especially critical for colleges and universities to encourage students to interact across cultural differences to ensure their learning and development.

Yet while the weight of the empirical evidence clearly and unequivocally documents the educational gains that result from diverse campuses and the essential role that interactions and friendships with diverse peers play in students’ achievement of diversity-related learning outcomes (Chang, 2013), very few studies have examined the process by which these interactions and friendships occur or how colleges and universities can support them. As a result, institutions have no guidance about purposeful interventions that can ensure their students engage in the experiences that facilitate achievement of these critical outcomes (Chang, 2013; Clarke & Antonio, 2012; Rude et al., 2012). Clearly, this is a troubling gap in our scholarly and practical knowledge. D. G. Smith (2009) asks, in reference to the role diversity plays in organizational effectiveness, “What is the price of *not* creating the

conditions under which diverse institutions can thrive and reap the benefits of their diversity?” (p. 16). Given the critical role of campus diversity—specifically intercultural interactions and friendships—for student learning and long-term societal outcomes, I pose a related question: What is the price of *not* creating the conditions under which students can thrive and reap the benefits of diversity?

The Diversity Rationale

In the past decade, there has been a burst of empirical research seeking to document the beneficial effects of campus diversity on student learning and development. The impetus for much of this research was a series of high-profile lawsuits challenging the use of affirmative action in higher education admissions decisions, notably *Grutter v. Bollinger et al.* (2003) and *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013). Although the Supreme Court’s decisions in these two lawsuits did not directly prohibit U.S. colleges and universities from considering race and ethnicity in admissions, they have created a reasonable fear among higher education institutions that legal challenges to affirmative action will become increasingly common (Clarke & Antonio, 2012; Engberg, 2007; Milem et al., 2005; Schmidt, 2007). Therefore, higher education researchers have mounted an empirical defense of the practice, known as the “diversity rationale,” that seeks to provide unassailable support for the academic and societal benefits that result from attending a diverse institution (Chang, 2007; Clarke & Antonio, 2012; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005, 2007; Pike et al., 2007; Wolfe & Fletcher, 2013).

Prominent educational organizations such as the American Council on Education and the Association of American Colleges and Universities have added their voices to the debate, arguing that students cannot achieve the essential outcomes of a college education if they attend campuses with low levels of racial and ethnic diversity in the student body. The American Council on Education (2012) asserts,

The diversity we seek and the future of the nation do require that colleges and universities continue to be able to reach out and make a conscious effort to build healthy and diverse learning environments that are appropriate for their missions. The success of higher education and the strength of our democracy depend on it. (p. 2)

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2013) expresses a similar philosophy in a statement cosigned by 37 higher education professional associations and advocacy groups:

A diverse student body enables all students to have the transformational experience of interacting with their peers who have varied perspectives and come from different backgrounds. These experiences, which are highly valued by employers because of their importance in the workplace, also prepare students with the skills they need to live in an interconnected world and to be more engaged citizens. Our economic future, democracy, and global standing will suffer if the next generation is not ready to engage and work with people whose backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are different from their own. (p. 1)

Overall, there is consensus within the U.S. higher education community—among scholars, professionals, administrators, and advocates—that diversity serves a compelling educational purpose. Additionally, some argue that higher education has a responsibility to produce graduates prepared to serve as future leaders of social progress toward equity, another outcome that can only be achieved if students develop racial understanding, perspective taking, multicultural competence, and the moral imperative for social justice through meaningful diversity experiences in college (Chesler & Crowfoot, 1998; Engberg, 2007; Hurtado, 2007).

Furthermore, the skills college students develop through diversity experiences are those most valued by future employers. A recent survey found that more than nine out of ten employers want the college graduates they hire to possess specific skills that result from diversity experiences: intercultural, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills (Association of American Colleges and Universities and Hart Research Associates, 2013). In addition, two-thirds of these employers want colleges and universities to place a greater emphasis on preparing graduates to collaborate with others from diverse backgrounds. Wolfe & Fletcher (2013) suggest that attending a structurally diverse college increases an individual's post-college productivity and human capital, and that restrictions on affirmative action will therefore have negative effects on both individuals and employers in the long run. As Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day-O'Connor stated in the majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), "These benefits are not theoretical *but real*, as major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today's increasingly global

marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints” (quoted in Chang, 2007, p. 27).

Interactions with diverse peers, in particular, are critical for achieving these learning outcomes; without such interactions, students may not realize the educational benefits of diversity (Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem et al., 2005; Rude et al., 2012). In an *amici curiae* brief to the Supreme Court in *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013), a coalition of social science scholars from across the U.S. highlighted this fact as the bedrock of their argument in support of race-conscious admissions:

The nation’s future and the quality of education for all students also have been compromised [by state prohibitions on race-conscious admissions], as the skills acquired through interaction with racially diverse peers have a lasting effect on individuals’ preparation for employment in an increasingly diverse and global workforce. (American Social Science Researchers, 2012, p. 22)

A diverse campus makes interactions among students from different racial groups more likely; in this sense, a structurally diverse student body is an educational resource on par with libraries and instructional technologies (Gurin et al., 2004). However, it does not guarantee that such interactions take place, or that when they do they will lead to desired outcomes (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Halualani, Chitgopekar, Morrison, & Dodge, 2004; Milem et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006).

Why Study College Students' Friendships?

As I have discussed, intercultural interaction facilitates the development of a number of important outcomes for college students, including individual benefits such as improved cognitive and academic performance and societal benefits such as reduction in prejudice and increases in intercultural competence and civic behaviors. These benefits extend into adulthood, preparing students to participate in our pluralistic, democratic society (Bowman, Brandenberger, Hill, & Lapsley, 2011; Hurtado, 2003, 2005, 2007; Jayakumar, 2008). For traditional age students, the college years are a particularly powerful time for students to benefit developmentally from diverse experiences (Jayakumar, 2008). Chickering and Reisser (1993) identify “developing mature interpersonal relationships,” which includes developing intercultural tolerance and appreciation of differences, as one of the seven vectors (or essential growth and development tasks) to achieve during college, attesting to the importance of interpersonal relationships in student development.

Interactions with peers exert a powerful influence on college students' learning and development; they are “one of the most influential change agents on campus” (antonio, 2001a, p. 67). In fact, peers may have an even stronger effect on student learning and development than the formal curriculum does (Astin, 1993; Chang, 2007; Jayakumar, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt et al., 1999). Peer groups influence (positively or negatively) students' openness to diversity, with diverse peer groups facilitating students' development of intercultural understanding and appreciation for pluralism (antonio, 2001a, 2001b; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2007; Milem et al., 2005; Pascarella &

Terenzini, 2005; Spanierman, Neville, Liao, Hammer, & Wang, 2008). Diverse peer groups also “provid[e] students with many opportunities to learn how to resolve conflict and practice democratic skills” (Hurtado, 2005, p. 603). While Hurtado (2005) found that students reporting negative intercultural peer interactions are the “least skilled in intergroup relations ... [and] least likely to exhibit the habits of mind that will prepare them for a diverse and global world” (p. 606), the empirical evidence suggests the converse is also true: students who report frequent, positive interactions—such as those that take place in a friendship relationship—accrue significant learning and development benefits and are better prepared to participate in our diverse society and workplaces after they graduate from college. “The key finding across all the research on diversity is that student-student interaction is essential for realizing the educational benefits of diversity” (Milem et al., 2005, p. 27).

Because college students presumably invest the most time, energy, and emotional resources in their closest friends, these peers may exert the greatest influence upon each other’s learning and development. As a particularly “substantial and meaningful” (Hurtado, 2007, p. 190) form of intercultural interaction, intercultural friendship has the greatest potential for helping students realize the critical societal outcomes that result from frequent, positive interaction with diverse peers. Figure 1 illustrates the increasing strength of different forms of interaction on college students’ learning. Studying students’ friendships at the interpersonal level therefore has the potential to yield rich information about students’ learning, development, values, and experiences with diversity.

Figure 1. Increasing strength of different forms of interaction on college students' learning.

Furthermore, intercultural friendships have a significantly greater effect on prejudice reduction than do other forms of intercultural interaction (Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). Indeed, given the power friendships have to reduce prejudice, Pettigrew (1998a) has proposed adding “the opportunity to become friends” to Allport’s (1954/1988) original four essential conditions for maximizing the positive effects of contact on prejudice reduction (discussed in more detail in chapter two). Intercultural friendships are particularly effective at reducing prejudice for three reasons: (1) they are most likely to occur when the four essential conditions for prejudice-reducing contact are present (i.e., equal status, cooperation, shared common goal, and social support); (2) they persist over time, leading to multiple interactions and thereby allowing for behaviors and attitudes to change through cumulative contact effects; and (3) they involve an affective component, leading the

interactants to develop sympathy and empathy for each other, which then may generalize to other members of the interactants' cultural groups (Allport, 1954/1988; Davies et al., 2011; McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Milem et al., 2005; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Turner et al., 2007). "Contact must reach below the surface in order to be effective in altering prejudice. Only the type of contact that leads people to do things together [such as close friendship] is likely to result in changed attitudes" (Allport, 1954/1988, p. 276).

Intergroup friendships not only reduce the prejudice of individuals who themselves have friends from other cultural groups, but they also have an indirect effect; that is, intergroup friendships lead to prejudice reduction among those who do not themselves have intergroup friends, but are friends with someone who does, although the direct effects are much stronger (Paolini, Hewstone, & Cairns, 2007; Turner et al., 2007). In addition, the prejudice reduction effects of intergroup friendship may generalize to other groups, reducing a person's prejudiced attitudes toward others generally as well as toward the specific group represented by the outgroup friend (McClelland & Linnander, 2006).

Interracial friendships, therefore, are a critical site at which college students develop the intercultural skills and attitudes that will aid them throughout their lives as citizens in our multicultural society. Understanding how college students' interracial friendships develop and are sustained, as this study sought to do, provides insight into how higher education institutions can create environments that support these friendships, thereby facilitating students' achievement of critical learning and development outcomes.

Purpose of this Study

Campus diversity programming and policies are not as effective as they could be in helping all students achieve essential diversity-related learning and development outcomes (E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado et al., 1998; Milem et al., 2005; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). We know that students' intercultural interactions lead to positive student outcomes that may extend beyond the college years into adulthood, and that these outcomes are affected to some degree by institutional factors such as climate for diversity (antonio, 2001a; Bowman et al., 2011; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004). We also know that interpersonal relationships across differences have been shown to be effective in reducing prejudice and bias toward other cultural groups (Allport, 1954/1988; Bowman, 2013; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Chavous, 2005; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Hurtado, 2005; Odell, Korgen, & Wang, 2005; Spanierman et al., 2008) and that among college students, more frequent cross-racial peer interaction leads to greater openness to diversity (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006). Furthermore, we know that peer interactions are also a critical site at which college students' learning and development occur (antonio, 2001a; Astin, 1993; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Whitt et al., 1999).

In terms of diversity-related learning and development, friendships are a particularly powerful form of peer interaction (antonio, 2001a; Davies et al., 2011; Hurtado, 2007; McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). Additionally,

the benefits that derive from intercultural contact are strongest when power differentials are not involved; thus, friendships are an excellent form of peer interaction in which to examine students' intercultural experiences (antonio, 2001a, 2004; McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Milem et al. 2005). Despite allegations of segregated campuses, we know that college students can and do develop friendships across cultural lines (antonio, 2001a, 2004; Camargo, Stinebrickner, & Stinebrickner, 2010; Fischer, 2008; Levin, van Laar, & Sidanius, 2003; Odell et al., 2005; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; Stearns et al., 2009). However, we know little about how or why these friendships develop and are sustained or the ways in which institutional contextual factors may affect the development and sustainment¹ of such friendships (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Clarke & antonio, 2012). We also lack an understanding of how student affairs educators and administrators can be intentional about ensuring students achieve the learning that can result from these interactions (L. B. Jones, 2011; D. G. Smith, 2009).

For these reasons, antonio (2004) criticizes existing research on college students' diverse friendships for taking a "macroscopic" approach that focuses on patterns of interaction rather than students' experiences, thereby failing to provide the information colleges and universities need to establish effective policies and programs to promote intercultural interaction among students. If colleges and universities are truly committed to fostering students' diversity-related learning—and the sizeable amount of literature

¹ I have chosen to use "sustainment," which is not found in the dictionary, instead of the more grammatically correct term "sustenance," to refer to the process of sustaining a friendship. I made this decision to conceptually differentiate between factors or conditions that sustain a friendship (i.e., *sustenance*) and the process of sustaining a friendship (i.e., *sustainment*).

documenting the connection between campus diversity and student outcomes indicates that they are—then this is a critical gap in our knowledge base. Therefore, we need to understand the process by which intercultural friendships develop and are sustained as well as the experiences of the students within them. This knowledge can help institutions foster an environment in which meaningful peer interactions across cultural differences are normative and supported, thus maximizing diversity-related student learning gains (Chang, 2007; Clarke & Antonio, 2012; Engberg, 2007; Hurtado, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998b; Pike & Kuh, 2006). This study addressed this gap in our scholarly and practical knowledge by generating a grounded theory that explains how college students develop and sustain interracial friendships as well as how institutional contextual factors may affect these friendships and, by extension, students' attainment of diversity-related learning gains.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: How do interracial friendships develop among undergraduate college students, and how are they sustained?

Approach to Inquiry

Constructivist Grounded Theory

The purpose of this study closely aligns with the constructivist research paradigm. Constructivists believe that there is no objective reality, but rather that the social context and worldview of an individual determines what constitutes reality for that person (S. R. Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006; Merriam, 2009; J. K. Smith, 1992). Because knowledge is socially

situated and constructed, the constructivist paradigm requires the researcher to engage with participants closely and extensively in order to fully understand their unique realities and the ways in which they make meaning of their experiences. Therefore, approaching a study from the constructivist paradigm necessitates the use of qualitative methods, which allows the researcher to develop a relationship with each of her participants through which co-construction of knowledge and meaning making can occur (Charmaz, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hall & Callery, 2001; S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln, 1995; Merriam, 2009; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006a, 2006b; Piantanida, Tananis, & Grubs, 2004).

Because the purpose of this study was to understand the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships, I utilized the grounded theory method of inquiry. Grounded theory is useful when seeking to explain a phenomenon or process for which there is no existing theory and/or when existing theory does not account for the experiences of certain populations (Creswell, 2007). The method's founders, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, sought to develop a new research method in the mid-1960s because they believed that the focus on "pursu[ing] causal explanation at the expense of establishing understanding" was a serious shortcoming of traditional methods of inquiry (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003, p. 133). Today, many researchers choose the grounded theory method because it is useful for exploring phenomena about which we know little by helping to explain what may be "going on"; it is also useful for studying topics that we think we understand well but that may benefit from "fresh understandings" and "creative insight"

(Suddaby, 2006) that are unsullied by longstanding preconceptions (Glaser, 1978, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hickey, 1997; Holton, 2009; McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007; Suddaby, 2006). Grounded theory research utilizes an inductive process to build a theory from the data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967); the goal is to build a “substantive” theory that reflects real-world phenomena and is context-specific rather than generalized and abstract. A substantive theory has practical utility; it provides readily understandable insight into a particular process and is meant to be applied in practice by those who experience and are affected by the phenomenon of study (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

I specifically chose to use Kathy Charmaz’s (2003a, 2004, 2006) constructivist version of the grounded theory method. Because I chose to align my research with the constructivist paradigm, I was not seeking to establish an objective “truth” of students’ experiences in interracial friendships, or to verify my participants’ experiences against existing accounts in the literature. Rather, my goal was to listen to and interpret their voices in order to construct, in partnership with them, a faithful account of their experiences in developing and sustaining these friendships. In chapter three, I elaborate on the fundamental assumptions of constructivist grounded theory and discuss how it connects to my own worldview, topic of study, and research design choices.

The Role of the Literature and Extant Theory in Grounded Theory Research

Generally speaking, “a good researcher learns all there is to know before beginning inquiry” (Meadows & Morse, 2001, p. 192). In grounded theory research, however, the

opposite is true: a researcher should seek to enter the field and conduct data collection and analysis with as few preconceived ideas about the topic of study as possible. Because the goal of grounded theory research is to build a theory inductively from the data, rather than imposing existing theories or concepts on the data, it is methodologically inappropriate—and counterproductive—to conduct a thorough literature review or identify a conceptual or theoretical framework prior to data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Holton, 2009; Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011; McGhee et al., 2007).

However, this does not mean that the literature review is not an important part of a grounded theory research study. Some degree of knowledge about and experience with the topic increases a researcher's theoretical sensitivity, or ability to make meaning of the data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; I. Dey, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Kelle, 2007; Urquhart, 2001). I agree with I. Dey (2007) that “the point is not to avoid preconceptions, but to ensure that they are well grounded in arguments and evidence, and always subject to further investigation, revision, and refutation” (p. 176). I share Charmaz's (2004, 2006, 2013) constructivist perspective that conducting research that is free of bias and preconception is undesirable and impossible (see also Bryant, 2003; Mills et al., 2006b). A researcher's prior knowledge and experiences instead should be “points of departure for developing, rather than limiting, their ideas” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 501).

Henwood and Pidgeon (2003) coined the term “theoretical agnosticism” to refer to the grounded theorist's ideal state of informed open-mindedness. Therefore, I decided to

follow McGhee et al.'s (2007) suggestion that two literature reviews may be appropriate: an initial one to explore the topic and provide a justification for the study, and then a second, focused one, undertaken during data analysis, that connects the theory I generate to existing theoretical ideas. I have reviewed the literature on the connection between campus diversity and college students' learning and developmental outcomes as well as that pertaining to intercultural friendships and interactions on college campuses (summarized in chapter two). This foundation allowed me to begin my study with an appropriate level of theoretical sensitivity. In the later phases of the analysis process as I was integrating my theory, I returned to the literature and sought new sources that connected with and informed the conceptual ideas comprising my theory. The goal of this second literature review was to compare others' empirical findings and, to some extent, personal experiences with my own findings and conceptual ideas, to further develop the substantive theory I generated. The guiding principle was for me to keep an open mind when it comes to interpreting and analyzing my data (I. Dey, 2007).

Significance of this Study

This study has the potential to inform both scholarship and practice concerning the student outcomes associated with campus diversity, and specifically the importance of intercultural interactions and friendships for students' achievement of these individual- and societal-level outcomes. As Sandra Day O'Connor noted in an essay reflecting on her decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, "Certainly useful studies have already been conducted on the benefits from diverse student bodies, but in our view more needs to be done" (quoted in

Schmidt, 2010, p. 3). This research will add to our currently limited understanding of one of the critical mechanisms through which college students attain the educational benefits of diversity: sustained, meaningful peer relationships. Below I discuss the specific ways in which I anticipate this study will contribute to theory and scholarship as well as to practice.

Theoretical and Scholarly Significance

This research contributes to theory and scholarship on college students' diversity-related learning and development in two ways. First, this research moves beyond the quantitative methods that are predominately used to investigate college students' intercultural friendships. In contrast, the qualitative design of this study yields a deeper, richer understanding of the processes and realities of these friendships than prior research has provided. Second, the substantive theory generated through this research and grounded in college students' actual experiences illuminates the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment among college students, paving the way for further research in this area.

Expanding our understanding of college students' interracial friendships through qualitative methods. While the literature on the beneficial educational effects of campus diversity is plentiful, the research on students' intercultural friendships is limited. Furthermore, with rare exceptions (e.g., Antonio, 2004), the extant empirical literature on college students' intercultural friendships uses quantitative methods to investigate three general areas: (1) the student-level predictors of intercultural friendship development, (2) the prevalence of intercultural friendships among college students at a single institution or across

a sample of institutions within a national dataset, and (3) the effects of these friendships on a limited set of measurable outcomes (e.g., changes in prejudice levels or attitudes toward other racial groups from the time of college entry). These studies rely upon national (e.g., Cooperative Institutional Research Program [CIRP] or the National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE]) or single institution, “homegrown” surveys to investigate these topics, collecting data via self-report questions that generally use three- or five-item Likert scales. When institution-level factors are included in these studies, they are usually factors that are difficult or impossible for the institution to change or control (e.g., size, Carnegie classification) or that have equivocal effects on students’ intercultural interaction (e.g., structural diversity, climate).

Furthermore, few studies have examined the effect of specific college experiences on friendship development or sustainment. Those studies that do include institution-level predictors of intercultural friendship development (e.g., Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; Stearns et al., 2009) suffer from the problem of unclear “treatments”—that is, asking students if they have ever participated in a “diversity workshop” or an “ethnic organization” strips these factors of meaning by lumping them into broad categories and leaving unaddressed the question of what constitutes meaningful “participation” in these experiences. Overall, by removing context and meaning from the constructs they examine (Bensimon, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), quantitative research provides little insight into how institutional contextual factors shape college students’ interracial friendships.

These inherent limitations of using quantitative methods to examine students' intercultural friendships prevent us from understanding the real-world complexity of college students' interracial friendships. Quantitative methods only offer insight into a finite set of factors and influences that, taken together, provide a disjointed and incomplete picture of the realities and experiences of students in these friendships, one that "focuses almost exclusively on theoretical deduction and hypothesis testing" (I. Dey, 2007, p. 173). Qualitative methods, by contrast, allow for a much deeper exploration of this topic, resulting in a holistic, comprehensive portrayal of an understudied topic such as the process by which interracial friendship develop and are sustained (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Krathwohl, 2009; Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009).

The grounded theory method, in particular, allows for a much richer examination of the complexity involved in a real-world topic such as interracial friendship development (Corbin & Strauss, 2008); it also allows for new understandings and theory to emerge, expanding our understanding of concepts critical to student success (Bensimon, 2007). As a constructivist researcher, I believe that "knowledge is found within the individual" and cannot be divorced from the context that gave rise to it (S. R. Jones et al., 2006, p. 18), beliefs that are fundamentally opposed to quantitative methods that privilege the researcher's perspective and knowledge above those of participants (Charmaz, 2003a, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I intentionally designed this study to be free of the preconceptions about intercultural interactions and friendships that dominate the empirical literature so that students' experiences and realities—not our scholarly assumptions about them—could

emerge (Cutcliffe, 2005). We have much to learn from students with friends of other races and ethnicities; let us listen to what they have to tell us.

Illuminating the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment.

As Estela Mara Bensimon noted in her 2006 presidential address to the Association for the Study of Higher Education regarding scholarship on student success, “the entry of new ideas [is] blocked by the high incidence of inter-citation” (2007, p. 449). While these frequently cited theories and ideas have significant merit, to be sure, our overreliance on applying and testing existing frameworks limits our understanding of key problems in the higher education field by circumscribing how we approach them and, therefore, how we make meaning of them. Novice researchers are generally taught that “good” empirical design involves selecting an extant theory or theories prior to beginning research and then deductively applying that framework to analyze data; the implicit message is that an inductive approach to research is sloppy, atheoretical, and not rigorous (Glaser, 2009; Suddaby, 2006). Yet inductive research methods are critical for generating new insights and knowledge; recycling the same “deified” theories as deductive frameworks keeps us from thinking about problems in the field of higher education in new ways and does not advance our scholarship in the long term (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It also keeps us from recognizing (and investigating) the very factors that are most critical for understanding our topic of study (Scott, 2009). As Bensimon advocates, we need to expand our knowledge base and incorporate new theories, perspectives, and methods to invigorate our scholarship. This study brings new insight to a significant and timely research problem: how to facilitate and support

the development and sustainment of interracial friendships among college students so that they achieve the critical learning outcomes associated with campus diversity.

I chose to use grounded theory to investigate this topic because it is a powerful method of inquiry that leads to the development of new theory, thus expanding our knowledge base rather than further verifying what we already know. As mentioned above, research on the educational benefits of intercultural friendships among college students has focused almost exclusively on the extent to which such friendships occur on campus, providing little information on *how* or *why* they occur and the role institutions may play in facilitating (or hindering) their development and sustainment (Clarke & Antonio, 2012). Focusing on the process of friendship development and sustainment, as I have done with this research, is precisely the sort of question that cannot be adequately answered via deductive research methods. Using the inductive method of grounded theory, however, uncovers the innovative insights we need to advance our understanding of college students' interracial friendships and how institutions can facilitate and support them. Furthermore, approaching this topic from a new perspective—looking at process, rather than predictive factors and outcomes—provides a deeper, richer perspective on these friendships than can be currently found in the scholarly literature. It also illuminates promising avenues for future research, avenues that deductive research methods may never uncover.

Practical Significance

As I have mentioned, this research was guided by the desire to inform practice. Specifically, I sought to elucidate how college and university administrators and student

affairs educators can facilitate and support the development and sustainment of interracial friendships among their students in order to foster the learning and development that we know results from meaningful intercultural interaction. Pope et al. (2009) assert that “multicultural research that is participant centered and practitioner oriented,” as this study is, “will likely have the most impact on student affairs practice” (p. 654). This research has practical implications for two broad areas. First, it illuminates changes to institutional policies and programming that can improve college students’ diversity-related learning and development. Second, the findings of this research provide insight into how institutional staff and administrators can prepare college students for citizenship in a diverse society.

Informing changes to institutional policies and programming to improve college students’ diversity-related learning and development. Despite the many documented beneficial outcomes of intercultural interaction, some students feel that colleges are failing at helping them realize diversity-related learning outcomes (antonio, 2004; E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Sidanius et al., 2004). Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between values and actions when it comes to intercultural interactions; that is, both students and institutions claim to value intercultural interaction, yet fall short in taking action congruent with this value (E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Halualani et al., 2004). As I discussed above, extant research provides scant information to inform campus policies and programming because they do not address questions of how or why these friendships develop and are sustained (the process) or how institutional characteristics and conditions (the context) affect this process, leaving colleges and universities helpless as to where and how to purposefully intervene to ensure students’

learning (Chang, 2013; Clarke & Antonio, 2012). Rather, these studies seem content to leave students' friendship development to chance, hoping that a structurally diverse student body will increase the likelihood that friendships develop across racial groups—despite evidence documenting that structural diversity alone is insufficient to guarantee intercultural interaction (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2004; Halualani et al., 2004; Milem et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006) and that some forms of interaction may negatively affect students' perceptions of and attitudes toward other racial groups (Allport, 1954/1988; Hurtado, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998a). As Hurtado (2005) cautions, “If interactions are left to chance, students are likely to revert to familiar and solidified positions when encountering conflict,” precluding their learning and development (p. 606). Intercultural interaction in the context of a structurally diverse institution cannot be assumed, and even when such interactions do occur, learning outcomes are not guaranteed. Therefore, institutions must take proactive responsibility for facilitating these interactions and ensuring that learning outcomes are met. Yet student affairs educators and administrators currently have little guidance to inform their practice in this critical area.

Peer interactions are essential for college students' learning (Antonio, 2001a; Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Whitt et al., 1999), and the sustained and deeply meaningful interaction that occurs within the friend relationship makes friendships especially powerful sites of learning. If the outcomes of intercultural interactions and friendships are truly important for college students' development and preparation for a pluralistic society—and we have ample evidence documenting that they are—then the

current lack of empirical insight into how colleges and universities can intentionally foster the conditions that support the development and sustainment of these friendships is a significant gap in our knowledge. Therefore, this research sought to provide a better understanding of the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships the perspective of students within them. Because friendships are a critical site of college students' learning, we cannot continue to remain ignorant about this process and how we, as student affairs practitioners and institutional leaders, can support these friendships.

Understanding how students develop and sustain interracial friendships, which was the aim of this research, holds promise for enhancing the effectiveness of campus diversity policies and programming. As Clarke and Antonio (2012) argue, "Scholars need to provide institutions with better, actionable insight into the dynamics of diverse student interaction and its outcomes" (pp. 40-41). In keeping with the purpose of the grounded theory method, this research generated a substantive theory of the process of college students' interracial friendship development and sustainment. Focusing on contextual factors that have "much explanatory power" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as a substantive theory does, illuminates areas where practitioners can effectively intervene to shape the process of study (Scott, 2009). Student affairs educators and institutional administrators will be able to use the substantive theory I have generated and present in this dissertation to inform their own practice in facilitating students' achievement of diversity-related learning and development outcomes. This theory also informs the creation of more-effective diversity policies and programming on college campuses—specifically, those that will facilitate and support the development and

sustainment of interracial friendships. The effectiveness of these new opportunities for intervention can be subsequently investigated through additional empirical research. Creating campus environments that foster meaningful and sustained intercultural interactions (such as friendships) holds substantial promise for maximizing the educational benefits of campus diversity (Rude et al., 2012), and this research begins to provide the critical insight needed in order to accomplish this goal.

Preparing college students for citizenship in a diverse society. The findings from this research also support the rationale behind institutional social justice- and equity-oriented policies oriented such as race-conscious admissions. Given that colleges' and universities' affirmative action policies have come under multiple legal challenges in recent years (e.g., *Fisher v. University of Texas*, 2013; *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003; see also Gurin et al., 2004; Schmidt, 2007), higher education institutions need to be prepared to defend the value of a structurally diverse campus. To withstand the inevitable forthcoming challenges to these diversity policies, we have to "clearly identify the *processes* through which racial diversity does and does not contribute to educational outcomes, and more importantly, to identify how institutions do and do not facilitate these processes" (Clarke & Antonio, 2012, p. 26). Because intercultural friendships are a key site of students' diversity-related learning, understanding the process by which these friendships develop and are sustained can bolster institutions' arguments in favor of policies and practices that ensure diverse campuses. The substantive theory I have generated through this research provides such support, as I discuss in chapter five.

In addition, meaningful interaction with diverse others in college helps students achieve the societal learning and development outcomes they need in today's world (American Council on Education, 2012; Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, 2005; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Pike et al., 2007). Indeed, this is one of the most—perhaps *the* most—important purposes of a college education: preparing students to function as citizens and employees in a pluralistic, multicultural, democratic society as well as leaders who will “advanc[e] social progress” (Hurtado, 2007, p. 186). Furthermore, because intergroup friendships have both direct and indirect effects on prejudice reduction (Paolini et al., 2007), *all* students can benefit from a campus where heterogeneous friendships are common, even those who themselves may not have any friends from other cultural backgrounds. Therefore, creating institutional environments in which college students can interact and form friendships with diverse peers is critical for society; in the interest of promoting social justice, higher education institutions can, and must, do a better job of helping students achieve these societal outcomes (E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005, 2007; D. G. Smith, 2009). Current research, however, rarely provides the information practitioners need to create these environments (Pope et al., 2009) or to “intentionally facilitat[e] the learning moments” (L. B. Jones, 2011). This research, in contrast, provides the insight institutional leaders and student affairs educators need to make meaningful changes to policies and programming that

will create environments supportive of interracial friendships—and likely other forms of intercultural interaction as well—thus helping to ensure that students achieve these crucial outcomes and graduate prepared to fully participate as citizens of a multicultural society and world. In chapter five I present a thorough discussion of the implications for educational practice suggested by the substantive theory I have generated.

Limitations and Delimitations

As with all qualitative research, the goal of this study was not to provide generalizable findings, but rather to allow readers to determine how well results will apply to their own contexts or situations (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). Although this is more accurately a characteristic of qualitative research rather than a limitation *per se*, it is especially true of grounded theory studies as the goal of grounded theory research is to produce a substantive theory that emerges inductively from the data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Substantive theories generated via grounded theory methods are by definition solidly grounded within the context from which they were derived (this is the criterion of “fit,” which I describe further in chapter three). However, because they aim for conceptual abstraction rather than description, they may be applicable to other contexts in which the process or phenomenon of study may also be found (Charmaz, 2006; Cooney, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this way, while my intent was to generate a substantive theory about college students’ interracial friendships that offers insight into the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment at higher education institutions generally, my readers must judge how transferable it is to their own institutions (Chiovitti & Piran,

2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2002). To help my readers make this judgment, I have included extensive contextual information about the research site and participants in my study, within the limits of confidentiality (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

At one time, qualitative researchers had to counter accusations of injecting personal bias into their research, and that such research could therefore not meet the traditional research standard of objectivity. Such criticisms have largely (although not entirely) abated today, and indeed, the fact that qualitative research explicitly acknowledges that research can never be truly objective is now considered by many social science and educational researchers to be a strength of the approach (Ahern, 1999; Bryant, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln, 1995; Mills et al., 2006b; Thomas & James, 2006; Tracy, 2010). Because of the role that a researcher's values and beliefs play in everything from choosing a research problem to shaping research questions, selecting participants, and interpreting data, qualitative researchers must be transparent about their values and beliefs so that readers can determine for themselves the extent to which these have shaped the researcher's interpretations and conclusions (S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Krathwohl, 2009; Lincoln, 1995). To this end, I included in chapter three statements of my positionality and subjectivity relative to the topic of this study.

My statement of positionality and subjectivity will also help readers to determine whether the substantive theory I have put forth "rings true" (Piantanida et al., 2004) or resonates with those who have experienced the phenomenon of study (Charmaz, 2006;

Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In grounded theory research, as in nearly all qualitative research, the researcher serves an interpretive role; participants' ideas and voices are filtered through her, and the researcher's task is to make meaning of these voices and ideas (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hall & Callery, 2001; S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Piantanida et al., 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Beyond this, a grounded theorist's primary goal in data analysis is to identify one primary concept (known as the "core category") around which to build the emergent theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). Other researchers analyzing the same data may choose a different category around which to build a substantive theory, and the researcher may have to choose between multiple core category possibilities within her data, a choice which may be arbitrary (Glaser, 1978; Jamieson, Taylor, & Gibson, 2006). Suddaby (2006) advises that as a grounded theorist, you must "constantly remind yourself that you are only human and that what you observe is a function of both who you are and what you hope to see" (p. 635). Therefore, in my written report and analytic memos, I have provided clear and detailed information to justify my analytic decisions and interpretations so that the foundation for my substantive theory is strong as well as transparent (Jamieson et al., 2006; Piantanida et al., 2004; Suddaby, 2006). I also included reflection in my memos to ensure that I was not unconsciously testing or verifying my existing knowledge (McGhee et al., 2007; Suddaby, 2006). Ultimately, college students in interracial and intercultural friendships as well as institutional practitioners who apply my theory will be the best judges of its fit, resonance, and utility (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978).

In addition to the paradigmatic limitations of this research as described above, there are also some practical limitations. As a graduate student with finite time and resources, I made some decisions about sampling and data collection that were driven by these considerations rather than by principles of grounded theory (such as theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation). Practical considerations are valid and researchers should seek to balance these with the ideals of rigorous grounded theory research (Glaser, 1978). One example was my decision to limit my participant recruitment to a single higher education institution located where I live. While limiting my recruitment to a single institution may have reduced the variation within my data and possibly reduced the transferability of the substantive theory I generated to other types of institutions located in other parts of the U.S., I made this decision in order to enhance the saturation and explanatory depth of my theory, as I discuss in chapter three. In other words, I chose to sacrifice theoretical breadth in the interest of theoretical depth. As Jamieson et al. (2006) note, “A grounded theory is never right or wrong but is always modifiable in the light of new information” (p. 102). As I discuss in chapter five, my future research aims to build upon the theory I’ve generated by applying it in additional institutional contexts and modifying it accordingly.

An additional practical limitation was the reality that the procedures of grounded theory research and the requirements of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and dissertation committees are to some degree at odds. Dissertation committees and protocols generally require students to complete a literature review prior to collecting data; they often require identification of a theoretical or conceptual framework in advance of the study as well. As

discussed previously, both of these requirements are incongruent with the grounded theory method, which specifies that a researcher should aim to be free from preconception until the late stages of data analysis to avoid consciously or unconsciously deducing, rather than inducing, concepts from the data (Glaser, 1978, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hickey, 1997; Holton, 2009; McGhee et al., 2007; Suddaby, 2006). For this study, I did not identify a conceptual or theoretical framework in advance, but I did conduct a literature review. However, because there have been few studies to examine the topic of students' intercultural friendships, and those that have addressed this topic have not approached it from a processual perspective, I feel that my interpretations and conclusions were not preconceived or weakened by an unconscious bias toward deduction and verification. In fact, my familiarity with the literature on campus diversity, intercultural interactions, and diversity-related learning outcomes enhanced my theoretical sensitivity, helping me to make meaning of my data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Additionally, IRBs generally require researchers to specify sampling procedures, including sites, numbers, and recruitment strategies, in advance of data collection. This requirement conflicts with the notion of theoretical sampling that is fundamental to grounded theory research, which requires sampling decisions to be driven by data analysis rather than predetermined (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011; McGhee et al., 2007). Thankfully the institution at which I conducted my research has an excellent IRB that was receptive to the study modifications I needed to make in order to fulfill my theoretical sampling needs.

Clarification of Terms: “Race,” “Ethnicity,” “Interracial,” and “Interethnic”

A traditional dissertation would include a “definition of terms” section in this chapter. I did not include this section in my dissertation because the constructivist epistemology underlying this research privileges participants’ perspectives and experiences over those of the researcher (Charmaz, 2003a, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), which made it inappropriate for me to define key terms in advance of learning from them how they make meaning of concepts such as “race” and “ethnicity.” Although I indicated in my proposal that I would provide definitions of key terms in my final report, after working with my participants to generate data for this study I concluded that a single definition of each term, as traditional “definition of terms” sections usually do, might distort and minimize the complexities of participants’ understandings of race and ethnicity, violating the constructivist principles guiding my research. Instead, I have chosen to present a more nuanced discussion of my participants’ conceptualizations of race and ethnicity in chapter four that more holistically captures the individual variations and complexities in their understandings of these terms. Below I clarify my understanding and use of certain terms throughout this dissertation. The terms I discuss here are those that were relevant to the design of my study. In chapter four I provide a supplemental clarification of terms in which I identify and discuss my use of additional terms that I drew upon in my analysis and are relevant to the concepts that comprise my substantive theory.

Throughout this dissertation I use the term “diversity” to refer to racial and ethnic diversity, consistent with much of the higher education literature on this topic. I also use the

adjectives “intercultural,” “interethnic,” and “interracial” interchangeably when referring to students’ interactions with a peer of a different race or ethnicity. There are, of course, differences in meaning between these three terms (Allport, 1954/1988; J. N. Martin, Trego, & Nakayama, 2010), but they are generally used synonymously in the higher education literature on student outcomes related to racial and ethnic diversity on campus (e.g., see Halualani et al., 2004). From a demographic perspective, the term “ethnicity” is much broader than the term “race,” and it is generally more congruent with how individuals actually see themselves. For example, “Hispanic” is a racial term that was created for use by the U.S. Census Bureau and other related government agencies for which there was a need to classify people broadly; embedded in this issue are legitimately troubling concerns about who has the power to define another’s identity and cultural group membership (Barreto, 2003; J. N. Martin et al., 2010). Individuals checking the “Hispanic” box on a Census form, however, may not identify as Hispanic at all but rather by ethnic, national, or cultural origin such as Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Guatemalan, and so forth. Similarly, individuals who racially classify themselves (or are classified) as “Asian” or “Asian American” may identify primarily with an ethnic, national, or cultural group (e.g., Thai, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.) rather than with “Asian” as a broad racial group (Halualani et al., 2004), and their experiences will be equally heterogeneous, reflecting these within-group differences (Arminio & Torres, 2012; D. G. Smith, 2009).

Several scholars on prejudice and intercultural interaction have provided clarifications on the differences between the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity.” Allport

(1954/1988) defines “ethnicity” as follows: “‘Ethnic’ refers to characteristics of groups that may be, in different proportions, physical, national, cultural, linguistic, religious, or ideological in character. Unlike ‘race’, the term does not imply biological unity” (p. xvii-xviii). Antonio (2001a) justifies his preference for “ethnicity” on the basis that college students see ethnic differences rather than racial differences among their peers, and therefore limiting the definition of diversity to “race” is an artificial construct that does not reflect students’ actual experiences (see also Barreto, 2003, regarding Hispanic and Latino/a identities). Similarly, Wimmer and Lewis (2010) suggest that “much of the often observed racial homogeneity of social networks is produced by ethnic, rather than racial, homophily” (p. 597), suggesting that Antonio’s assertion is accurate. Finally, Chaudhari and Pizzolato (2008) offer a clarification of “ethnicity” from the perspective of the identity development literature:

The distinction between race and ethnicity is unclear in much identity development research, where race and ethnicity are used interchangeably... Ethnic identity is a developmental, contextual, and dynamic construct. It can be defined as an individual’s affiliation with other members of a particular ethnic group. (p. 444)

However, from an interpersonal perspective, “race” is the term people commonly use (whether accurately or not) to describe differences in physical appearance and values that are presumed to accompany those differences; because this process is the root of prejudice (Allport 1954/1988), the term “race” is often used when discussing prejudice and attitudes toward other cultural groups (e.g., racial attitudes).

For many reasons, “ethnicity” would seem to be a preferable term to “race” because it is more flexible and encapsulates a broader and more inclusive range of possible identities. Nonetheless, “race” remains the predominant term used in the empirical and theoretical literature on higher education diversity and student outcomes for three reasons. First, institutional and survey data collection methods make it difficult, if not impossible, to capture the wide variety of ethnic identities represented on college campuses, whereas when we use racial categories, researchers usually need only four categories, greatly simplifying data analysis and generalization. Second, discussions about affirmative action in higher education—which, as mentioned earlier, are the impetus for much of the research over the past decade on the educational outcomes of diversity—almost exclusively use the term “race” (e.g., in discussion of racial preferences in admission, conditional student outcomes by race, etc.). Third, U.S. government agencies continue to use racial categories rather than ethnicities (with the exception of “Hispanic” ethnicity, a dichotomous option) in collecting and disseminating educational data, and large-scale datasets generally use the demographic categories established by the government for the sake of consistency, limiting the information available to researchers conducting analyses (Wolfe & Fletcher, 2013).

Therefore, as much as researchers and practitioners of higher education may wish to move beyond the term “race” for many valid reasons, it remains stubbornly ensconced in the scholarly literature for higher education and many other social science fields. From a research perspective, this is problematic for three reasons. First, the fact that two individuals may share a racial or ethnic identity does not mean that they experience a phenomenon in the

same way, yet quantitative research assumes that a shared identity results in shared experiences. Second, the limited racial and ethnic categories used in quantitative research preclude recognition of multiple and intersecting identities and how these may shape an individual's experiences (Park, Quaye, Harper, Chang, & Marin, 2013). Third, college students may change their racial identification based upon the specific context of the situation in which they are being asked to choose a racial identity, or even upon the language used on demographic questionnaires (Johnston, Ozaki, Pizzolato, & Chaudhari, 2014). Qualitative research methods, in contrast, offer the flexibility needed to go beyond narrow definitions of racial and ethnic identity, allowing for findings that more closely reflect the realities of how college students self-identify (e.g., multiple and intersecting identities) (Park et al., 2013). Indeed, as I discuss in detail in chapter four, some of my participants felt "race" was more relevant to their experiences (i.e., in discussing differences between themselves and their friends) while others felt "ethnicity" was more salient.

For the sake of simplicity, I chose to primarily use the broader terms "race" and "interracial" in describing the focus of my study. In my recruitment materials, I used these broader terms to refer to the purpose of my study but used both terms to state my primary criterion for participation: "I'm seeking participants for my study who ... currently are, or previously were, close friends with a fellow student of a different racial or ethnic background" (see Appendix B). Congruent with the constructivist worldview that informed this research, I allowed my participants to define for themselves whether their friendship is "interracial"; it was not epistemologically appropriate for me to verify whether it qualifies

under an “objective” definition that does not, in fact, exist. In this way I respected my participants’ racial and ethnic self-identification, rather than imposing an externally ascribed categorization upon them (Johnston et al., 2014).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have discussed how my research fits within the larger context of the “diversity rationale” for colleges and universities—that is, the need to create diverse campus environments to ensure that college students achieve the many learning and development outcomes that result from diversity experiences and are essential for preparing them to participate in today’s multicultural society. I have also presented arguments for why studying the process of college students’ interracial friendship development and sustainment connects to this diversity rationale, as intercultural peer interactions and friendships are powerful sites of diversity-related learning, and why we need to understand how this process and how higher education institutions can support these friendships. Finally, I have discussed the contributions to scholarship and practice that this research makes by generating a substantive theory explaining the process of students’ interracial friendship development and sustainment.

The theory that resulted from this research provides new insight into how higher education institutions can make purposeful changes to their programming and policies to facilitate and support students in developing and sustaining interracial friendships, thereby ensuring achievement of diversity-related learning outcomes. I close with Daryl G. Smith’s (2009) powerful invocation to action:

What *is* clear is that we need to create campuses in and for the twenty-first century that function well in a pluralistic society, that create the leadership for that society, that help engage the issues of that society, and, perhaps, that model what thriving, diverse communities look like. If not on our campuses, where? ... And if not now, when? (p. 270)

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the grounded theory method of inquiry requires researchers to minimize preconception so that analysis is inductive rather than deductive. The researcher must take care to avoid confirming or verifying existing concepts and theories, and therefore s/he should not conduct a thorough literature review or identify a conceptual or theoretical framework prior to data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Holton, 2009; Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011; McGhee et al., 2007). Yet the researcher must also have enough familiarity with the topic of study to be able to recognize important concepts and patterns in the data; this is known as theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; I. Dey, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Kelle, 2007; Urquhart, 2001). To balance the need to avoid preconception while also ensuring an appropriate level of theoretical sensitivity, I conducted two literature reviews, a more general one in advance of data collection and a more focused one during the later stages of data analysis (McGhee et al., 2007). The first literature review provided a foundation and context for my study, while the second one focused on identifying existing concepts and theories that pertain to the concepts and categories that comprise my substantive theory.

This chapter primarily presents the first, broader literature review to situate my research within the larger body of literature to which it relates, although where relevant I have also incorporated ideas from the second, focused literature review. In chapter five, I discuss specific connections between the concepts and categories comprising my theory and

existing concepts and theories from the literature, including some of the studies I discuss below as well as new studies I identified through my second literature review. In that chapter I also discuss how my substantive theory informs and enhances the predominant theoretical explanations of intercultural friendship that I summarize below (i.e., similarity-attraction and propinquity).

To frame the literature review here, I first provide a brief overview of student diversity on college campuses. I then describe the types of diversity on campus, focusing on structural diversity and institutional climate, both of which influence the extent to which students engage in intercultural interaction. I next review the empirical literature on intercultural interaction and intercultural friendships among undergraduate college students and the connection between intercultural interactions and friendships and students' achievement of diversity-related learning outcomes. Finally, I summarize two ideas that have been proposed to explain intercultural interaction (or its lack): the theory of similarity-attraction and the concept of propinquity. I conclude this chapter by describing the contribution this research makes to the literature on the learning and development outcomes of college students' interracial friendships.

A Brief Overview of Student Diversity on U.S. College Campuses

Although the particular diversity composition of the undergraduate student population at any given U.S. college or university will be unique to that institution, in general, today's college students represent a wide range of demographic backgrounds and cultural heritages. Students are diverse by socioeconomic status, first-generation student status, race and

ethnicity, religion and worldview, gender, sexuality, age, disability status, and national origin, among many other identity and cultural factors. In the higher education literature, the general term “diversity” is often used to refer specifically to racial and ethnic diversity.

However, this singular focus within much of the higher education literature on racial and ethnic diversity, to the exclusion of other cultural backgrounds and identities, is problematic for several reasons. First, it neglects the reality of intersectionality or multiple dimensions of identity: the notion that a person does not experience life through the perspective of one identity at a time, but rather through the uniquely individual lens created by the intersection of all of her identities (Crenshaw, 1991; S. R. Jones & McEwen, 2000; Pope et al., 2009). For example, an African American, transgender, Muslim woman’s experiences and perspectives are shaped by all of these identities working together in tandem, with the particular salience of each of her identities relative to each specific context of her life; she is not a woman in one context, a Muslim in another, and so forth (S. R. Jones & McEwen, 2000). In addition, focusing on one identity (such as race) to the exclusion of others when conducting social justice research risks minimizing or misinterpreting individuals’ lived realities of oppression, as multiple identities create multiple oppressions (Crenshaw, 1991; S. R. Jones & McEwen, 2000; Villalpando, 2003).

Furthermore, when we privilege one aspect of cultural identity over others in our discussions of diversity, we may implicitly create a hierarchy of cultural identity, sending the message (if unintentionally) that some forms of identity are more valuable than others. This may also create an environment in which varied cultural identities are pitted in competition

for recognition, resources, and status within the identity hierarchy, doing serious harm to campus diversity climates (Tanaka, 2003). Focusing on a single dimension of identity such as race also suggests that intergroup differences are more important and worthy of attention than intragroup differences, where in reality the converse may be true (Crenshaw, 1991). Finally, as D. G. Smith (2009) observes, the desire within higher education institutions (and arguably within our scholarship as well) to focus upon one form of diversity at a time—and as few forms as possible—is driven by “plethoraphobia” (the fear of too many); yet we can be more inclusive when we move beyond “laundry lists” of institution-defined identities that do not reflect the realities of students’ experiences on their campuses (pp. 62-63).

Yet there are several valid reasons why racial and ethnic diversity predominates over other aspects in the literature on diversity in higher education. First, U.S. higher education institutions have historically excluded students of Color, particularly Native American and African American students (Allen & Jewell, 2007; Horowitz, 1987; D. G. Smith, 2009; Wechsler, 2007; Wright, 2007), as well as students deemed to be of “lesser” ethnic backgrounds, such as Jewish students (Horowitz, 1987; Levine, 2007; Wechsler, 2007). Second, this exclusionary history persists within colleges and universities as institutional racism: the embedding of discriminatory and racist assumptions and impacts within institutional policies and practices (Iverson, 2007; Villalpando, 2003). Third, institutions that seek to remedy their past history of racial and ethnic discrimination and lingering institutional racism through policies such as race-conscious undergraduate admissions have been challenged by high-profile lawsuits (e.g., *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003; *Fisher v.*

University of Texas, 2013; see also Schmidt, 2007). Yet one positive result of the lawsuits challenging the considering of race in admissions has been a flurry of research to provide empirical support for the diversity rationale—the notion that racial diversity on college campuses provides significant educational benefits and leads to long-term, positive developmental outcomes for *all* students, not just students of Color who may be admitted through affirmative action (Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005, 2007; Jayakumar, 2008).

As I discuss in more detail throughout this chapter, the benefits and outcomes that result from campus diversity accrue primarily through students' intercultural peer interactions, making the study of these interactions, and specifically how institutions can facilitate and support them, a critical area of research. In the interest of presenting an aggregate summary of empirical findings, I primarily use the term “intercultural” throughout my literature review, but I have chosen to use the more precise term “interracial” in defining the kinds of friendships I examined in my research.

Types of Diversity on Campus

When researchers speak of campus diversity, they are usually referring to one of three constructs: structural diversity, institutional climate, or classroom diversity. Briefly, structural diversity refers to the numerical or proportional representation of members of specific cultural groups on campus, institutional climate refers to whether minority group members and minority perspectives are welcomed or marginalized on campus, and classroom diversity refers to the representation of minority groups and perspectives in the curriculum (Hurtado et al., 1998; Pike & Kuh, 2006). Below I elaborate upon the concepts of structural

diversity and institutional climate and their relevance for student learning outcomes and intercultural interaction on campus. Classroom diversity, although an essential component of campus diversity, is peripheral to the focus of this research on students' peer interactions and friendship development. It also did not emerge as a relevant contextual factor shaping students' interracial friendship development or sustainment in my participants' experiences, as I briefly discuss in chapter five. Therefore, I do not discuss classroom diversity in this literature review.

Structural Diversity

Generally, when people refer to how diverse a college campus is, they are referring to how structurally diverse it is. Although structural diversity most accurately accounts for the representation of many different cultural identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability status, etc.), it is commonly used in reference to the proportion of racial and ethnic minorities on a college campus (antonio, 2001b; Hurtado et al., 1998; Pike & Kuh, 2006). Milem et al. (2005) prefer the term “compositional diversity” to “structural diversity” to differentiate the numeric representation of minority groups from the aspects of an institution's organizational structure that also affect its diversity climate. While I agree that “compositional diversity” is a more conceptually accurate term, the majority of the higher education diversity literature uses “structural diversity,” and therefore I also use “structural diversity” throughout this dissertation.

The importance of structural diversity on a college campus extends beyond questions of social justice and access for underrepresented and marginalized groups; it is also “thought

to exert an indirect effect on student learning, acting through interactions with peers” (Pike & Kuh, 2006, p. 427; see also Antonio, 2001b; Gurin et al., 2004; Jayakumar, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rude et al., 2012). Indeed, the U.S. Supreme affirmed the educational value of structural diversity in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), citing the important role structurally diverse college and universities play in preparing college students to be effective members of our diverse society and workplaces. As Chang, Denson, et al. (2006) note, a structurally diverse campus “can create a rich and complex social and learning environment that can subsequently be applied as an educational tool to promote students’ learning and development” (p. 432). Indeed, empirical research provides evidence that attending a structurally diverse institution has a positive effect on college students’ development of cross-cultural competencies and that these positive effects persist into adulthood as graduates are more likely to choose to live and work in diverse settings (Antonio, 2001b; Hurtado, 2003; Jayakumar, 2008). In addition, students who attend institutions with greater levels of structural diversity experience long-term human capital gains including a 4.5% increase in earnings and a 5.5% increase in family income (Wolfe & Fletcher, 2013). Attending a structurally diverse campus also leads to greater diversity in the post-college friendship groups of White students but not for students of other races (Wolfe & Fletcher, 2013).

However, while structural diversity is necessary for intercultural interaction to occur, it does not *guarantee* that students will interact across cultural differences (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2004; Halualani et al., 2004; Milem et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006). We also cannot assume that a

structurally diverse campus environment necessarily translates into meaningful experiences with diversity that lead to student learning outcomes. “[If] students retreat from the rich and complex social and learning opportunities offered by a diverse campus and settle into institutional spaces that are more homogenous, they are likely to miss out on many of the important benefits derived from diversity” (Milem et al., 2005, p. 9). For learning to occur, students must engage in discussion about their differences within intercultural peer relationships (antonio, 2001b, 2004; Clarke & antonio, 2012; Gurin et al., 2004; Rude et al., 2012), and therefore colleges and universities must take steps to ensure that structural diversity enables student learning by facilitating these interactions. Diversity, then, must be more than a numerical indicator in order to be educationally purposeful; it must be an “educational *process*” (Milem et al., 2005, p. 16).

Institutional Climate for Diversity

The achievement of diversity-related learning outcomes also depends on the institutional climate for diversity, which is affected—but not determined—by an institution’s structural diversity. When researchers and practitioners discuss an institution’s climate for diversity, they are generally referring to how members of cultural minority groups are treated and perceived on campus: Are they openly welcomed, passively ignored, or actively marginalized? Hurtado et al. (1998) propose that there are four dimensions to an institution’s racial climate: the institution’s history regarding race, its structural diversity (discussed above), the behaviors and attitudes of campus community members toward race (psychological climate), and the relationships among people of different races on campus

(behavioral climate). The racial climate on a college campus, although distinct from that of its surrounding environment, is not immune to the effects of issues related to diversity, both positive and negative, in society at large (Pettigrew, 1998b).

Just as there are different aspects of diversity, an institution may have multiple diversity climates for different aspects of cultural identity; for example, a school may have a favorable climate for members of racial and ethnic minorities, but LGBT students may experience a hostile climate. In addition, climate may be perceived differently by members of majority groups than by minority group members; in general, studies that have examined conditional perceptions of climate have found that minority students are more likely than White students to report a negative campus climate at predominately White institutions (Chavous, 2005; Cress, 2008).

Although structural diversity affects campus diversity climate, there is not a clear relationship between them. Some research indicates that conflict among cultural groups, which leads to negative perceptions of climate, is more frequent on campuses with high levels of structural diversity (Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado et al., 1998; Sidanius et al., 2004). Pike and Kuh (2006) found no relationship between structural diversity and campus climate, although this effect could be attributed to the nature of their sample. Others suggest that the relationship between structural diversity and climate is not a direct relationship, but rather mediated by the institution's diversity policies and programming (Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado et al., 1998). In contrast, Pettigrew (1998b) argues that institutional norms regarding intergroup contact are a more practically relevant concept than climate, because norms can be

changed through policy and leadership. However, the difference may be semantic, as institutional norms and climate are clearly related concepts.

An institution's diversity climate impacts students' potential learning gains from campus diversity, with positive climates creating an environment in which intercultural interactions lead to cognitive, developmental, and societal learning outcomes (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem et al., 2005; Whitt et al., 2001). One explanation for this effect proposes that climate mediates the effect of structural diversity on the frequency and quality of students' interracial interaction; these interactions, in turn, are the mechanism through which students achieve diversity-related outcomes (Jayakumar, 2008). In contrast, Chang, Denson, et al. (2006) found that attending an institution that values diversity and communicates that value in terms of expectations and norms leads students to perceive that they have become more open to diversity regardless of their *actual* level of interaction with racially diverse peers, suggesting that intercultural interaction has a normative, rather than processual, effect on learning.

The literature on workplace groups and teams supports the idea of a normative effect: in "multicultural organizations"—those that indicate they value diversity through their actions as well as their policies and rhetoric, creating a positive racial climate—group members appreciate each other as individuals rather than as representatives of social groups, which leads to better decision making and organizational outcomes (Larkey, 1996). In the college context, Pettigrew (1998b) uses the term "integrated" to refer to campuses that intentionally create the conditions that facilitate positive intergroup contact, thereby reducing

prejudice. Ultimately, however, the varied findings regarding the effect of climate on the frequency and quality of intercultural interactions suggest that there are a number of factors at play that shape students' perceptions of campus racial climate and influence how those perceptions serve to facilitate or discourage intercultural interaction.

In summary, although empirical research has not yet definitively established the means by which campus racial climate affects college students' diversity-related learning and development, it is clear that students reap educational benefits from attending institutions that are structurally diverse and that value diversity. Therefore, colleges and universities have a responsibility to take intentional steps to ensure students learn and benefit from diversity by “consciously creat[ing] diverse learning environments” (Hurtado, 2003, p. 24).

College Students' Intercultural Interactions and Friendships

Intercultural peer interactions are the context in which the majority of diversity-related student learning and development occur (Chang, 2007; Milem et al., 2005; Rude et al., 2012; Whitt et al., 1999). Halualani et al. (2004) define intercultural interaction as “conversational exchange between at least two racially/ethnically different persons” (p. 360). We might expect that a high level of structural diversity at an institution will make students' interactions across cultural differences more likely, and the empirical literature shows this to be true (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Pike and Kuh, 2006; Pike et al., 2007; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007). However, Pike and Kuh (2006) found that it is the quality—not quantity—of these interactions that affect an institution's climate. In addition, students' perception of a segregated campus (i.e., a negative climate) may lead them to avoid intercultural interaction

by communicating that such interaction is not the norm (antonio, 2001a). Institutions, then, must work to shape the quality of these interactions, as well as take steps to encourage students to interact across lines of diversity (Chang, 2007; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Clarke & antonio, 2012; Hurtado, 2003, 2005; Rude et al., 2012). This is especially crucial for first-year students, as informal interactions with diverse others during the first year of college predict involvement in diversity experiences in later years of college, and because the majority of students' learning and growth resulting from peer interactions occurs in the first year (Bowman, 2012a; Rude et al., 2012; Whitt et al., 1999). First-year students are also more likely than upperclass students to form friendships with students of other racial backgrounds (Hu & Kuh, 2003).

Most quantitative studies that have examined the factors affecting intercultural interactions have used the frequency or amount of intercultural interactions or friendships as the dependent variable. However, a few studies have recognized that quality of interaction is an important dependent variable as well because quality of interactions is likely also relevant, and perhaps even more important than frequency, to students' learning gains. For example, research has found that peer interactions as well as other types of diversity experiences must be novel, unexpected, or surprising in some way—that is, they must create a state of disequilibrium for the student—in order for students' beliefs to be challenged and personal growth to result (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012; Hurtado, 2005, 2007). This finding may explain why institutional characteristics such as structural diversity have a stronger relationship with intercultural interactions for first-year students, for whom nearly every

college experience is new, than for seniors (Pike et al., 2007). However, results are inconclusive about whether effects differ for interactions that are rated as positive versus those rated as negative, with some evidence suggesting that both positive and negative interactions may lead to learning and growth (Bowman, 2012a).

Factors Affecting Intercultural Interactions and Friendships

College students' intercultural interactions and friendships are subject to institutional and student-level contextual influences (Clarke & Antonio, 2012). Student-level influences include students' demographic backgrounds and pre-college experiences, while institutional influences include institutional characteristics and the experiences a student has, both inside and outside the classroom, while in college. Next, I elaborate on these factors and discuss their effects on college students' intercultural interactions and friendships, as documented in the empirical literature.

Pre-college factors. Students come to college from a variety of backgrounds, and they have had a wide range of experiences with and exposure to diversity prior to college. These experiences, as well as a student's values, beliefs, and personal demographics such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status, affect the likelihood of forming friendships or interacting with culturally different peers (Antonio, 2004; Astin, 1993; Bowman & Park, 2014; Fischer, 2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Milem & Umbach, 2003; Milem, Umbach, & Liang, 2004; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz, 2010; Schofield, Hausmann, Ye, & Woods, 2010; Stearns et al., 2009). While students' demographic characteristics in and of themselves are minimally related to their frequency of intercultural interaction in college

(V. B. Saenz et al., 2007), pre-college experiences—such as the diversity of the neighborhood(s) in which they grew up and their amount and type of contact with other racial groups in their neighborhoods and K-12 schools—shape the attitudes students hold toward members of other racial and ethnic groups as they enter college. These attitudes, in turn, predisposition them to seek out or avoid intercultural interaction in college and may also affect the quality of their interactions (Bowman & Park, 2014; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Fischer, 2008; Jayakumar, 2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; N. D. Martin, Tobin, & Spenner, 2014; Milem & Umbach, 2003; Milem et al., 2004; Odell et al., 2005; Park, 2014; Pettigrew, 1998a; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007; Schofield et al., 2010). Furthermore, these pre-college experiences may moderate the effect of interracial interaction on student outcomes, possibly by shaping the quality of interactions (Bowman & Denson, 2012).

The most frequently investigated pre-college predictors of intercultural interaction are having racially diverse interactions and/or friendships prior to college (Bowman, 2012b; Bowman & Denson, 2012; Fischer, 2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Milem et al., 2004; N. D. Martin et al., 2014; Odell et al., 2005; Park, 2014; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007; Schofield et al., 2010; Stearns et al., 2009) and the racial diversity of students' family neighborhoods and/or K-12 schools (Bowman & Denson, 2012; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem et al., 2004; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007; although Park, 2014, found no effect for high school diversity); diversity in all three pre-college environments positively predicts intercultural interaction in college. As might be expected, students who have friends from

other racial or ethnic groups in high school are more likely to have heterogeneous friendship groups in college, whereas students who hold prejudiced attitudes toward other races at the time of college entry are less likely to have friends of other races or ethnicities (antonio, 2004; Bowman 2012b; Bowman & Park, 2014; Fischer, 2008; Odell et al., 2005; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz, 2010; Schofield et al., 2010; Stearns et al., 2009). Park (2014) found this predictive relationship to hold true even for students' friendship groups in their fourth year of college, suggesting that the positive effects of diverse friendship groups endure over time. In general, White college students come from neighborhoods and high schools that are more homogeneous than those of African American, Latino/a, or Asian American students, and White students' pre-college friendship groups tend to be more homogeneous as well (V. B. Saenz, 2010; Stearns et al., 2009). In addition, there is a positive relationship between attending a structurally diverse high school and attending a structurally diverse college, supporting the notion that students exposed to diversity prior to college seek out diverse college environments (Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; Wolfe & Fletcher, 2013). This effect may mediate the relationship between high school friendship diversity and college friendship diversity (Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013).

Students' pre-college experiences may differ based on their racial group membership, and one such difference is especially relevant to institutions' efforts to encourage intercultural interaction: White students are much more likely than students of Color to come to college from racially homogeneous neighborhoods and K-12 schools in which they had

little opportunity to interact with people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds (Jayakumar, 2008; Milem & Umbach, 2003; V. B. Saenz, 2010; Stearns et al., 2009) and they are also less likely to have diverse friendships prior to college (Stearns et al., 2009). Therefore, White students may need extra support in the form of structured curricular and co-curricular initiatives in order to alter their established homogeneous interaction patterns (D. Cole, 2007; Milem et al., 2004). Students of Color, in contrast, are more likely to have had pre-college experiences with diversity through friendships, neighborhoods, and schools, and therefore may need less-intrusive measures to encourage their engagement in intercultural interaction (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Milem & Umbach, 2003; V. B. Saenz, 2010; Stearns et al., 2009).

While colleges and universities cannot change students' pre-college experiences and attitudes, it is nonetheless important to understand how these factors influence students' willingness to engage in the experiences that lead to diversity-related learning. In addition, the effects of policies and programming to promote diversity-related learning may be conditional on these pre-college factors and attitudes (Bowman & Denson, 2012; Milem et al., 2004; Pettigrew, 1998a; Rude et al., 2012; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007). For example, Milem et al. (2004) found that White students who had greater pre-college exposure to diversity (in terms of the representation of people of Color in their neighborhoods, schools, and peer groups) "were more likely to engage in cross race interaction and diversity related activities while in college" (p. 698). Bowman and Denson (2012) found that changes in beliefs about other racial groups were larger for students with greater pre-college exposure to diversity than for students with little pre-college exposure to

diversity, an effect that they suggest may operate by shaping the quality of students' interracial interactions. V. B. Saenz et al. (2007) report the conditional predictive effects by racial group membership of several pre-college experiences (including neighborhood, school, and peer group diversity as well as frequency of interactions with and studying with those of different racial backgrounds) and pre-college racial attitudes on the frequency of positive cross-racial interactions in college. While these pre-college experiences and attitudes were significant predictors overall, there were variations among racial groups in the statistical significance of the coefficients for these predictive experiences. For example, the pre-college racial environment was not a statistically significant predictor of positive cross-racial interactions in college for Latino or White students, and while frequency of interaction with and studying with peers of other racial backgrounds were significant predictors for all groups, their significance level was much weaker for African American students than for White, Latino, and Asian students. In contrast, N. D. Martin et al. (2014) found that percent of close friends from other racial/ethnic group(s) was positively predicted college interracial friendships for White, Black, and Asian students but was a negative predictor for Latino students. However, while these studies highlight that the effects of students' precollege experiences on their intercultural interactions in college may be conditional by race, they do not shed light on *why* these effects are conditional. Regardless, the crucial point is that institutions must be aware that "racially/ethnically different persons enter and move into intercultural interactions from different starting points" (Halualani et al., 2004, p. 368), and

therefore effective policies and programming must be developmentally tailored to meet students where they are.

College contextual factors. On college campuses, students interact with diversity in and out of the classroom through formal programming and informal interactions. Table 1 summarizes the institutional contextual factors that the scholarly literature has identified as affecting the frequency and quality of student intercultural interactions and the direction of their effects (positive, negative, or no effect). These factors include institutional characteristics such as structural diversity, diversity climate, size, classification, control, and location, as well as a variety of student experiences such as diversity coursework, living arrangements, and membership in Greek, racial/ethnic, or religious organizations. Findings for many factors are mixed, often due to the nature of the sample or of the analytic method. In the interest of parsimony, effects reported in the table are for the overall sample of students in each study; conditional effects are not reported even though effects may differ substantially among students from different racial or ethnic groups (Bowman, 2013).

Overall, the empirical literature is in (or near) consensus on the effects of several factors on the frequency of intercultural interaction: structural diversity (positive effect), having a roommate of a different racial/ethnic background (positive effect), and Greek organization membership (negative effect). In contrast, findings regarding the effects of other institutional characteristics such as size, control, and diversity climate have been equivocal, and there has been insufficient research on other campus experiences such as taking diversity classes, attending diversity workshops, and belonging to an ethnic/racial or religious

organization for us to be confident about their effects on intercultural interaction. Further complicating our understanding of the effect of institutional factors on intercultural interaction is the fact that the effects of climate and structural diversity may be conditional. For example, structural diversity may be a significant predictor of interaction for White students only (Bowman & Park, 2014; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007), and climate may have a stronger predictive relationship with interaction for African American students than for other groups (Chavous, 2005; Levin et al., 2003). Furthermore, the effect of an institution's level of structural diversity on frequency of intercultural interactions or friendships may be non-linear (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Fischer, 2008), and the particular level of structural diversity that has the greatest positive effect on interaction may differ among racial groups (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004).

Perceived institutional norms also influence the frequency and quality of students' intercultural interactions; students who believe that such interactions are normal on their campus are more likely to engage in them (Chavous, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998b). Interestingly, however, the converse is not true—perceptions of a segregated campus do not necessarily lead to fewer intercultural interactions (antonio, 2001a). In addition, as mentioned above, students' perceptions of and responsiveness to college contextual factors may be shaped by their pre-college experiences and attitudes (Milem et al., 2004; Pettigrew, 1998a; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007). However, Chavous (2005) found no relationship between students' pre-college backgrounds and their perceptions of campus diversity climate (one college contextual factor), which she argues indicates that “the racial congruence or

Table 1. Institutional contextual factors affecting student intercultural interaction.

Factor	Effect on Intercultural Interaction ^a
Level of structural diversity*	Positive (<i>Bowman & Park, 2014; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Engberg, 2007; Fischer, 2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Pike et al., 2007; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007</i>); no effect (<i>Jayakumar, 2008 - direct</i>)
Diversity climate (perceived or measured)*	
Unified/positive	No effect (<i>Schofield et al., 2010</i>); positive (<i>Jayakumar, 2008; Levin et al., 2003</i>)
Segregated/negative	Negative (<i>antonio, 2001a</i>); no effect (<i>Levin et al., 2003</i>)
Size	No effect (<i>Pike & Kuh, 2006</i>); negative (<i>Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Fischer, 2008</i>)
% female students	Positive (<i>Pike et al., 2007</i>)
% full time students*	Positive (<i>Pike et al., 2007 - frequency</i>); negative (<i>Pike et al., 2007 - quality</i>)
Control*	
Public	Negative (<i>Bowman & Park, 2014; Pike & Kuh, 2006</i>)
Private	Positive (<i>Hu & Kuh, 2003; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Pike et al., 2007</i>); negative (<i>Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004</i>)
Mission/classification	
Doctoral/research university	Positive (<i>Pike et al., 2007 - frequency</i>); no effect (<i>Pike & Kuh, 2006</i>); negative (<i>Hu & Kuh, 2003; Pike et al., 2007 - quality</i>)

Table 1 Continued

Factor	Effect on Intercultural Interaction ^a
Master's university	Positive (Pike et al., 2007 - frequency); no effect (Pike & Kuh, 2006); negative (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Pike et al., 2007 - quality)
Liberal arts college	Positive (Pike & Kuh, 2006; Pike et al., 2007); no effect (<i>Bowman & Park, 2014</i> ; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Jayakumar, 2008)
Baccalaureate general college	No effect (Pike & Kuh, 2006); negative (Hu & Kuh, 2003)
Selectivity*	Positive (Pike et al., 2007)
Location*	
City	Positive (Pike et al., 2007 - frequency); no effect (Pike & Kuh, 2006); negative (Pike et al., 2007 - quality)
Suburban	No effect (Pike & Kuh, 2006)
Town	No effect (Pike & Kuh, 2006)
Rural	No effect (Pike & Kuh, 2006)
Campus experiences	
Roommate of another race/ethnicity	Positive (<i>Camargo et al., 2010</i> ; <i>N. D. Martin et al., 2014</i> ; V. B. Saenz, 2010; <i>Schofield et al., 2010</i> ; <i>Stearns et al., 2009</i>)
Frequent intercultural interaction on campus	Positive (<i>Schofield et al., 2010</i>)
Activities with shared goals, equal member status, cooperation, and institutional support (Allport's four essential criteria)	Positive (hypothesized) (Clarke & antonio, 2012); no effect (<i>Park, 2014</i>)
Activities not meeting all of Allport's four essential criteria	Negative (hypothesized) (Clarke & antonio, 2012)

Table 1 Continued

Factor	Effect on Intercultural Interaction ^a
Greek organization membership	No effect (<i>Bowman & Park, 2014; Stearns et al., 2009</i>); negative (<i>Jayakumar, 2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009; N. D. Martin, 2014; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007</i>)
Cultural/ethnic organization membership	No effect (<i>Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz, 2010</i>); negative (<i>Bowman & Park, 2014; Park, 2014; Stearns et al., 2009</i>)
Religious organization membership	No effect (<i>Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009</i>); negative (<i>Bowman & Park, 2014; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013</i>)
Living on campus	Positive (<i>Chang et al., 2004</i>); no effect (<i>Bowman & Park, 2014; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009; V. B. Saenz, 2010</i>)
Employment on campus	Positive (<i>Chang et al., 2004</i>); no effect (<i>Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009</i>)
Employment off campus	No effect (<i>Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009</i>); negative (<i>Chang et al., 2004</i>)
Racially heterogeneous classrooms	Positive (<i>Milem et al., 2004</i>); no effect (<i>Stearns et al., 2009</i>)
Co-curricular diversity activities	Positive (<i>Jayakumar, 2008; V. B. Saenz, 2010</i>)
Diversity coursework	Positive (<i>Bowman, 2012a; Jayakumar, 2008</i>)

^aEffects identified in the literature are generally correlational or predictive rather than causal; some effects may be conditional (not reported here). Factors affecting friendships specifically are noted in italics. All factors noted affect frequency, amount, and/or proportion of interracial interaction/friendship; those also affecting quality are noted with a *.

incongruence between [students'] background and their college does not necessarily influence their views of the *quality* of [intergroup] interactions, institutional values, nor their own intergroup associations" (p. 251). Because every student experiences an institutional environment differently, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions for ensuring students attain diversity-related learning outcomes. In addition, Bowman (2012a) found that even students who are least open to diversity at the time of college entry can benefit developmentally from diversity experiences, and V. B. Saenz (2010), in examining the effect of pre-college and college experiences on frequency of positive cross-racial interaction, found evidence affirming that "various college environments and experiences interrupt the perpetuation effects of precollege factors" (p. 30). Together, these findings suggest that it is possible for colleges and universities to create meaningful learning environments for students despite their variety of pre-college experiences with and attitudes toward diversity.

The literature on intercultural interactions identifies eight contextual factors that shape the interpersonal quality (as perceived by the interactants) of intercultural interactions:

1. Site of contact: On campus, contact may occur in the academic realm (e.g., classroom, faculty office), the co-curricular realm (e.g., student organization meeting, campus workshop or event, intramural sports), or the informal realm (e.g., in a residence or dining hall, walking to class, at the library) (Halualani et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2006; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007).
2. Relationship between interactants: Are the interactants strangers, acquaintances, friends, or close friends (Allport, 1954/1988; Halualani et al., 2004)?

3. Power or status differential between interactants: There may be little to no power differential between interactants, such as between students (although Park [2012] notes that we cannot assume that student-to-student interactions are without status differentials), or there may be a sizeable difference in power, such as between a professor and a student (Allport, 1954/1988; Pettigrew, 1998a).
4. Duration of contact: Both the duration of a single contact event and the duration of the relationship between the interactants affect the quality of the interaction (Halualani et al., 2004). For example, the quality of an interaction between two childhood friends having lunch at the dining hall will be very different from that of two classmates who were randomly assigned to work together on a semester-long project (Allport, 1954/1988; Pettigrew, 1998a).
5. Perceived quality of contact post-interaction: Do they interactants come away feeling good, bad, or neutral about the interaction? As with duration, this factor involves both the single-contact perceptions and the cumulative effect of perceptions over the time of the relationship between interactants (Allport, 1954/1988; Halualani et al., 2004; Pettigrew, 1998a).
6. Cultural background of those interacting: The cultural background includes the multiple aspects of each interactant's identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, sexuality, or ability status (Halualani et al., 2004; Park, 2012).
7. Intimacy level of contact: Does the contact occur in a large group setting or is it one-on-one (Allport, 1954/1988)?

8. Topic of discussion during contact: A potentially divisive topic could cause divisive conflict or unify interactants through finding common ground, whereas a neutral topic may have no effect on interactants' perceptions of the quality of their interaction (Halualani et al., 2004).

Undoubtedly there are many more dimensions that determine the quality of an intercultural interaction, but these eight contextual factors provide a guide with which we can understand and assess the interpersonal quality of interactions across cultural differences. Halualani et al. (2004) have criticized extant research on intercultural contact for failing to consider the context in which interactions take place. However, institutions working to shape the quality of students' intercultural interactions must be mindful of the fact that individuals' perceptions of quality and the factors that affect it may be determined by whether those individuals are members of the majority group or a minority group. Therefore, "the perspectives of both groups—especially that of lower status groups—must be carefully considered in fashioning the optimally structured contact situation" (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000, p. 110; see also D. G. Smith, 2009).

Just as perceptions of the quality of intercultural interactions may be contingent on group membership and the interpersonal context, the effects of institutional contextual factors on intercultural interaction frequency and quality may be conditional by racial group, complicating institutional efforts to create supportive environments. For example, V. B. Saenz et al. (2007) found that students' perceptions of a negative campus racial climate predicted fewer positive intercultural interactions for African American students, but it was

not a significant predictor for students from other racial groups. Chang, Astin, & D. Kim (2004) found that for White students, the relationship between structural diversity and interracial interaction is positive—that is, as the proportion of students of Color at an institution increases, White students' frequency of interracial interaction increases. In contrast, the relationship for students of Color is not so straightforward, with the lowest levels of interracial interactions for students of Color occurring at institutions with the smallest proportion of these students, even though this is probabilistically counterintuitive. In a study of the effect of opportunities and activities for interracial contact (e.g., in residence halls, classrooms, student organizations, and at social events) on the development of interracial friendships, N.D. Martin et al. (2014) found that the magnitude, significance, and directionality of all 12 factors they examined varied by racial group; in other words, no single activity had a uniform effect across all racial groups. Students' racial background may also interact with their pre-college exposure to diversity to condition the effects of institutional contextual factors on frequency of intercultural interaction (V. B. Saenz, 2010).

Effects of college contextual factors on intercultural friendship development. At the institutional level, the campus climate for diversity and the structural diversity of the school influence who is available—numerically and perceptually—for friendships (Alemán, 2000; antonio, 2001a; Fischer, 2008; Milem et al., 2005; Pike & Kuh, 2006). Logically, students at more structurally diverse campuses would be expected to have more heterogeneous friendship groups, and this has been found to be true (Fischer, 2008; Y. K. Kim, Park, & Koo, 2015; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013). Yet the effects of structural diversity on interracial

friendship development may be conditional. For example, in a longitudinal study of 28 institutions, Bowman (2012b) found that structural diversity has a positive effect on White students' development of interracial friendships, no effect for Black or Hispanic students, and a negative effect for Asian students. In contrast, Y. K. Kim et al. (2015) found structural diversity to have a positive direct effect on interracial friendship development for students of all four racial groups, although the effect was larger for White and Latino students than for African American and Asian American students. Bowman and Park (2014) found coefficient differences by racial group in magnitude as well as direction for public (versus private) universities (a negative relationship for Asian American and Black students and magnitude differences between Asian American students compared to Hispanic and White students) and structural diversity (a positive relationship for White students but a negative relationship for Asian American and Hispanic students). They also found that many of the factors that predicted interracial friendship differed from the factors predicting interracial interaction, in terms of significance and in some cases direction. In contrast, Fischer (2008) found that structural diversity has a positive effect on interracial friendship development for students from all racial groups, but that high levels of structural diversity have an especially strong effect on White students' interracial friendship development.

As indicated by Bowman's (2012b) results, students from different racial groups exhibit different patterns of interracial friendship development. In another example, Stearns et al. (2009) conducted a single-institution study of how the racial heterogeneity of students' friendship networks changed over the first year of college and found that friendship diversity

increased for White students, decreased for Black students, and did not significantly change for Latino and Asian students; yet White students still had the most homogeneous friendship groups at the end of their first year of college compared to the other three racial groups.

However, a four-year longitudinal study found that the friendship groups of students from all racial backgrounds become less diverse over time, with the largest drop in diversity occurring between the first and second years (N. D. Martin et al., 2014). Overall, these conditional results make sense in light of findings regarding the effects of students' pre-college experiences (as described earlier): in going to college, most White students encounter greater structural diversity than they experienced in pre-college settings, whereas students of other races may find the college environment to be similarly or less structurally diverse than their pre-college environments (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004). Therefore, we cannot assume that the effect of any given level of structural diversity on the likelihood of interracial friendship development will be uniform across all racial groups.

Empirical results concerning the effect of campus climate on intercultural friendship development have been inconclusive: Schofield et al. (2010) found that a *positive* racial climate has no effect while Levin et al. (2003) found a positive effect; antonio (2001a) found that a *negative* racial climate has a negative effect on interracial friendship development while Levin et al. (2003) found no effect. We do know that students tend to form friendships with those they often interact with as roommates, classmates, teammates, or through student organizations (antonio, 2004; Boisjoly, Duncan, Kremer, Levy, Eccles, & Kremer, 2006; Camargo et al., 2010; Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005; Schofield et al., 2010). This may be

because students who interact frequently are likely to have similar interests, or it may be due to convenience—it is easier to become friends with someone whom you spend a lot of time with (antonio, 2004). The effect of convenience on friendship development is known as the “propinquity effect” (antonio, 2004), and it can lead to homogeneous or heterogeneous friendship networks depending on an institution’s structural diversity (antonio, 2001a; Clarke & antonio, 2012; Pike & Kuh, 2006). Indeed, the propinquity effect may explain why White students who are members of Greek organizations tend to have fewer intercultural interactions and friendships (Jayakumar, 2008; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007; however, Stearns et al., [2009] found no effect). I discuss in more detail how similarity and propinquity affect intercultural interaction and friendships later in this chapter.

A school’s policies can also significantly affect whom students form friendships with (Milem et al., 2005; Stearns et al., 2009). For example, first-year students assigned a roommate of a different race or ethnicity have more interracial friends than do students who live with a same-race roommate (Camargo et al., 2010; N. D. Martin et al., 2014; Schofield et al., 2010; Stearns et al., 2009; however, Sacerdote & Marmaros [2005] found no effect). Camargo et al. (2010) found that this effect persisted through the second and third years of college. Indeed, in residence halls where interracial friendships and interaction are the norm, even students who live with a same-race roommate show evidence of a positive spillover effect in that they have more diverse friendship groups than their peers with same-race roommates in other residence halls (N. D. Martin et al., 2014; Stearns et al., 2009). White

students assigned a Black roommate in their first year also show an enduring reduction of prejudice, as measured by comfort level in cross-racial interactions and attitudes toward affirmative action (Boisjoly et al., 2006). More common, however, are schools that lack intrusive diversity initiatives such as random roommate assignment and also have low levels of structural diversity. At these schools, the propinquity effect, coupled with students' pre-college attitudes and values and institutional climates that are often unsupportive or even hostile for minorities, leads students to form homogeneous, rather than diverse, friendship networks (Alemán, 2000; E. R. Cole & Yip, 2008; Sidanius et al., 2004; Stearns et al., 2009; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010), precluding their ability to make diversity-related learning gains.

Finally, whether a student's friendships groups are heterogeneous or homogeneous may be intentional or unintentional (antonio, 2004). In other words, some students intentionally seek out or avoid friendships with students of different racial backgrounds (usually related to their pre-college exposure to diversity and attitudes toward other racial groups), whereas other students do not consciously consider race or ethnicity in choosing friends; for these latter students, other factors such as propinquity determine the racial make-up of their friendship groups. Students whose friendship groups are heterogeneous by chance may not reap the same learning and development outcomes as those who intentionally seek diverse friends (antonio, 2004), underscoring the importance of structured institutional programming to help students make meaning of their intercultural interactions.

Outcomes and Benefits of Intercultural Interactions and Friendships

College students benefit from interacting with diverse others on campus, both inside and outside the classroom. The positive outcomes associated with intercultural interaction include benefits specific to students' learning and development as well as gains that are important for preparing students as citizens and employees in our pluralistic society, as described below. Although some outcomes and benefits are conditional by race, "the effects of interracial interactions are fairly consistent regardless of with whom the interaction occurs" (Bowman, 2013, p. 327). In other words, students benefit from interacting with peers from any and all racial groups, and more frequent interaction leads to greater benefits (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006).

The benefits and outcomes of intercultural friendships are generally similar to those for intercultural interactions. However, because friendships involve sustained interaction over time as well as an emotional component (Davies et al., 2011; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Turner et al., 2007), they may be more powerful in helping students achieve diversity-related learning and development outcomes (although recent research by Bowman and Park [2015] challenges this assumption). Indeed, Antonio (2001a, 2001b) suggests that friendships may mediate the effect of campus diversity on student learning. Next, I highlight some of the particular benefits that result from intercultural interactions and friendships, as described in the empirical literature; these include individual-level as well as societal-level benefits. I conclude with a discussion of the research findings

regarding the effect of intercultural contact on an especially significant outcome: prejudice reduction.

Individual-level outcomes and benefits. Outcomes of intercultural interaction that positively affect students at the individual level include academic benefits, such as a higher GPA and gains in learning outcomes and skill development (Astin, 1993; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; T. Saenz et al., 1999); psychological benefits, such as improved mental health, greater self-confidence, and advances in identity development (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; E. R. Cole & Yip, 2008); and cognitive benefits, such as enhanced critical thinking and problem solving skills and cognitive complexity (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2004; Loes et al., 2012; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2009) also found a positive relationship between interracial interactions and development of leadership skills. In the workplace, exposure to diverse perspectives, especially those held by members of non-dominant groups, has been shown to improve individuals' cognitive complexity and processes (Hurtado, 2003; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998b). This finding likely holds true for college students' learning as well, since students must frequently work together both within and outside of the classroom. Indeed, the range of viewpoints and perspectives on a diverse campus "is the key mechanism by which diversity makes an intellectual atmosphere" (Milem et al., 2005, p. 7).

However, an important caveat to these findings regarding the individual benefits of intercultural interaction is that some effects may be conditional. In general, White students experience greater gains in learning and personal development from intercultural interactions than do students of Color (Bowman & Park, 2015; Hu & Kuh, 2003), possibly because they come to college with less prior experience with diversity, as previously discussed. However, Bowman (2013) found larger benefits of intercultural interaction for Asian students. First-year students may also benefit more than other students from intercultural interaction and other diversity experiences as these early experiences set the stage for later experiences in college (Bowman, 2012a; Hu & Kuh, 2013; Pike et al., 2007; Rude et al., 2012). The range of conditional effects reported in the empirical literature is too extensive to be adequately summarized here, but the important point is that “research that examines all participants simultaneously—or analyzes Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics as a single group of ‘students of Color’—may mask important group differences in the impact of interracial interactions and other college diversity experiences” (Bowman, 2013, p. 327). This is especially true for research conducted at predominately White institutions, meaning that the reported effects, if not disaggregated, are likely those for White students only (D. G. Smith, 2009).

Societal outcomes and benefits. Students who interact across cultural boundaries also experience gains in intercultural understanding, perspective taking, prosocial values, appreciation for pluralism/diversity, and civic participation (such as voting and volunteering), which many higher education institutions have identified as essential “21st century skills” college graduates must possess to succeed in today’s world (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Bowman

& Brandenberger, 2012; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et al., 2004; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, 2005; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Pike et al., 2007; Rude et al., 2012; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001). As Gurin et al. (2004) describe them, these are “the tools needed for a life of engagement in active learning and contribution to a democratic society” (p. 111). Both frequency (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Hurtado, 2005; Pike et al., 2007; Rude et al., 2012) and quality (Engberg, 2007; Hurtado, 2005; Pike et al., 2007) of intercultural interactions are positively related to the size of students’ gains on these outcomes. Regarding interaction quality, Hurtado (2005, 2007) found that negative interactions lead to *decreases* on societal and democratic outcomes, and Engberg (2007) found that negative interactions lead to weaker gains in pluralistic orientation (as compared to the effect of positive interactions). However, Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) suggest that negative interactions may nonetheless lead to development in these areas by stimulating cognitive disequilibrium that the student must resolve. Among White students, campus intercultural interaction has a stronger effect on post-college cross-cultural competency and interaction for those who come to college from homogeneous neighborhoods and K-12 schools, although students who have pre-college diversity experiences also show gains (Jayakumar, 2008).

Prejudice reduction and the contact hypothesis. One of the most significant outcomes of intercultural interaction, benefitting both the individual student as well as society as a whole, is a reduction of prejudice; this is known as the contact hypothesis

(Allport, 1954/1988). Prejudice, as defined by Allport (1954/1988), is an irrational judgment of an individual on the basis of his or her “presumed group membership,” such as race or ethnicity, rather than any knowledge of the individual as a person. Reducing prejudice requires changing a person’s beliefs and attitudes toward other groups. While beliefs can be changed as a result of exposure to new knowledge, the associated change in attitudes does not always follow; this helps explain why a structurally diverse campus may nonetheless have a negative racial climate—mere exposure to other cultural groups does not result in changed attitudes toward them.

However, positive interpersonal contact across cultural differences minimizes perceived cultural boundaries and reduces intergroup bias, which leads to increased intercultural understanding and reduced intergroup conflict (Allport, 1954/1988; Hewstone et al., 2002). Contact in and of itself does not reduce prejudice; in fact, certain forms of contact can reaffirm or strengthen prejudice (Allport, 1954/1988; Pettigrew, 1998a). In order for intercultural contact to lead to prejudice reduction, four essential conditions must be present. First, interactants must be of equal status. In addition, interactions that involve cooperation (the second condition) and working toward common goals (the third condition) help reduce prejudice because they lead to changes in attitudes, not just beliefs. The fourth condition essential for the positive effects of prejudice reduction to result from intergroup contact is the support provided by authority and/or social or institutional norms (Allport, 1954/1988; Pettigrew, 1998a). Ensuring the fourth condition is especially critical for college campuses

and emphasizes the need for institutional leaders to proactively communicate the value of intercultural interaction and enact congruent policies (Pettigrew, 1998b).

Although the contact hypothesis is now 60 years old, it continues to provide a conceptual justification for the importance of intercultural interaction in society at large as well as in educational environments, and empirical evidence from a variety of settings supports its continued explanatory relevance. A meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) found strong and unequivocal support for the contact hypothesis in a wide range of empirical settings and a variety of populations. Their findings also refute a common criticism of the hypothesis, that the effects of contact on prejudice reduction are driven by selection bias (i.e., that less-prejudiced people are more likely to engage in intercultural interactions). Indeed, they found a *stronger* effect of contact on prejudice reduction in studies where participants could not choose whether or not to interact with members of other groups. They also found that the effect of contact on prejudice reduction was stronger than the reverse effect of lower prejudice levels on contact, bolstering their contention that the effect of contact on prejudice reduction is a real outcome and not the result of selection bias (see also Pettigrew, 1998a).

Providing support for the contact hypothesis on college campuses, empirical studies have found positive relationships between a student's frequency of cross-racial interaction and his or her self-reported openness to diversity (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Hurtado, 2005; Spanierman et al., 2008) and commitment to promoting racial understanding (Rude et al., 2012) as well as self-reported levels of questioning beliefs about other racial and ethnic groups (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009) and valuing the perspectives of other racial groups

(Chavous, 2005), and a negative relationship between frequency of contact and the perception that other racial groups have different values from one's own group (Hurtado, 2005). In addition, a student's number of interracial friendships is negatively related to perceived social distance from (i.e., "othering" of) other racial groups (Bowman & Park, 2014, 2015; Fischer, 2011; Odell et al., 2005). Bowman (2013) similarly found a positive relationship between frequency of interracial interaction and closeness to other racial groups for Black, Hispanic, and Asian students but not for White students. However, the quality of interracial interaction may mediate the effect of contact on intergroup anxiety; Engberg's (2007) study of the effect of structural diversity and interracial interactions on college students' development of pluralistic orientation found that "positive interactions across race serve [an important role] in attenuating their intergroup anxiety. Conversely, students' negative interactions across race played an even larger role in increasing their intergroup anxiety" (p. 310). However, Bowman and Park's (2015) recent study comparing the outcomes of interracial interaction and interracial friendship suggest that while interracial interaction is positively related to prejudice reduction for college students, interracial friendship is not; they are the first to report this finding.

As mentioned previously, students who have culturally heterogeneous friendship groups or frequent interactions with diverse others prior to college have more-frequent intercultural interactions in college, suggesting that pre-college experiences "prime" students to see intercultural interaction as normal and desirable in college (Bowman & Park, 2014; Fischer, 2008; Milem et al., 2004; N. D. Martin et al., 2014; Park, 2014; Pettigrew, 1998a; V.

B. Saenz et al., 2007; Schofield et al., 2010; Stearns et al., 2009). Even when controlling for these pre-college experiences and attitudes, however, Levin et al. (2003) found that “students who had more outgroup friends in college were more likely to have positive ethnic attitudes at the end of college,” suggesting that the effect of contact on prejudice reduction is not inflated by selection bias (congruent with Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). In addition, students with larger proportions of interracial friends (more than 50%) are also less likely than students with fewer interracial friends (fewer than 50%) to categorize a person into a racial group based on that person’s skin Color, suggesting that getting to know people from other racial groups reduces reliance on external cues (like skin color) as indicators of difference, consistent with the contact hypothesis (J. N. Martin et al., 2010).

Studies of interracial contact that occurs through college experiences such as having a roommate of another race also provide support for the contact hypothesis by demonstrating that these experiences generally lead to a reduction in prejudice (Boisjoly et al., 2006; Camargo et al., 2010; Schofield et al., 2010; Shook & Fazio, 2008; Stearns et al., 2009). However, most of these studies have examined the effect of contact with African American students on the reduction of White students’ prejudice; less is known about how interracial roommate assignments affect prejudicial attitudes of students of Color or of White students toward other races. Park (2012) found partial support for the contact hypothesis within a college spiritual organization: while having a shared goal (promoting the Christian faith) did help facilitate interracial interactions among members, it did not fully eliminate the problems associated with racial inequality, conflict, and marginalization within the organization.

Although the contact hypothesis does not explain the opposite effect—whether a *lack* of interracial contact might *increase* prejudice or negative racial attitudes—there is some evidence that college students who primarily interact with those of their own racial/ethnic group experience increases in their level of ethnocentrism and perception of racial conflict or competition on campus (Sidanius et al., 2004).

Having friends from different racial or ethnic groups in college has been found to reduce prejudice and its component attitudes such as intergroup anxiety, ingroup bias, perceived racial social distance, expressions of sympathy and empathy toward other racial groups, and reliance on superficial characteristics for racial classification (Fischer, 2011; Levin et al., 2003; J. N. Martin et al., 2010; McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Odell et al., 2005; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Spanierman et al., 2008). These effects persist beyond the college years, suggesting that students who engage in intercultural relationships graduate from college better prepared to live and work in a diverse society (Hurtado, 2003, 2005; Jayakumar, 2008). In addition, “diversity in the friendship group works to define interracial interaction as a norm for expected behavior” (antonio, 2001a, p. 83). If college graduates carry this expectation with them into their workplaces and communities, they will establish norms for interracial interaction and friendship in these settings as well, thereby creating positive spillover effects and spreading the benefits of prejudice reduction and cross-cultural understanding.

The Interrelationship of Pre-College and College Factors with Students'

Achievement of Diversity-Related Outcomes

As I have discussed throughout this chapter, students' intercultural interactions, including friendships, are contextualized by the intersection of institutional characteristics and experiences (e.g., racial climate, structural diversity, and curricular and co-curricular experiences), known as "environment" or "E" characteristics in Astin's (1993) I-E-O model, and student characteristics and experiences (e.g., pre-college experiences with and attitudes toward diversity and demographic/background factors), known as "input" or "I" characteristics in Astin's model. These pre-college ("I") and college ("E") experiences interrelate to influence whether students achieve desired outcomes ("O" in Astin's model). In this model, intercultural interaction and friendship are intermediate outcomes: outcomes during college that result from the interplay of "I" and "E" factors and that also facilitate students' achievement of the desired outcomes of a completed college education, such as the individual and societal benefits that result from diverse peer interactions and other diversity experiences. Figure 2 summarizes the relationship between these "I," "E," and "O" factors relevant to campus intercultural interaction.

Higher education institutions obviously cannot control students' pre-college ("I") experiences, but they can shape students' college ("E") experiences with the goal of influencing student outcomes. Empirical research has identified some of the relevant institutional factors that influence the frequency and quality of students' intercultural interactions (the desired intermediate outcome that facilitates essential net outcomes), but we

Figure 2. Factors influencing intercultural interaction on campus.

Sources: Astin, 1993; Halualani et al., 2004; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pike & Kuh, 2006

need to better understand *how* these institutional factors lead students to interact—and to develop and sustain friendships—across racial and ethnic lines so that institutional leaders can more intentionally design campus experiences to promote intercultural interaction. My study provides much-needed insight in this area by generating a theory of the process of undergraduate college students' interracial friendship development that accounts for the role of institutional contextual factors.

Theories and Concepts Explaining Intercultural Interaction and Friendship

Development

As I discussed in chapter one, my choice of grounded theory as a method of inquiry for this study necessitated that I not identify a theoretical or conceptual framework prior to collecting and analyzing my data. However, grounded theorists must develop theoretical sensitivity so that they can make meaning of their data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; Mills et al., 2006b; Thomas & James, 2006). In the interest of developing my theoretical sensitivity, I reviewed the literature concerning theories explaining interpersonal relationship development and intercultural (often known as “intergroup”) interaction prior to data collection, and I summarize these theories here. The theory of similarity-attraction and the concept of propinquity (or proximity) are frequently cited in empirical research on friendship development to explain how friendships and other interpersonal relationships initially form. There is considerably less empirical research on the factors predicting or explaining friendship sustainment; Hays (1985) is one exception. I discuss similarity-attraction, propinquity, and Hays’s research below.

Similarity and Attraction

Social psychologists believe that we form interpersonal relationships—such as friendships and romantic relationships—with those to whom we are attracted. They posit that attraction results from “rewards” we receive from another, such as validation and support. We react positively toward these rewards, leading us to form a positive attitude toward the

other person; this positive attitude is the basis of attraction (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978). A person may make judgments about his or her similarity to another in terms of attitudes, values, and beliefs (usually referred to as “deep” or “attitudinal” diversity) or demography (including visible characteristics such as race, gender, and age, as well as less obvious characteristics such as socioeconomic status) (Milliken & Martins, 1996). This phenomenon is known in the literature as the similarity effect on interpersonal attraction (e.g., Bahns, Pickett, & Crandall, 2011; Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978; Newcomb, 1961, 1962; Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008), similarity-attraction theory (e.g., Mannix & Neale, 2005), or homophily (e.g., Bowman, 2012b; Fischer, 2008; Park et al., 2013; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; Stearns et al., 2009; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Regardless of the terminology used, the shared underlying idea is that we tend to feel greater attraction toward similar others than toward dissimilar others, and consequently, we are more likely to develop interpersonal relationships with similar others.

Substantial research has shown a strong, positive correlation between attitudinal similarity and attraction. Newcomb (1961) found that stable, high-attraction relationships require “mutually shared orientations” toward important matters (see also Montoya et al., 2008). In other words, two people in a close relationship will likely have similar attitudes toward a particular matter that is salient to both of them (e.g., they may both be active in environmental causes). However, this attitudinal similarity may be perceptual, not actual (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978; Montoya et al., 2008; Newcomb, 1961). In fact, a meta-analysis found that in existing relationships (as opposed to brief interactions or laboratory studies),

actual similarity has no effect on attraction, whereas perceived similarity has a strong effect (Montoya et al., 2008). The causal direction of the relationship between similar attitudes and attraction is unclear and may run in both directions. That is, we may be attracted to those who have (or whom we perceive to have) attitudes similar to our own, but being attracted to someone may also lead to perceived or actual attitude convergence (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978; Montoya et al., 2008; Newcomb, 1962). Regardless of the direction of the relationship, shared attitudes (or perceptions of them) help us feel socially validated, and this reward leads to attraction. An alternative explanation is that we may be attracted to similar others because we believe they will be less likely than dissimilar others to reject us, so attraction might also result from a desire to avoid the punishment of rejection (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978).

Because interpersonal attraction may result from perceived similarity, our perceptions of others affect our feelings of attraction or aversion toward them. Perceptions play a particularly important role when we first meet someone because we have limited factual information about that person's attitudes. As a result, we may use readily available information—such as a person's skin color, accent, or gender—to make judgments about that person's attitudes and, from there, judgments about whether or not we are similar to (and thus attracted to) that person (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Using race or other demographic information as a proxy for information about a person's values and beliefs is the basis of prejudice (Allport, 1954/1988). However, as discussed in more detail below, once we have spent time with someone we initially perceive as dissimilar based on his or her demographic characteristics, we learn more about the person's actual attitudes and values and

can make more accurate judgments of actual similarity or difference (Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Jehn et al., 1999; Larkey, 1996). In addition, as with the possible reciprocal causality of attitudinal similarity, being in a close friendship with someone of a different race or ethnicity may lead others to presume similarity and overlook that the two friends are of different racial backgrounds (Halualani et al., 2004). Similarity of interests is also a powerful factor for initial interpersonal attraction, although it is usually insufficient for sustaining attraction, which necessitates similarity at a deeper level (Newcomb, 1962).

Studies of friendship development in the college setting support the notion that similarity (or homophily) is an important factor. For example, college students are more likely to be friends with someone within their own class year cohort, suggesting that students believe they have more in common with those who begin college at the same time they do than with students in previous or subsequent cohorts (Foster, 2005; Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005). The studies of interracial friendship development among college roommate pairs have generally found that living with a student of another race reduces perceived perceptions of dissimilarity based upon race or ethnicity (i.e., prejudice) (Boisjoly et al., 2006; Camargo et al., 2010; Schofield et al., 2010; Shook & Fazio, 2008; Stearns et al., 2009). However, Sacerdote and Marmaros (2005) found that racial dissimilarity reduces the likelihood of friendship development. Participating in similar experiences also leads students to form friendships (Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005), but as Foster (2005) notes, it is hard to disentangle the effects of similarity in interests from the propinquity effect (discussed

below), as students who share interests are also likely to interact more frequently than students who do not. Wimmer and Lewis (2010), in their comprehensive study of the effect of homophily and alternative explanations for college students' friendship network hetero- or homogeneity, sought to disentangle the effect of racial-ethnic homophily versus "homophily on other types of attributes" (p. 626) (e.g., musical taste, geographic origin) and found the latter type of homophily to have an overall greater predictive effect than racial-ethnic homophily:

Fans of Coldplay and Dave Matthews Band are almost as homophilous as white students. Fans of R&B, hip hop, and rap are more homophilous than both white students and Asian students ... Students from Illinois (whatever their racial background) tend to befriend one another more often than whites, Asians, and Hispanics and almost as much as blacks. Notably, socioeconomic status also emerges as one of the most important dimensions of social closure among these students. (p. 626)

Foster (2005) also noted a geographic similarity effect, finding that first-year college students who come from geographically proximal hometowns are also more likely to form friendships than those who do not "share a geography" (p. 1459). Findings regarding the effect of academic ability similarity on friendship development have been mixed; Foster (2005) found that dissimilar academic performance prior to college tends to prevent friendship development among first-year students, whereas Camargo et al. (2010) found a small effect

of academic ability similarity on friendship development and Sacerdote and Marmaros (2005) found no effect.

Institutional factors such as structural diversity and size may also affect whether students tend to socialize with similar peers. Bahns et al. (2011) found a higher degree of attitudinal and behavioral similarity between friends on a large college campus than on two small campuses; they explain their finding as the result of students having a greater pool of potentially similar friends to choose from on the larger campus (i.e., availability; see also Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). In other words, more diversity on campus may lead to *less* diversity within friendships (the “ironic hypothesis”). Although they examined size and not structural diversity, it’s plausible that the “ironic hypothesis” might hold true for structural diversity as well, especially for students of Color who have more potential same-race friends on diverse campuses (e.g., as Y. K. Kim et al., 2015 found for Asian American students).

Propinquity

Proximity, or propinquity, also contributes to attraction and the development of interpersonal relationships; we are more likely to be attracted to those with whom we interact frequently (antonio, 2004; Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978; Newcomb, 1961, 1962; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Propinquity and similarity are closely mechanisms in terms of their effects on relationship development. Because we receive more information about the attitudes of frequent interactants, we can make stronger judgments about whether or not we are actually similar. For example, as noted above, we are more likely to become friends with those who share our interests in part because we are likely to be around them more frequently. Thus, our

“exposure” to others—which is often determined by chance, especially in the case of random housing assignments for college students—plays a significant role in friendship development (Foster, 2005; Newcomb, 1962; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). This helps to explain why campus structural diversity is a necessary condition for intercultural interactions and friendships (antonio, 2001a, 2004; Clarke & antonio, 2012; Hurtado, 2003; Pike & Kuh, 2006).

However, propinquity only makes intercultural friendship development more likely; it does not guarantee it, especially when perceived dissimilarity is involved: “At most we can say that it creates a condition where friendly contacts and accurate social perceptions can occur” (Allport, 1954/1988, p. 272).

As mentioned previously, spending more time with someone helps us feel as though we are more similar to that person, regardless of whether this similarity is actual or perceptual. This may explain why there is strong empirical evidence of a positive relationship between propinquity and the development of close interpersonal relationships, whereas evidence of a positive relationship between propinquity and repulsion is weak (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978). Studies of diverse teams in the workplace, for example, have shown that while demographic differences initially create divisions among team members, over time these divisions weaken as strong relationships develop among them (Harrison et al., 2002; Jackson et al., 2003; Jehn et al., 1999; Larkey, 1996). Interaction over time allows us to form judgments about others’ actual attitudes, rather than continuing to rely on demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, or gender as attitudinal proxies (Newcomb, 1961), congruent with Allport’s (1954/1988) contact hypothesis. Actual similarity may also become

less important as relationships develop over time, as we come to value the ways in which someone is different from us in addition to our similarities (Montoya et al., 2008).

Research among college students has found support for the effects of propinquity on friendship development. Living in the same residence hall significantly increases the likelihood of two students becoming friends (Foster, 2005; Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010) or of acquaintances developing into more intimate friendships (Hays, 1985), and living together even helps to overcome some of the negative effects of racial dissimilarity (Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005). However, the geographic range of the propinquity effect is quite small, extending not far beyond a student's campus residence (Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005). Sharing a major is also an important form of propinquity influencing college students' friendship development, although its effect is smaller than the effect of living together (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Propinquity may, in fact, have a stronger effect in predicting the heterogeneity (or homogeneity) of college students' friendship groups than similarity-attraction (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). In addition, as friendships become more intimate over time, quality of interaction becomes more important than quantity in friendship maintenance (Hays, 1985), suggesting that for established, close friendships, propinquity ceases to be a strong explanatory factor.

Additional Factors Influencing Friendship Development

Additional factors influencing friendship development include balancing, sociality, and availability. Balancing consists of "the tendency of friendship to be returned (reciprocity) and of friends of friends to befriend one another (triadic closure)" (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010,

p. 586). Although balancing and racial-ethnic homophily are distinct factors, balancing may lead to an “amplification effect” for racial-ethnic homophily, as students who have racially homogeneous friendship groups will be more likely to develop new friendships among members of those groups rather than with peers with whom they have no friends in common (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). As with propinquity, balancing has a larger effect than racial-ethnic homophily on the diversity of college students’ friendship networks (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Sociality refers to the fact that more-social students tend to have larger friendship networks than less-social students. Sociality may also lead to an amplification effect for racial-ethnic homophily as smaller friendship groups (i.e., those of students who are less social) offer numerically fewer possibilities for development of interracial friendships (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Finally, availability “depends first on the pool of potential friendship partners and on the distribution of individuals over social categories within that pool ... the smaller the relative size of a group, the more likely its members will form out-group ties, under *ceteris paribus* conditions” (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010, p. 590). In the context of colleges and universities, availability is most clearly reflected in the institution’s size and structural diversity (see also Bahns et al., 2011). As noted earlier in Table 1, both of these institutional factors have been found to affect interracial friendships; the majority of the empirical studies have found structural diversity to have a positive effect on interracial friendships (Bowman & Park, 2014; Fischer, 2008; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013) and institutional size to have a negative effect (Fischer, 2008).

Development and Sustainment of Close Friendships

While similarity, propinquity, and the other factors discussed above provide help to explain what leads individuals to initially establish friendships, they do not explain how close (or intimate) friendships develop or are sustained. There are few comprehensive studies explaining the process of intimate friendship development; Hays (1985) provides one of the few empirical attempts to address this process, although his findings are correlational rather than causational. In a study of first-year college students at one institution, Hays found that acquaintance relationships that developed into close friendships (compared to those that did not) tended to show a period of heightened interaction in the early stages of the relationship and more quickly progressed in the level of intimate behaviors (such as discussing deeply personal topics like sexual experiences). Related to the latter finding, more of the participants in close friendships than those in casual friendships tended to identify emotional support as a benefit of their relationships; Pettigrew (1998a) also noted the important role that positive emotions such as empathy play in interracial friendships in particular. Finally, Hays found that participants in close friendships identified a greater number of friendship benefits and these benefits remained salient over time, whereas for those in casual friendships, the number of identified benefits decreased over time.

Limitations of Existing Theories of Friendship Development and Sustainment

Although Hays (1985) did not focus specifically on interracial friendships, we might reasonably expect that the process of friendship development would be similar for racially heterogeneous pairs as for homogeneous ones. While there has been some research

examining factors involved in the process of interracial friendship development (e.g., see Pettigrew, 1998a, for a summary), I have not located any empirical research that addresses this question among college students. In addition, the few studies that examine factors affecting friendship development among college students (e.g., Foster, 2005; Hays, 1985; Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005) focus on students in their first year of college; we know little about friendship development for students in later college years or about how these friendships are sustained over time.

The theory of similarity-attraction and the concept of propinquity seemingly work together to explain the observed tendency for college students to associate in racially homogeneous groups: students choose to spend the most time with those whom they perceive to be similar, and in the absence of institutional interventions such as random roommate assignment, they are unlikely to be in close contact with students from different racial backgrounds (this latter fact is especially true for White students at predominately White institutions). Yet plenty of college students form close interpersonal relationships across racial and ethnic lines. Presumably, these students are looking beyond demography to find common ground for friendship. Why are some students able or willing to look beyond surface differences while others are not? How can we encourage *all* college students to set aside their prejudices? And how might institutional context affect students' ability or willingness to develop and sustain friendships despite their racial differences? As I discuss next, my research provides answers to these questions by generating a theory of college students' interracial friendship development and sustainment. Because interpersonal

interactions are critical for realizing the student learning and development outcomes of campus diversity, understanding how and why students develop and sustain close interracial friendships can inform effective institutional diversity initiatives.

Improving Our Understanding of College Students' Intercultural Friendships

Much of the research on college students' intercultural friendships and interactions has focused on examining whether and to what extent such relationships form on college campuses. These studies are often quantitative and tend to look at institution-wide patterns, often through self-reports of individual behavior (e.g., antonio, 2001a; Bowman et al., 2011; Camargo et al., 2010; E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Fischer, 2008; Halualani et al., 2004; Levin et al., 2003; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Schofield et al., 2010; Spanierman et al., 2008; Stearns et al., 2009). Because of this “macroscopic approach” (antonio, 2004; Clarke & antonio, 2012), most studies of college students' intercultural interactions and friendships miss the level of detail that is necessary to understand these interactions at the interpersonal level. That is, we know that students *do* form friendships across cultural lines, but we know little about *how* or *why* these friendships develop or are sustained (Schofield et al., 2010). Knowing, for example, “how the students met, or the shared activities in which the friends participate... would be especially helpful in understanding the specific conditions that promote (or dissuade) cross-group interaction and friendship” (Fischer, 2008, p. 653). A better understanding of how intercultural interactions happen organically among college students through friendships may yield practical recommendations for intentional actions colleges and universities can take to ensure students achieve diversity-related learning

outcomes. In addition, because there are positive spillover effects in terms of openness to diversity on campuses where interracial interaction is common (Chang, 2007; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Stearns et al., 2009), institutions that implement policy or program interventions to facilitate these interactions will see benefits for *all* of their students. But first, we need to identify the areas in which interventions may be effective.

We also need to gain a deeper understanding of the contextual factors that may influence students' intercultural friendship development, particularly institutional factors that can be controlled or shaped through changes in policies or programming (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Clarke & Antonio, 2012; Halualani et al., 2004; Milem et al., 2005). "That there are measurable developmental gains related to being in an environment that enhances the overall frequency of interactions across racial differences among students suggests that equal attention should also be given to *what* institutions can actually do to realize those benefits" (Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; pp. 451-452). Improving our understanding of how institutional factors might affect students' interpersonal relationships holds promise for developing more effective diversity programming and policies by targeting the key site at which students experience diversity on campus: peer interactions.

The empirical literature on students' interracial friendships is limited in two additional ways. First, quantitative studies often rely on large national datasets such as the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) (e.g., Antonio, 2001a; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Gurin, 2004; Jayakumar, 2008), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (e.g., Pike & Kuh, 2006; Pike et al., 2007), the Wabash National Study of Liberal

Arts Education (e.g., Bowman, 2012a; Rude et al., 2012), or the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshman (e.g., Bowman, 2013; Fischer, 2008). While use of these datasets allows for a standardized operationalization of concepts and measures as well as the advantages of capturing trends across institutional types and locations and a large sample for statistical power, it limits exploration of students' interracial friendships to a small number of easily quantified constructs such as the number of interracial interactions/friendships, whether or not a student has an interracial roommate, or interactional/friendship heterogeneity (usually calculated using a formula that divides the proportion of friends reported to be of different racial groups by the total number of friends, e.g., Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013). The unique survey measures used by others (e.g., Camargo et al., 2010; Schofield et al., 2010) have similar limitations and lack the advantages of large datasets. In addition, to facilitate quantitative effect estimation, students are often grouped in ways that may mask conditional effects; for example, Camargo et al. (2010) included all non-Black students in a "White" racial category, and Asian American students are frequently grouped into a single category despite the fact that these students may consider interaction across ethnicities within the category "Asian" (e.g., Chinese and Hmong) to be *intercultural*, not *intracultural* (Halualani et al., 2004). Ultimately, these crude and reductionist constructs cannot capture the variety of students' actual experiences, nor can they adequately account for the quality of students' interpersonal relationships (Clarke & Antonio, 2012).

Second, existing quantitative and qualitative studies on college students' intercultural friendships often use single-institution samples, limiting the generalizability or transferability

of their findings (e.g., antonio, 2001a, 2004; Camargo et al., 2010; J. N. Martin et al., 2010; Odell et al., 2005; Park, 2012; Schofield et al., 2010; Shelton, Trail, West, & Bergsieker, 2010; Stearns et al., 2009; notable exceptions are Chang, Denson, et al., 2006, and Fischer, 2008). An additional weakness of single-institution studies is that they cannot explore how different institutional contexts may affect students' experiences with interracial friendships. The University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA) has been the site of multiple, frequently cited studies, but because of its unusual level of structural diversity, the findings of UCLA-based studies may be too idiosyncratic to provide insight into intercultural interactions and friendships on other campuses (Schofield et al., 2010).

In summary, to ensure students achieve the individual and societal outcomes that result from intercultural friendships, colleges and universities must create the conditions for these friendships to form (Pettigrew, 1998a). Institutions must be intentional and proactive to disrupt the cycle of segregation that will otherwise impede students' learning (Milem et al., 2004; Stearns et al., 2009). Currently, however, we know little about how colleges and universities can create environments in which intercultural interactions—especially intercultural friendships—can develop and thrive (Clarke & antonio, 2012; Fischer, 2008; V. B. Saenz, 2007; Schofield et al., 2010).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to generate a substantive theory of the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships. Because the theory generated through this research focuses on the *process* of friendship development and sustainment, it promises to have greater practical utility than current research that merely

identifies static factors affecting intercultural friendship development and the correlational relationships among them. In chapter three, I discuss how the grounded theory method and my specific procedures allowed me to accomplish this. Furthermore, since I spoke with college students in interracial friendships to learn about their experiences rather than relying on crude survey measures, and since I did not limit my data collection to confirming factors already determined to be relevant through previous research, I identified a much broader range of factors involved in students' friendship development and sustainment and explored the most relevant factors in much greater depth than previous research. Ultimately, the deeper and more holistic understanding of how college students' interracial friendships develop and are sustained that my substantive theory provides will help institutions implement effective practices and policies to support these friendships and positive intercultural interaction, thereby ensuring that students graduate with the skills, attitudes, and values they need to effectively participate as citizens, employees, and leaders in our multicultural society (Chang, 2007; Hurtado, 2005; Jayakumar, 2008; Levin et al., 2003).

Chapter Summary

The empirical literature on campus diversity has clearly shown the benefits students gain from diverse peer interactions. Higher education institutions therefore have a clear and compelling interest in supporting the development and sustainment of intercultural friendships among college students. While the literature identifies some of the institutional factors that affect intercultural interaction and friendship development, we lack a comprehensive understanding of how friendships develop across racial groups and how they

are sustained. Furthermore, because we know little about the internal motivations and external influences on the development of intercultural friendships, we cannot create purposeful and effective interventions to help students achieve the educational benefits of campus diversity. This study sought to remedy this deficiency in our scholarly and practical knowledge by generating a theory of the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships that provides “actionable insight” (Clarke & Antonio, 2012, p. 40) to ensure students achieve the critical learning and development outcomes related to campus diversity.

As Allport (1954/1988) shares with us, “It is easier ... to smash an atom than a prejudice” (p. xvii). We know that intercultural friendships are effective at “smashing” prejudice; understanding how colleges and universities can support the development of these friendships will provide institutional administrators and student affairs educators with a powerful tool for reducing prejudice among college students. And as these students graduate to become citizens and employees, they will help to spread their multicultural attitudes and values throughout their workplaces and society at large.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Method of Inquiry

As discussed in chapter one, existing empirical research on college students' interracial friendships is limited in four ways: (1) it focuses on documenting only the prevalence and predictors of such friendships, (2) it tends to rely upon quantitative survey data, (3) its exploration of the institutional contextual factors that affect development and sustainment of such friendships is insufficient and lacks practical utility, and (4) it has not illuminated how colleges and universities can purposefully intervene to support students' interracial friendships. To truly understand the *how* and the *why* of college students' friendships across racial lines, we need to understand the reality of these friendships from the point of view of students in them. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of college students in interracial friendships, explaining (1) how interracial friendships develop among undergraduate college students and how they are sustained (a question of *process* as well as of patterns of action and interaction) and (2) the role institutional *context* plays in this process. The grounded theory approach is well suited for exploring the process of college students' development and sustainment of interracial friendships because it focuses on explaining a social process and elucidating the contextual factors that surround and influence that process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As defined by grounded theorists, a process is "something which occurs over time and involves change over time" (Glaser, 1978, pp. 97-98) and is demarcated by stages or

“temporal sequences” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). Although the grounded theory method can be used to investigate non-processual phenomena, Strauss and Corbin (1994) note that “grounded theory researchers are interested in *patterns* of action and interaction ... They are also much concerned with discovering *process*—not necessarily in the sense of stages or phases, but of reciprocal changes in patterns of action/interaction and in relationship with changes of conditions either internal or external to the process itself” (p. 278).

The goal of the grounded theory method is to generate a theory (known as a “substantive theory”) explaining the phenomenon of study that is grounded in the context in which that phenomenon occurs (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The substantive theory generated via the grounded theory method is an abstract, “interpretive rendering” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 184) of the phenomenon of study rather than a description of it. Yet although the theory is an abstraction, it is also clearly connected to (*grounded in*) the data from which it was generated (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Furthermore, the substantive theory must have practical utility: participants and others involved in the phenomenon of study must be able to relate to and make sense of the theory, and it must give them the power to understand, predict, influence, and/or control the process it explains (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This study generated a substantive theory of the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships. As I discuss in chapter five, I believe that the theory I’ve generated will prove useful in creating more-effective diversity policies and programming on college campuses by suggesting possible areas for purposeful intervention to support these friendships.

The Grounded Theory Method of Inquiry

The Foundations of Grounded Theory

The method of grounded theory was proposed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their 1967 book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. In that book, they argued that a new, qualitative research method was necessary as an alternative to the dominant quantitative methods of the time, which focused on verification of existing theory (via deductive inquiry) rather than generation of new theory (through inductive inquiry). Glaser and Strauss believed that both quantitative and qualitative methods have value, but that scholarly preference for verification limits our collective knowledge base because deductive methods cannot answer certain kinds of research questions or provide innovative insights. They further felt that the privileged position social science disciplines accord to research that “pursu[es] causal explanation at the expense of establishing understanding” was short-sighted (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003, p. 133), and they therefore sought to remedy this deficiency in scholarship by establishing a new, inductive method of inquiry.

An additional rationale behind Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) development of the grounded theory method was their assertion that scholarly knowledge and abstract theory resulting from traditional research methods too often lacked practical utility or relevance to people’s daily lives, limiting its value for society. As Glaser (1978) put it, “More and more people wish to discover what is going on, rather than assuming what should be going on, as required in preconceived type [i.e., deductive] research”(p. 159). By using the grounded

theory method, researchers can understand and explain a social phenomenon or process without the limitations imposed by relying upon existing knowledge.

Grounded theory is the first and only method of inquiry aimed at producing, rather than verifying or applying, theory. As such, it recognizes that “theorizing is a *practice*. It entails the practical activity of engaging the world and of constructing abstract understandings about and within it. The fundamental contribution of grounded theory methods resides in offering a guide to interpretive theoretical practice not in providing a blueprint for theoretical products” (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 128-129). In other words, the grounded theory method provides an empirical and systematic way of understanding the world by engaging in the process of theorizing, rather than simply following a step-by-step recipe for producing theory about the phenomenon of study without truly making meaning of that phenomenon.

Substantive Theory: The Product of Grounded Theory Research

The goal of grounded theory is to produce a substantive theory: a theory that has practical utility for participants, explains a phenomenon or process that features in participants’ lives (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and “make[s] statements about how actors interpret reality” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 636). In this sense, grounded theory is a product (Charmaz, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The basic criteria for a substantive theory are that it must be relevant to (grounded in) the situation or context from which it was generated, it must be understandable by the persons whose social situation or process it explains, and it must be able to be put into use by

these persons (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I present a full list of criteria for judging the quality of a substantive theory later in this chapter.

The researcher generates a substantive theory via the constant comparative analysis process, aided by the techniques of theoretical sampling and theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory method is flexible and can be adapted to fit a variety of research topics, data sources, and paradigms as long as the four defining features of non-preconception, theoretical sampling, constant comparative analysis, and inductive generation of theory are honored (Charmaz, 2003a, 2005, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978, 1999; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I discuss these defining features and techniques of grounded theory research in more detail throughout this chapter.

Inductive Research Design

As noted above, grounded theory is an inductive, or emergent, research method. With other, deductive, methods, the researcher begins with a problem and theory(ies) or concept(s) that explain or relate to that problem and then applies those theories or concepts to the data in order to make meaning of it and generate conclusions. Grounded theory research, in contrast, proceeds in the opposite direction: the researcher begins with a general topic of study, collects data that pertains to the topic broadly defined, and analyzes the data without preconceiving what she will or will not find within it. Although grounded theory methodologists disagree about whether the substantive theory “emerges” from the data or is “generated” by the researcher—reflecting different perspectives on the nature of reality and

the role of the researcher—all grounded theorists agree that the design of grounded theory research is emergent: it is driven by data analysis rather than prescribed by the researcher in advance (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; O'Connor, Netting, & Thomas, 2008). “How the research will unfold cannot be known ahead of time. And this ‘unknowability’ becomes a fundamental requirement in grounded theory, fundamental because it stems from the epistemology of grounded theory” (Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011, p. 402). This fundamental requirement is also known as the non-preconception requirement, which informs every step of the grounded theory research process from the literature review (as discussed in chapter one), to sampling, data collection methods, and data analysis (discussed later in this chapter). Preconception and induction are diametrically opposed; the inductive generation of theory cannot happen if the researcher holds preconceptions about what the theory will look like or what sorts of data will be relevant to it. Despite grounded theorists’ agreement on the inductive nature of the method, there is substantial disagreement among them about the philosophical and epistemological foundations of the method, which I discuss next.

The Grounded Theory Paradigm Debates

Since Glaser and Strauss first presented their new method of inquiry in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), grounded theory has proliferated as a research method and gained a sizeable methodological literature base. Numerous researchers, from novices to experts, have expanded upon (and, depending upon one’s perspective, either improved or weakened) the method with a variety of intents: to clarify the vague guidelines provided in

the foundational texts, to establish a set of concrete guidelines and criteria for rigorous use of the method, to apply it in new disciplines, to identify its epistemological and ontological foundations and debate its paradigmatic “home,” and to align it with contemporary concerns about the nature and conduct of research. These attempts to expand and clarify the method resulted in the establishment of three recognized versions of grounded theory, each with its own set of assumptions and procedures: (1) Classic Grounded Theory (sometimes referred to as “Glaserian”); (2) Strauss and Corbin’s version, which developed from their attempts to provide more structure for grounded theory procedures; and (3) Charmaz’s constructivist grounded theory, which blends the foundational principles of grounded theory with constructivist ontology and epistemology.

Because each of these three versions carries different epistemological and ontological assumptions, an ongoing debate in the methodological literature concerns whether grounded theory is most congruent with the postpositivist, interpretivist, and/or constructivist paradigms, or whether it must be aligned with any paradigm at all. Interestingly, Charmaz’s (2003a, 2004, 2006) version is the only version that is clearly situated within a research paradigm; a discussion of ontology or epistemology does not appear in any of the foundational works (e.g., Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Although some recent methodological publications (e.g., Annells, 1996) classify grounded theory as pseudo-qualitative or positivistic, and therefore not congruent with the interpretivist or constructivist paradigms of qualitative research, Glaser and Strauss (1967) blended positivistic and interpretivistic language in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. In fact, many of the

principles they described parallel the assumptions of interpretivism. For example, they emphasize that it is the researcher's role to make meaning of the social process of study (congruent with the fundamental qualitative idea of "researcher-as-instrument").

Additionally, they note that one of the criteria for credibility of a grounded theory study is the reader's assessment of the researcher's analytic interpretations and description of the theory she generated from the data, which echoes one of the key criteria for rigor in qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Goulding, 1999; Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Piantanida et al., 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Suddaby, 2006).

Because of its historical lack of a clear paradigmatic alignment or epistemological position, some have questioned the strength and rigor of grounded theory as a research method (e.g., Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). How, then, can grounded theory have any rigor as a method of inquiry if it has no clear epistemological "home"? Without directly addressing this question, Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) suggest that grounded theory researchers clearly explicate the epistemology and related assumptions underlying their research, to ensure epistemologically consistent use of the method and to avoid the "erosion" of the method that results from epistemologically inconsistent (or "strategic") use. Glaser, in contrast, maintains that the grounded theory method's lack of alignment with a paradigm or epistemology is not a weakness but rather its unique strength. Grounded theory, he asserts, "stand[s] alone as a transcending general research methodology" (Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 5) that can be used with any theoretical framework (or paradigm), yet belongs to no single paradigm. Other grounded theorists agree: Piantanida et al. (2004)

propose that there is no single “right” way to do grounded theory, but rather that “logics [of justification] must be custom-crafted to fit the intent and procedures of each grounded theory study” (p. 335). Charmaz (2003a, 2004, 2006) justifies her revision of the method from a constructivist perspective on the basis of the method’s epistemological and ontological flexibility and argues that Glaser’s positivistic and her constructivist versions of grounded theory are both valid. Ultimately, grounded theory “is a method, and as such, can be used comfortably in most paradigms” (Urquhart, 2001, p. 16).

The fundamental concern for a researcher using the grounded theory method, then, is the need to present a justification for her use of the method that is congruent with the research paradigm she has selected, and to be thoughtful and intentional about aligning specific research procedures and language used in the written report with that paradigm, while also remaining true to the fundamental principles of grounded theory research. A grounded theorist should not rigidly strive for methodological “purism,” but rather should make decisions about which methods and procedures are appropriate and why, and then provide a “logic of justification” (Rennie, 1998) for her decisions that addresses epistemology and ontology (Cutcliffe, 2000; Mills et al., 2006b; O’Connor et al., 2008; Piantanida et al., 2004; Suddaby, 2006). While some of the assumptions or goals behind the different versions of grounded theory differ, the defining features of the method (i.e., constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling, non-preconception, and theory generation) are the same regardless of the version used (O’Connor et al., 2008). Next, I discuss the fundamental assumptions and principles of constructivist grounded theory, the

version I have chosen to use for this research. My intent was to use the method in a way that was faithful to the epistemology and ontology of constructivism, and I designed my study accordingly. Throughout this chapter I address different aspects of my methodology, and I expect my readers to judge whether I have provided an adequate and coherent logic of justification that gives them faith in my interpretations and the substantive theory I've generated.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Just as the interpretivist and social constructivist perspectives have become mainstream in social science research discourse in recent decades, so too have these perspectives influenced the grounded theory method. As a form of interpretive qualitative research, constructivist grounded theory focuses on the “point of view of the experiencing person” and “seeks to learn how they construct their experience through their actions, intentions, beliefs, and feelings” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 499). The constructivist version of grounded theory utilizes the traditional procedures of grounded theory, but centers the role of the researcher in the production of knowledge and theory, rejecting claims to the researcher's interpretive neutrality and ability to “discover” an objective reality that are embedded in Glaser and Strauss's original conception of the method as well as Glaser's Classic Grounded Theory version (Charmaz, 2005; Hall & Callery, 2001; Mills et al., 2006a, 2006b). Charmaz (2003a) defines constructivist grounded theory as follows:

A constructivist grounded theory approach distinguishes between the real and the true. The constructivist approach does not seek truth—single, universal, and lasting.

Still, it remains realist because it addresses human realities and assumes the existence of real worlds. However, neither human realities nor real worlds are unidimensional. ... The constructivist approach assumes that what we take as real, as objective knowledge and truth, is based upon our perspective. ... [Therefore,] we must try to find what research participants define as real and where their definitions of reality take them. (p. 272)

Principles of constructivist grounded theory. The general philosophical principles of constructivist research are (1) knowledge and meaning are socially constructed, (2) the researcher is positioned within her research, (3) data collection and analysis focus on participants' realities and meanings, and (4) researchers have a relational duty to participants. Next, I briefly discuss each of these principles as applied within constructivist grounded theory research.

Social construction of knowledge. The foundational principle that gives constructivism its name is the belief that knowledge is socially constructed between researcher and participants and that such constructions are shaped by each individual's unique values and prior experiences as well as by the social and historical contexts in which each lives (Charmaz, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hall & Callery, 2001; Mills et al., 2006a, 2006b; Piantanida et al., 2004). Because data is constructed through the interaction between researcher and participant, constructivist researchers more accurately "generate" or "produce" rather than "collect" their data (Charmaz, 2006; Mills et al., 2006a). Since our constructions of reality are shaped by our

unique perspectives, there can be no single, universal reality that all individuals share; rather, there are an infinite number of realities, none of which is more “real” or valid than any other (Charmaz 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Mills et al., 2006b). Furthermore, because all realities are individual interpretations, there is no separation between individual and reality; we are each an integral part of our own realities, and the researcher’s task is to enter participants’ worlds to the fullest extent possible in order to understand their realities (Charmaz, 2003a, 2003b). To understand participants’ worlds with the goal of generating theory, constructivist researchers must ask, “What do people assume is real? How do they construct and act on their view of reality?” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 127). Finally, the substantive theory that results from constructivist grounded theory research is also a social construction, generated jointly by the meaning-making process of participants and the researcher (Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Mills et al., 2006a; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Researcher position within the research. Constructivists’ belief in the existence of multiple realities rather than a single, objective reality leads to the related belief that a researcher’s values, beliefs, experiences, and overall worldview affect how she approaches her research and makes meaning of her data (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 2004). “No analysis is neutral—despite research analysts’ claims of neutrality. ... What we know shapes, but does not necessarily determine, what we ‘find’” (Charmaz, 2005, pp. 510-511). Indeed, constructivists believe that the strength of their approach lies in the fact that researchers can bring their “whole selves” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) into their research, rather than trying to achieve the impossibility of “detach[ing] themselves from their

backgrounds” (Thomas & James, 2006, p. 19). Accordingly, constructivists eschew neutral language that renders the researcher invisible in favor of language that centers the role of the researcher in the analysis process (such as use of the first-person voice) (Charmaz, 2006; Mills et al., 2006a, 2006b). In addition, because the researcher cannot possibly be neutral or objective, it is essential that she reflects upon how her positionality and subjectivity (i.e., her beliefs, values, experiences, etc. relative to the research) have affected her research and make these transparent so that others can assess the credibility of her conclusions in light of these factors (Charmaz, 2003a, 2006; Goulding, 1999; Hall & Callery, 2001; Mills et al., 2006a).

Focus on participants’ realities and meanings. In collecting and analyzing data, constructivists seek to understand the meanings participants make of their worlds:

Constructing constructivism means seeking meanings—both respondents’ meanings and researchers’ meanings. To seek respondents’ meanings, we must go further than surface meanings or presumed meanings. We must look for views and values as well as for acts and facts. We need to look for beliefs and ideologies as well as situations and structures. By studying tacit meanings, we clarify, rather than challenge, respondents’ views about reality. (Charmaz, 2003a, p. 275)

Because the goal of grounded theory is theoretical abstraction rather than description, this focus on participants’ realities and meanings takes a slightly different form in grounded theory research than it does in other forms of qualitative research, in which the goal is to convey participants’ voices and lives holistically and faithfully through rich description. However, in describing the abstract categories and concepts that together comprise the

substantive theory, the constructivist grounded theorist uses concrete stories or illustrative excerpts from participants in order “to keep the human story in the forefront of the reader’s mind and to make the conceptual analysis more accessible to a wider audience” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 516).

Relationships with participants. Participants’ voices and perspectives are central to constructivist research, and to honor this fact, constructivists seek to develop relationships with their participants, rather than treating them as little more than sources of data. Researchers have an ethical duty to listen to participants closely and to treat participants with respect (Charmaz, 2003a; Hall & Callery, 2001). Trust and caring are essential components of the constructivist researcher-participant relationship (Hall & Callery, 2001), as is a consideration of the power differential between the researcher and participants and of steps to minimize harm that may result from this difference in power (Mills et al., 2006a). Considerations of reciprocity and ethics are important in their own right, of course, but constructivist researchers also need to establish trusting and caring relationships with their participants in order to be able to generate the sort of rich data necessary to understand participants’ lives (Charmaz, 2003b).

Throughout the remainder of chapter, I indicate how these four principles of constructivist grounded theory shaped my study design and methodological decisions. In designing my research, I also took into account the critiques that constructivist researchers have raised concerning the assumptions of objectivist grounded theory, and I highlight some of these critiques next.

The constructivist critique of objectivist grounded theory. By aligning grounded theory with the constructivist paradigm, Charmaz (2003a, 2004, 2006) intentionally altered some of the positivistic assumptions within the original grounded theory method as put forth by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Charmaz was particularly troubled by the positivistic assumptions about the role of the researcher in collecting and analyzing data underlying the original version of the method as well as Glaser's Classic Grounded Theory version. She has labeled these versions "objectivist" in reference to the assumptions of objectivity embedded within them: that the researcher can (and should) be neutral and that an objective reality exists for the researcher to discover. Her constructivist version simultaneously honors the fundamental procedures of the grounded theory method while addressing "key arguments about science, claims to knowledge, and representation that must be taken into account" (Bryant, 2003, p. 2). Researchers today cannot claim to be ignorant about the criticisms that interpretivists and constructivists have raised about the positivistic assumptions of traditional social science research (Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Piantanida et al., 2004; Suddaby, 2006). I share Charmaz's epistemological position and therefore feel that constructivist grounded theory is the most appropriate version of the method for my use.

Because constructivist grounded theorists acknowledge the role of the researcher in interpreting data and generating theory, they challenge objectivists' contention that categories, concepts, and theory objectively exist to be "discovered" in, or will "emerge" from, the data (e.g., Glaser, 1978; Glaser 2002/2012; Glaser & Holton, 2004). Rather, "constructivist grounded theorists acknowledge that they define what is happening in the

data” (Charmaz, 2003b, p. 320). From the constructivist perspective, objectivists’ “unrealistic truth claims” (Kelle, 2007, p. 205) concerning a researcher’s ability to unproblematically discover a theory within the data compromise the credibility of objectivist grounded theory by masking the interpretive role of the researcher in generating the substantive theory (Bryant, 2003; Charmaz, 2004, 2006; Hall & Callery, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Ultimately, the debate between the objectivist and constructivist versions of grounded theory boils down to an irreconcilable difference in the epistemological perspectives of objectivists and constructivists: for objectivists, a researcher’s attempts to interpret the data make it impossible for her to maintain objectivity, while for constructivists, *all* research is interpretative and it cannot be otherwise. As Thomas and James (2006) wryly observe, “Grounded theories are products of cultured minds. Unlike the moons of Jupiter, they are not discovered” (p. 24). As I discuss in more detail in my statement of subjectivity later in this chapter, my worldview is aligned with the constructivist approach, and the fundamental assumptions of constructivism informed the decisions I made about study procedures such as sampling and data collection as well as the criteria for rigor and credibility that I chose to follow in designing my study.

Objectivist grounded theorists maintain that researchers must avoid all preconception in order to honor the inductive nature of grounded theory research; they deride any attempts to incorporate prior experiences and knowledge as “forcing” the data (Glaser, 1978, 2002/2012; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Holton, 2007, 2009). In contrast, constructivist grounded theorists challenge the idea that avoiding all preconception is possible or even desirable as

the researcher cannot erase her prior experiences and knowledge and, in fact, these enable a researcher to make meaning of her data (Charmaz, 2003b; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; Holton, 2009; Kelle, 2007). “The point is not to avoid preconceptions, but to ensure that they are well grounded in arguments and evidence, and always subject to further investigation, revision, and refutation” (I. Dey, 2007, p. 176). As Charmaz (2013) has observed, the assumption that a researcher can *not* have preconceptions is in itself a preconception—a preconception that researcher standpoint is irrelevant. This is perhaps another irreconcilable difference between constructivists and objectivists since it concerns the fundamental beliefs of each perspective. From the constructivist perspective, a researcher cannot “turn off” the belief that knowledge is socially constructed based upon whether or not the constructivist perspective is relevant to the study at hand. If she holds a constructivist worldview, it will be relevant to all research she conducts; substituting a “neutral” worldview on occasion is not possible. Furthermore, the objectivist belief that researchers can approach their research without any theoretical perspective itself reflects a particular worldview: the positivist notion of an invisible, neutral researcher (Bryant, 2003; Charmaz, 2003a, 2006; Rennie, 1998). I share the constructivist perspective on the role that my prior knowledge and experiences play in shaping my research choices, and as I discuss later in this chapter, I have sought to make these transparent to ensure the rigor and credibility of the theory I’ve generated.

In summary, grounded theory is “an evolving method” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 134), and therefore there is no “right” or “wrong” version; rather, using it “correctly” requires the

researcher to reflect on the epistemological congruence of her decisions and to present a clear logic of justification. However, this is not to say that researchers can choose whether or not to conform to the defining features of grounded theory that are shared by all versions of the method, as failing to implement the defining features undermines the method's rigor and the credibility of the researcher's conclusions (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992; Cutcliffe, 2000; Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Holton, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2008; Suddaby, 2006). One of these defining features is theoretical sampling, which I discuss next.

Sampling Principles and Procedures

Participant Selection and Recruitment

The participants for my study were college students who are currently in, or have been in, interracial friendships with other students on their campus. Because I wanted to understand the effects institutional context may have on the development and sustainment of these friendships, students who have friends of another race or ethnicity on other campuses or at home, but not at the institution where they are currently enrolled, were excluded. I adapted antonio's (2001) definition of a "friendship group" to operationally define an interracial friend as "a fellow student at your college or university with whom you spend [or spent] substantial time and whom you consider [or considered] to be one of your best friends, and who is of a different racial or ethnic background than you." In keeping with the participant-centered focus of constructivist research, my participants had sole authority to determine whether their friendships met my definition of an interracial friendship; I did not seek to independently verify the race of their friends. Indeed, antonio (2001a) found that

college students hold varying definitions of what constitutes an interracial relationship, and those definitions can be flexible and context-dependent. For those participants whose friendships were current (i.e., had not ended), I asked each participant if his/her friend might also be willing to participate in my study (and I had two friend pairs participate), but whether or not both members of a friendship pair participated was not be a basis for inclusion or exclusion. In the interest of research ethics and minimizing harm, I did not ask participants whose friendships had ended about whether their friends might want to participate.

In originally conceiving of this study, I had planned to recruit participants at three four-year institutions of higher education within North Carolina, representing different institutional types. I selected institutions located within a one-hour drive of my home so that I could maintain close contact with my participants and reasonably limit my own investment of time and money. In spring 2014 I began participant recruitment at one of these three institutions, Southeastern University (a pseudonym), a high research intensity doctoral institution with a fall 2012 enrollment of about 34,000 students (25,000 undergraduates), of which about 21% are racial/ethnic minorities. I planned to reserve recruitment at the other two institutions for theoretical sampling, planning to use the variation in institutional type to generate comparative data. My initial recruitment at Southeastern yielded 15 participants, and in analyzing the data from these participants, I discovered that my initial assumptions about the type of variation I would need to produce a saturated and conceptually dense theory were incorrect. I realized that recruiting students at other institutions would likely lead me to generate new concepts (i.e., it would create more conceptual variation) rather than facilitating

comparisons among my existing concepts (i.e., to allow me to elucidate properties and dimensional variation); in other words, I decided to prioritize conceptual depth over contextual breadth. Supporting my decision, Boeije (2002) notes, “When the sampling has been conducted well in a reasonably homogeneous sample, there is a solid basis for generalizing the concepts and the relations between them to units that were absent from the sample, but which represent the same phenomenon” (p. 393). I concluded that my substantive theory would be conceptually weaker—and therefore less useful—if I sampled at the additional institutions as originally planned, and I therefore decided instead to recruit six additional participants at Southeastern University in fall 2014, theoretically sampling for participants meeting specific criteria pertaining to my developing concepts. This decision necessarily involved a trade-off; by only recruiting participants at one institution, I reduced the potential transferability of my substantive theory to other types of institutions, but I enhanced the theory’s overall explanatory power and utility. Applying my theory in different institutional contexts and modifying it accordingly will therefore be an important area for my future research, as I discuss in chapter five.

In my proposal and IRB submission, I indicated that I planned to recruit participants through institutional contexts exemplifying Allport’s (1954/1988) four essential conditions for positive intergroup contact, as these are the conditions under which intergroup friendships are most likely to form: interactants are of equal status; work cooperatively toward a common goal or shared purpose, preferably over an extended period of time; and have the institution’s support. These included student affairs units focused on diversity (e.g.,

multicultural student affairs offices, women's centers, LGBT centers) and leadership (e.g., student government, student conduct, student judiciary, scholars programs); student organizations focused on race/ethnicity or diversity (e.g., single-identity as well as multicultural organizations); student organizations that focus on working collaboratively toward specific goals, such as theatre groups, athletic teams, and performance-focused music or dance clubs (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009); and living-learning communities focused on diversity or the arts.

I began recruitment in February 2014 by emailing the coordinators of 15 selected programs at Southeastern University meeting the above criteria (including Multicultural Student Support Services, living-learning communities, honors and scholars programs, and leadership programs) asking them to forward an email about my study to students in their programs/on their listservs (see Appendix B). Because not all of the coordinators responded to me, I am unsure of how many of these 15 programs forwarded my recruitment message to their students. I underestimated the degree to which students would be excited about participating in this study; within several days I received emails from more than 150 students who were interested in participating. I replied to those who seemed to best meet my initial, purposeful sampling criteria (see my discussion of theoretical sampling below) to set up first interviews and sent the remaining students a request asking if they would be willing to be contacted at a later date should I need them. I conducted first and second (if necessary) interviews with my initial sample of participants from March to May 2014. This initial sample consisted of 15 participants. I also prepared flyers with information about my study to

post around campus; however, I did not need to use these. To recruit an additional sample in the interest of theoretical sampling, I contacted students on my “reserve” list in October 2014 asking them if they met my revised recruitment criteria (see my discussion of theoretical sampling below). I conducted interviews with six additional participants in October 2014.

Theoretical Sampling

Unlike quantitative research, which idealizes random samples to allow for maximum generalizability of findings, the focus of qualitative research on privileging participants’ perspectives over those of the researcher necessitates a sample that allows such perspectives to emerge in rich detail (Mertens, 2010). Therefore, qualitative research often utilizes purposive sampling, which involves choosing participants based on their ability to provide information relevant to the topic of study (Krathwohl, 2009; Morse, 2007).

Grounded theory methods prescribe a particular approach to purposive sampling that is congruent with the goal of generating substantive theory: theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is driven by the data and the needs of the developing substantive theory. Put simply, “Theoretical sampling involves starting with the data, constructing tentative ideas about the data, and then examining these ideas through further empirical inquiry” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 102). Therefore, the people and places to sample cannot be determined in advance as they are in other methods of inquiry; rather, the grounded theorist determines where and whom to sample through the analysis process. As the researcher generates categories and concepts during analysis, she seeks sources of data that can add richness and variation to the categories and concepts and help the researcher understand relationships among them

(Becker, 1993; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Cutcliffe, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Holton, 2007; Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011; Piantanida et al., 2004). Asking questions of the data helps a researcher identify concepts that need additional development, which guides further sampling; Corbin and Strauss (2008) provide a helpful list of questions that I used in making sampling decisions during my research. Below I elaborate upon the three aims of theoretical sampling: sampling concepts, maximizing comparisons, and saturating categories.

Sampling concepts, not participants. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define theoretical sampling succinctly: “the researcher is not sampling persons but [rather] concepts” (p. 144). Because the goal of grounded theory analysis is the development of a conceptually dense theory, not generalization of findings (as in quantitative research) or rich description of participants’ lived experiences (as in other forms of qualitative research), selecting participants on the grounds of population representativeness or to maximize demographic or phenomenological variation is inappropriate (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, 2007). Rather, “the persons, places and situations sought by the researcher when collecting empirical data are chosen on the basis of their ability to promote the emergence and construction of the theory” (Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011, p. 408). Fundamentally, the unit of sampling in theoretical sampling is a *concept*, not a person or population (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978). Therefore, in choosing a sample, the researcher should aim to maximize the breadth and depth of concepts, not of populations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Appropriate

participants are those who have extensive experience with the phenomenon of study and can contribute information that adds depth to the categories and concepts of the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006; Cutcliffe, 2000). Sampling on the basis of participant characteristics such as age or gender is only appropriate if the researcher's analysis determines that these characteristics are relevant to the emerging theory (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Glaser, 1978; Morse, 2007). Indeed, this is a strength of using the grounded theory method for social justice research: it prevents the researcher from assuming that a participant's demographic characteristics (such as race or ethnicity) deterministically shape his or her experiences with the topic of study or that participants who share an identity must therefore share experiences (Park et al., 2013).

Maximizing comparisons. With theoretical sampling, a researcher seeks both convergent (or confirmatory) and divergent (or negative case) information to elaborate concepts and develop the theory's conceptual density:

Alternatively sampling divergent and convergent sources of texts is not intended to “prove” that a particular phenomenon really exists, or to warrant a generalization, or to verify the validity or reliability of our interpretations. Rather, sampling divergent sources of texts helps us to challenge our preconceptions and broaden our appreciation for the complexities and nuances of the phenomenon. Sampling convergent sources helps us to hone in on a potential point or insight, to probe it more deeply, to get hold of something that we sense is important, but cannot quite grasp or put into words. (Piantanida et al., 2004, p. 337)

The key principle driving theoretical sampling is to maximize comparisons, as this facilitates the constant comparative process and theory generation; therefore, in choosing comparison groups, the researcher should seek breadth and depth as well as similarity and difference (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling allows grounded theory studies to be both inductive and deductive at once: inductive in that sampling helps to generate theory, deductive in that the researcher can use sampling to test emerging ideas about the theory under development (Becker, 1993).

Saturating categories. Because theoretical sampling is ongoing throughout a grounded theory research study, the size and composition of the sample cannot be determined in advance. Rather, the researcher concludes sampling when she feels that the theory, its component concepts and categories, and the relationships among them are all sufficiently dense and conceptually elaborated to offer a satisfactory and convincing explanation of the phenomenon or process of study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Cutcliffe, 2000; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pergert, 2009). The ultimate goal of sampling in grounded theory, therefore, is theoretical saturation:

Saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby the [researcher] can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated. He goes out of his way to look for groups that stretch diversity of data as far as possible, just to make certain that saturation is based on the widest possible range of data on the category. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61)

Unlike in other forms of qualitative research, saturation in grounded theory research does not refer to repetition of themes or achieving the richest possible level of description. Rather, the researcher must judge whether each and every category in the theory is conceptually dense enough to enable the theory to plausibly explain the phenomenon or process of study, and that further data collection would not add any conceptual depth to the categories or theory, or illuminate any new relationships among categories (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher must ask, “Does [the theory] ring true; does it offer useful insights; does it have the vitality and aesthetic richness to be persuasive?” (Piantanida et al., 2004, p. 341). If the researcher can answer these questions affirmatively, theoretical sampling and data collection may cease.

Per the three aims of theoretical sampling, I sought variation among participants based on the properties and dimensions that emerged as relevant through data analysis rather than preconceiving that certain characteristics (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) would be relevant to my developing theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Roderick, 2009). Such concepts “must earn their way into the analysis rather than be assumed” to be relevant without question (Charmaz, 2005, p. 512).

Also consistent with the principle of theoretical sampling, I did not predetermine a number of participants, but rather decided during my analysis how many participants are “enough” by judging the conceptual density of the theory I generate (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pergert, 2009; Piantanida et al., 2004). I initially recruited fifteen participants in spring 2014 and recruited an additional six participants in fall

2014. In my second sampling wave, I intentionally sought participants who met certain criteria that would provide insight into certain concepts in my developing theory (i.e., that would enable theoretical saturation). I next discuss the phases of theoretical sampling and what my sampling strategy was at each phase.

Initial sampling: Purposeful. In the early phases of grounded theory research, before the constant comparative analysis process has begun, participants must be selected based on the researcher's knowledge (or theoretical sensitivity) about the kinds of people who will be most likely to have experienced the phenomenon or process of study. In this sense, the initial phases of sampling in grounded theory research are driven by a purposeful sampling strategy, similar to that guiding other forms of qualitative research.

In recruiting my initial sample of participants in spring 2014, I sought variation in terms of demographic characteristics such as year in college, gender, participant race, and friend race. I also sought to balance participants who had been referred from different sources (e.g., living-learning villages, the honors and scholars programs, Multicultural Student Support Services), in the interest of seeking variation in institutional contextual experiences and in Allport's (1954/1988) supportive conditions for positive intergroup contact. I had hoped to include some participants who were international students, but I encountered an issue regarding whether international students were eligible to receive compensation. Although Southeastern University's International Support Office eventually clarified that I could compensate my international participants, the international students who

had originally contacted me about participating were no longer interested when I got back to them.

Primary sampling: Theoretical. Theoretical sampling begins as soon as the researcher has begun coding the data, and she makes early theoretical sampling decisions based upon the need to flesh out the definitions, boundaries, and properties of categories identified through initial coding (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Coyne, 1997; Cutcliffe, 2000; Glaser, 1978). After the researcher has determined which concepts and categories best explain the process of study, she seeks comparison groups, which are “any groups that will help generate, to the fullest extent, as many properties of the categories as possible, and that will help relate the categories to each other and to their properties” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 49). In the interest of maximum variation, the researcher should choose comparison groups that are similar to as well as different from the initial sample. Focusing on similarities and differences within the data adds depth and richness to categories and to the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

For my study, I began theoretical sampling after my first four interviews, when I began to form my initial ideas about the concepts that might be relevant to my theory. At this early phase in my analysis my sampling was based more upon my impressions about what sort of comparisons would facilitate my analysis; in particular, I found that the gender balance of participants’ friendships (e.g., male-male, female-female, or male-female) did not seem to have much comparative relevance, nor did participants’ academic majors (congruent with Bahns et al., 2011), but where (e.g., by living together, working together, or through

mutual friends) and when (e.g., during their first semester versus later on in college) they had met their friends seemed to be a theoretically important source of variation, and so I adjusted my sampling to seek students who would provide variation on these latter dimensions.

In the later phases of research, the goal of theoretical sampling is to gain information about the relationships among categories that can help to integrate and fill gaps within the emerging theory, and the researcher must make decisions about which concepts to sample for and which to disregard based on their relative centrality to the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006; Holton, 2007). I intentionally designed my data generation to have two subsequent phases (interviews and journaling, as described below) so that I could return to my participants to have them provide additional data pertaining to my central concepts and categories I order to saturate my theory and fill in any explanatory gaps. I developed my journal prompts after I had analyzed transcripts from most of the interviews I conducted in spring 2014, which allowed me to ask targeted questions about specific experiences and perspectives to provide dimensional variation on the concepts that seemed most promising for inclusion in my theory (see Appendix F).

Final sampling: Saturation. In the final stages of data collection and analysis, when the researcher has identified a core category around which to build the theory, theoretical sampling is aimed at saturating the core category, to ensure that it is sufficiently dense to explain the process of study and support the theory that the researcher is building around it (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At this point, I determined through my analysis which participant and institutional contextual factors are and are not

relevant to the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment and my developing theory, and my theoretical sampling decisions were guided by the need to seek participants who could provide data to help me saturate the categories comprising my developing theory. To achieve this goal, in fall 2014 I recruited additional participants who met one or more of the following criteria: (1) did not meet their friend by living together in a residence hall, (2) developed their friendship in their second year of college or later, (3) had been friends for at least two years, and (4) had an interracial friendship in college that ended. Throughout my study, all modifications to my sampling strategy were approved by North Carolina State University's IRB.

To summarize, the parameters of the grounded theory sample may initially be broad, as the researcher explores many possible directions, but will narrow over the course of the study as informational needs become more specific and targeted toward elaborating the core category and relevant concepts that comprise the substantive theory (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Figure 3 summarizes how the process of theoretical sampling progresses in a grounded theory study such as the one I conducted.

Figure 3. The progression of theoretical sampling in a grounded theory study.

Documenting sampling decisions. Because theoretical sampling aims to gather information that is most relevant and meaningful to the categories and concepts that comprise the developing theory, the researcher must make decisions about data collection and sampling strategies as the study progresses. In my study, I generated data in two subsequent phases: interviews and participant journaling (described in more detail later in the next section). My interview questions were open-ended and broad in order to generate as much information as possible about the process of interracial friendship development, whereas the questions I asked during the journaling phase were narrower and more focused in order to generate data that specifically related to the categories that were most relevant to my developing theory (Coyne, 1997; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In an ideal world, a researcher would continue sampling until each and every category in the theory is conceptually dense and accounts for as much variation as possible. However, the reality of limited time and resources places some restriction on reaching saturation (Glaser, 1978). “Saturation is always a subjective judgment and the decision to stop theoretical sampling, using the methodological guidelines, is always influenced by the scope of the research project, particularly in terms of time and resources” (Pergert, 2009, p. 68). From the perspective of ensuring the rigor and credibility of the substantive theory that the researcher generates from the data, she must, at a minimum, ensure she does not succumb to premature closure by leaving the field too early—before collecting sufficient data to generate a conceptually abstract theory (Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 1999; Suddaby, 2006). In my study, I sought to balance the methodological imperative of saturation with my interest in timely completion of my research. In my memos I reflected upon how saturated I felt my categories were and documented my decisions about whether additional data were needed and how and where to collect that data. These memos are part of the audit trail supporting the credibility of my study. To help me judge the saturation and explanatory power of my substantive theory, I shared a draft of it with participants and with relevant practitioners (i.e., member checks and practitioner checks, described later in this chapter) and asked them to provide feedback regarding how well it explains the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships and to identify any gaps that might remain. I drew upon their feedback to revise my theory prior to submitting this dissertation to my committee.

Throughout the study, the researcher makes sampling decisions with the goal of obtaining theoretically relevant and meaningful data and pursuing interesting avenues suggested within the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The quality of the theory that results from a grounded theory study, including whether it is sufficiently explanatory (integrated) and conceptually dense (saturated), are dependent on the researcher's sampling decisions and how well those decisions support the stated purposes of the study (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher must make all sampling decisions transparent because "the credibility of a theory, or any piece of research, cannot be dissociated from the process by which it is generated" (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009, p. 123). Therefore, I documented my own theoretical sampling decisions in my memos and have discussed the rationale behind them here.

Data Generation

My participants provided three sources of data for this study: interviews, solicited journals, and written questionnaires. During the first meeting with each participant I began by describing the purpose and procedures of my study and allowing the participant to review the informed consent form and ask questions of me (see Appendix C). If the participant consented to participate, I provided him/her with an unsigned copy of the consent form and offered to email a pdf version of the signed copy. I then gave the participant a written questionnaire to complete (see Appendix E). After completing the questionnaire, I asked the participant for verbal permission to audio record the interview (all 21 participants consented) and gave him/her the opportunity to choose pseudonyms for him/herself and the friend (I

chose pseudonyms for the participants who didn't wish to choose their own). I then conducted the interview. During the interview I took written field notes on key comments made by participants as well as my observations. After concluding the interview I notified participants that I would be sending them the interview transcript for their review by email, and that while they were not required to provide feedback as a condition of participation, I would appreciate any feedback they had.

After each interview I wrote the interview date and time and the participant's pseudonym on the questionnaire and scanned it to pdf for retention. I then shredded the paper copy. I retained the original paper copies of all signed consent forms in a file cabinet in my home. I transcribed my written notes and shredded the paper copy. I then composed a participant vignette for my own reference, summarizing key information provided by the participant on the questionnaire and in the interview and drawn from my interview notes. Summarized versions of these participant vignettes appear in Appendix I.

Interviews with my initial sample of participants ($n=15$) took place in March-May 2014 and they completed their journal responses in July-August 2014. Interviews with my additional sample of participants ($n=6$) took place in October 2014 and they completed their journals immediately after their first interviews in October-November 2014. Participants who completed both the interview and journaling phases of the study received a \$35 Visa gift card; participants who only completed the interview phase received a \$20 Visa gift card.

Primary Data Source: Interviews

Although the grounded theory method does not require interviews as a source of data, the nature of my topic as well as my choice of the constructivist version made interviews the most appropriate primary data source for my study (Charmaz, 2003b). Interviews allow the researcher to become familiar with participants' experiences and meanings, an essential requirement of constructivist research, and they also allow the researcher to guide the conversation around the topic of study as well as make in-the-moment changes to follow up on promising leads, both critical for grounded theory data collection (Charmaz, 2003b). Because the data that results from an interview is constructed by the researcher and participant together in conversation, Mills et al. (2006a) refer to interviews as a data *generation* (rather than *collection*) strategy, and I have chosen to use their terminology.

The primary source of data for this study consisted of in-depth interviews with undergraduate students in interracial friendships, meeting the criteria described earlier. Because the focus of my study was friendships, which naturally consist of two individuals, I offered each participant the opportunity of inviting his/her friend of a different race or ethnicity to join the study, and I also asked whether s/he would be willing to participate in a joint additional interview with the friend if the friend decided to participate. Two participants' friends decided to participate, and in both cases the two friends agreed to be interviewed together. To avoid entering data generation with preconceptions about what information would be relevant, I conducted open-ended first interviews with participants. I used a semi-structured interview protocol to guide our conversation (see Appendix D), but I

did not rigidly adhere to the protocol; I pursued promising stories, especially in later interviews after I had begun generating concepts, and I also gave participants freedom to direct the conversation in directions they felt were relevant (Charmaz, 2003b; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Hall & Callery, 2001; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Mertens, 2010). In developing my interview protocol, I relied upon Charmaz's (2003b, 2006) recommendation to craft questions that encourage participants to explore and reflect and that focus on participants' meanings, definitions, and perspectives (matters of interest in constructivist research) rather than facts or sequences of events (matters of interest in objectivist research). Individual interviews ranged from 23 to 88 minutes in length, with most lasting 45 to 60 minutes.

I audio recorded all interviews, and I transcribed the first three interviews (with two participants) myself because these were the most crucial in determining the direction of my analysis. I sent subsequent interview audio recordings to a professional transcriptionist. While Charmaz (2004) argues that researchers must do their own transcription to remain familiar with the data, other grounded theory methodologists do not stipulate this, and in fact, Glaser and his colleagues advocate the use of field notes rather than verbatim transcripts (Glaser, 2009; Holton, 2007). As a constructivist, I agree with Charmaz (2003b, 2004, 2006) on the need to be intimately familiar with my data and therefore reject Glaser's and Holton's position that field notes are preferable, but I am felt that attempting to handle the full transcription work myself would have needlessly prolonged my research. To compromise, I

closely reviewed all transcripts that I did not produce myself by reading them multiple times while listening to the audio recording of the corresponding interview.

Consistent with the principle of theoretical sampling, I did not predetermine what an adequate number of interviews may be (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 1999), but offered participants the option of a second interview if they or I felt they had more to share. I conducted second interviews with two participants, one who had to leave the first interview before we had covered all questions and the other who felt he needed more time to reflect on the questions I'd posed in the first interview. In addition, as noted above, I conducted joint interviews with two friendship pairs. These interviews were conducted after the participants had completed individual interviews with me, and the questions for these joint interviews were more targeted to address specific matters that one or both friends had discussed in their individual interviews. One joint interview was 50 minutes and the other 57 minutes in length. I felt that one interview was sufficient for the majority of participants, given that they would be generating additional data through solicited journals, which I discuss next.

Secondary Data Source: Solicited Journals

To enrich my interview data as well as to enhance credibility through triangulation (Janesick, 1999), I asked participants to engage in solicited journaling (or diary writing; the relevant methodological literature uses "journal" and "diary" interchangeably) (Hookway, 2008; Kenten, 2010). This phase of data generation occurred after participants completed at least one interview and took the place of the follow-up interview that is common in

constructivist grounded theory research. As Charmaz (2003b) notes, “One useful way for the researcher to check leads and to refine an analysis is to go back and ask earlier participants about new areas as these are uncovered. ... [Multiple interviews enable the researcher] to correct earlier errors and omissions and to construct a denser, more complex analysis” (p. 318). Solicited journals (also known as researcher-driven journals) provide an alternative means of accomplishing this goal, and they offer several advantages compared to a second round of interviews. First, they allow participants an alternative medium in which to share their experiences, thus better accommodating individual preferences for self-expression (Kenten, 2010). In addition, because some participants may be more comfortable writing about certain topics than expressing them in a one-on-one interview with a researcher (Kenten, 2010), they may allow additional themes such as “thoughts, feelings, and concerns” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 36) to emerge from the data. Third, “journal writing allows participants in a research project an active voice” (Janesick, 1999, p. 522), and, because they are constructed in the moment by participants, they do not suffer from the same recall and reconstruction problems as interviews (Hookway, 2008). Because solicited journals are co-constructed by the researcher and participants, they are an appropriate data generation method to use in a study guided by the constructivist paradigm as mine was (Kenten, 2010). Finally, participant journals have particular utility in grounded theory research as a method of theoretical sampling because having a variety of data sources and types allows for better theory generation by facilitating the comparisons that add depth to categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Piantanida et al., 2004). The data that my participants and I generated via

journals also helped saturate the categories I generated through the constant comparative analysis process (Glaser, 1978).

When I met with participants for our first interview, I asked them if they would also be willing to participate in journaling and I described the purpose and process of solicited journaling. I did not exclude from my study any participants who did not wish to participate in journaling (although to receive full compensation participants had to participate in all phases of data generation). For the journaling phase of data generation, I used Blogger to create a restricted blog for each participant; to maintain confidentiality, only the participant and I had access to the blog and I used pseudonyms rather than the participant's and friend's real names. I sent instructions for completing the journals by email and gave participants two weeks to complete their responses. I provided five specific journal prompts for them. Per the principles of theoretical sampling, the prompts asked participants to elaborate on specific topics relative to the categories that I generated through my analysis of interview data (see Appendix F), and therefore I submitted the prompts to the IRB as a modification request. Prompts were worded slightly differently for participants whose friendships had ended (i.e., worded in the past tense). Of my 21 participants, 17 completed a full set of journal responses; one participant responded to only two of the prompts, two decided not to participate in the journaling phase, and one left Southeastern University and couldn't be contacted for the journaling phase.

While journals can be used on their own as a data source, Kenten (2010) recommends following up on participants' journals using the "diary interview." Diary interviews help

ensure that the researcher's analytic interpretations are congruent with what participants intended to express in their journals, and they also help the researcher collect contextual information relevant to the diary entry to help the researcher make analytic sense of it (Kenten, 2010). In my study, I conducted diary interviews with my participants virtually, by using the comment feature of the restricted blog through which participants submitted their journal responses. This enabled each participant and me to have an asynchronous dialogue about the significance and context of what s/he wrote.

Supplemental Data Sources

Participant questionnaire. Prior to beginning each interview, after the participant completed the consent form, I asked them to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix E). The questionnaire collected demographic data about participants (such as racial/ethnic identity, where they grew up, gender identity, age, and year in college). The questionnaire also asked a short series of questions concerning the racial/ethnic diversity of the student's current friendship group in college, the racial/ethnic diversity of their friendship group in high school, and the cocurricular activities in which the student is involved (type of activity, hours involved per week, leadership roles held). It also asked participants to complete several short-answer questions to provide some additional data on the participant's interracial friendship as well as to share his/her perspective on how well Southeastern University supports (or does not support) intercultural friendships.

Researcher reflection, ideas from the literature, and institutional documents. I had initially planned to supplement the two primary data sources and the demographic

questionnaire with reflection on my own experiences in intercultural friendships as well as ideas drawn from the literature (scholarly and experiential) on intercultural interactions; in a grounded theory study, these are both valid sources of data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holton, 2009). I did incorporate the latter—ideas drawn from the literature—and to avoid preconception, I only incorporated these toward the end of the constant comparative process, where they served as sources of variation and comparison to add conceptual density to my developing theory. Regarding my own reflections, however, I realized toward the end of my analysis process that my analytic interpretations already reflected my own experiences to some degree; as a constructivist researcher, I believe that it is neither possible nor desirable to fully remove myself from my interpretations (Bryant, 2003; Charmaz, 2004, 2006; Hall & Callery, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Thomas & James, 2006). I felt that by introducing my own experiences and reflections as true data, to be coded and incorporated into my theory, would add even more of myself to my analysis at the risk of overshadowing participants' experiences and voices (Milner, 2007; Young, 2003). I also felt that the central categories of my theory were sufficiently saturated that I did not need to include my reflections for the sake of theoretical sampling to add additional variation. Additionally, I was concerned that having spent so much time immersed in my participants' experiences and my analysis, I would be unable to fully disentangle my own experiences and perceptions from those of my participants. For these reasons I decided not to include my reflections as a supplemental data source as I had originally planned.

In addition, I collected textual information regarding news and events related to diversity, social justice, racial discrimination, and other matters that may pertain to institutional diversity climate at Southeastern University. Although these documents were not incorporated into my analysis as data to be coded, keeping abreast of relevant events at my participants' university enhanced my theoretical sensitivity and ability to make meaning of their worlds (Charmaz, 2006). I compiled a list of relevant resources (e.g., primary student newspaper, alternative or audience-specific student publications, institutional website, student Facebook page). In addition, the questionnaire participants completed at our first session asked them to identify the campus information sources they most frequently rely upon, and I sought these out as well. During data generation I periodically searched these resources for relevant information and wrote short summaries of what I found.

Data Analysis

As discussed previously, the defining feature of a grounded theory study, and what differentiates ground theory from all other research methods, is the result of the analysis process: a theory. Grounded theorists generally focus on developing substantive theories that are grounded in and explain the phenomenon or process of study. This theory is generated inductively from the data; it is not imposed upon the data, as in traditional, deductive research (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Holton, 2009). A researcher must be theoretically sensitive in order to generate theory, meaning that she must possess sufficient academic and experiential knowledge to make

meaning of the data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999).

Generating Theory

Generating theory requires researchers to engage in conceptual abstraction when analyzing data. Conceptual abstraction moves beyond the level of description to explain a concept from the data in an abstract way. In this sense, the factual “accuracy” of data becomes irrelevant, because a concept generated from the data is an abstraction about the phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holton, 2007, 2009). Put another way, the goal of grounded theory research is to explain, not describe: “Grounded theory is not about the accuracy of descriptive units, nor is it an act of interpreting meaning as ascribed by the participants in a study; rather, it is an act of conceptual abstraction” with the goal of developing a substantive theory (Holton, 2009, p. 42).

To generate substantive theory, the researcher needs to move beyond the “idiosyncratic and individual,” which is “necessary, but not sufficient” for theorizing; theorizing requires us to “be able to bring a conceptual perspective to the situational and the individual experience. And therein lies the power of grounded theory” (Piantanida et al., 2004, p. 335). The methods of grounded theory, including the constant comparative approach (described in more detail below) and theoretical sampling (discussed earlier in this chapter), were developed to help researchers identify and elaborate upon relationships among concepts drawn from the data in order to explain the phenomenon of study via a substantive theory.

In developing a grounded theory, researchers analyze the data for relationships among concepts; this process results in the generation of the substantive theory (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). These relationships among concepts are the foundation of theory because they answer the question of *why*: “Strong theory, in our view, delves into underlying processes so as to understand the systematic reasons for a particular occurrence or nonoccurrence” (Sutton & Staw, 1995, p. 378). Thomas and James (2006) have criticized the grounded theory method for producing substantive theories that focus on understanding everyday experiences and therefore do not rise to the level of explanation and abstraction required of “strong theory”; they argue that social science research methods can never produce the caliber of theory such as that found in the natural sciences, and that grounded theorists are therefore not delivering what they promise. However, their criticism brings us back to Glaser and Strauss’s original purpose for developing the grounded theory method: to challenge the notion that verifying the “big ideas” of “theoretical capitalists” is a more worthy goal than generating new knowledge that has practical utility for people’s everyday lives (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). (Thomas and James’s assertion that social science research can never, or rarely ever, produce “true” theory is a larger question that cannot be answered here but is worthy of scholarly debate.) With this research, I sought to generate a substantive theory of how and why college students develop and sustain interracial friendships, questions to which the extant empirical literature on the topic provides no answers.

A good theory answers questions of *where* and *when* in addition to *how* and *why*, and therefore context is also a critical component of the substantive theory that results from grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Thus, grounded theory analysis procedures were designed to elucidate crucial elements of the context in which the phenomenon of study is situated. “Delineating the context or the conditions under which something happens, is said, done, and/or felt is just as important as coming up with the ‘right’ concept. Context not only grounds concepts, but also minimizes the chances of distorting meaning and/or misrepresenting intent” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 57). Additionally, clearly situating a grounded theory in the context from which it was derived is a key criterion for a rigorous and credible substantive theory (what Glaser and Strauss [1967] term “fit”). The substantive theory I generated through this research illuminates how institutional contextual factors shape college students’ interracial friendship development and sustainment.

I was initially drawn to the grounded theory method for my research precisely because I wanted to conduct research that is applicable to my own, and others’, professional practice as student affairs educators (I elaborate further on my positionality relative to grounded theory later in this chapter). I also wanted to move beyond what we already know (or think we know) about the processes by which college students achieve the learning and development outcomes related to campus diversity. Grounded theory was the only method of inquiry that would allow me to achieve the vision I had for my research: to generate a theory of college students’ interracial friendship development and sustainment that can inform

purposeful changes to institutional policies and programming, thereby ensuring student learning and development. In chapter five I discuss the contributions to educational practice that my substantive theory makes.

To generate a substantive theory, a researcher must use grounded theory methods; in this sense, grounded theory is a process (Charmaz, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Suddaby, 2006). The centerpiece of the grounded theory process of analysis is the constant comparative approach; it is a defining feature of the grounded theory method and is common to all three versions. The specific coding procedures and terminology for each version vary, however. I next describe the constant comparative approach as well as the coding procedure I used. I also discuss the critical role of memoing in grounded theory analysis.

The Constant Comparative Approach to Data Analysis

The hallmark of the constant comparative approach is the simultaneous collection and analysis of data: the researcher collects initial data and begins analysis immediately—starting after the first interview—to identify preliminary patterns and categories. The researcher then continues collecting and analyzing data, and as analysis progresses, the level of analysis moves from detailed and descriptive to broad and conceptual. Concepts within the data are first compared to each other to generate categories, then new incidents are compared with existing categories, and finally categories are compared with each other. The constant comparative process provides a built-in credibility check for the grounded theory researcher by ensuring that only concepts that are truly relevant to the data remain in the analysis

(Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; I. Dey, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Holton, 2007). Ultimately, the goal of the constant comparison approach is for “the theory [to] be kept in a state of permanent confrontation with data” (Moghaddam, 2006, p. 6). McGhee et al. (2007) call the constant comparative process the “inductive-deductive interplay” because it involves the inductive process of looking for patterns in the data, and then the deductive process of testing the “mini theories” that the researcher forms from the data (p. 335; also Suddaby, 2006).

Coding Procedures

Each of the three versions of the grounded theory method proposes a specific approach to the coding process. These three approaches are more similar than different, but there are some significant differences in terminology and in the underlying philosophical orientation to data and analysis (i.e., objectivist versus constructivist). Consistent with the constructivist design of my study, I chose to use Charmaz’s (2004, 2006) approach to coding. Her approach is derived from Glaser’s as she was a student of his; however, she altered his approach to reflect the constructivist belief that a researcher’s analytic conclusions are not neutral or objective but rather a product of her interpretations shaped by her prior experiences, knowledge, and values (Charmaz 2003a, 2004, 2006; Thomas & James, 2006). Charmaz’s approach has two analytic phases: initial coding and focused coding; these are followed by theoretical integration. Below I describe the specific procedures I followed in analyzing the data for this study. I used QSR International’s NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software to store and analyze all data.

Initial coding. I began coding interview transcripts with initial coding, which involves remaining open to all possible analytical interpretations in order to make meaning of the data. In the earliest stages of my analysis (the first three interview transcripts), I coded each 1-2 lines of the transcript with an action code (a gerund) in order to remain focused on processes, as Charmaz (2013) recommends. After coding the first few transcripts, I broadened my coding from line by line to “chunks” in order to focus more naturalistically on entire ideas that indicated a single concept; these chunks ranged from half a sentence at the smallest to a paragraph at the largest. The following excerpt from one of my early analytic memos illustrates my early coding procedures:

... sometimes I code together one or two sentences (I try not to do more than that), and sometimes I code sections of a sentence, but my guiding principle is that the chunk—whatever its size—represents a single idea that hangs together. That makes much more sense to me than to code by some artificial cut-off point like a line or a sentence. But I am conscious of trying to keep the chunks as small as possible while ensuring that they will still be meaningful when I go back to them as fractured pieces of data (i.e., I want to make sure each chunk has sufficient context for me to understand what it’s about when it’s standing alone). If I’m remembering correctly from the workshop I attended with Kathy Charmaz last July, this seems to make the most sense to allow me to make meaning of my data.

Where possible I used *in vivo* codes to incorporate my participants' language; in other cases, I created codes that reflected their meanings as closely as possible. In Table 2 I present some of the initial codes I assigned, indicating which of these are *in vivo* codes.

In each instance when I considered a line or chunk of data, I would reflect upon whether what the participant was conveying was similar to a concept for which I'd already developed an initial code, in which case I would assign that existing code, or if it seemed to suggest a new concept, in which case I would assign a new code. I considered both explicit and implicit meanings contained in the excerpt and I "look[ed] for commonalities and differences between incidents" (Kelle, 2007, p. 196). This procedure is the foundation of the constant comparative process—each new instance of data is compared to previously analyzed instances to generate conceptual ideas (Charmaz, 2006). Many of my early codes were more descriptive than conceptually abstract, but as my analysis progressed, my codes began to focus on "the larger story" in the data—"what is going on here?" (Charmaz, 2004, 2006, 2013). I also generated dimensional codes at this point; these codes did not represent concepts but rather dimensions such as point on the friendship timeline (e.g., prior to friendship, early/development, transition to close friendship, middle/sustaining, precipitating friendship demise, after friendship demise, future), influence on friendship (e.g., positive, negative, or no influence), and comparison to other friends (e.g., positive or more than negative or less than, similar or the same, not more or less just different). I also created a reference node, "negative case," to allow me to code an instance of data as reflecting the opposite or negative of the initial indicator node at which it was coded.

Table 2. Selected initial codes and illustrative data excerpts.

Code	In vivo?	Example Data Excerpt(s)
“Taking a risk” to make new friends	yes	<i>It was the first week of college or whatever and I had some new acquaintances from an English and bowling class that I like met in class and we talked a lot. And the same evening I ran into them and they wanted to go bowling. So already was the first week of school and I thought, “Oh, I don’t really know these people but I’ll just take a risk and I’ll go bowling and make new friends.” And what I didn’t know they had invited other people already and it turned out that they invited their suitemates which Alisha was one of them. So that evening I met her and then there’s probably six or seven of us or whatever. And we went bowling. So this is my first time meeting everyone basically. And these people eventually became the seven to ten people I talk to or hang out with on a daily basis, so my friend group I guess.</i>
Connecting through shared interests	no	<i>(1) I mean, Erik and I are from different cultures. But we have some of the same interests and we live in close proximity to one another, so it doesn’t surprise me that we became friends. (2) We have music, we listen to the same type of music and stuff. And we kind of have the same kind of activities, so that’s how we bonded, kind of. (3) And at one point when other people were talking, I would talk to her and see what she liked. And a common ground that we found was anime and cosplay, and there again our personalities kind of clicked because we just talked about what we liked about it, what we don’t like about it, what we would like to do with it, if we would like to go to a convention one day, and it kind of sparked off from there.</i>
Feeling able to “talk about anything”	yes	<i>(1) She was intellectually stimulating, because we could talk about anything for hours, and we both have such interesting responses... (2) And then I think that’s just how close we’ve become. We can literally talk about anything and we’re together every day.</i>

Table 2 Continued

Code	In vivo?	Example Data Excerpt(s)
Occupying judgment-free zone	no	<i>Well, I think that we definitely - we're very open with each other. I feel I can be honest with her almost - I've found that I've started to tell her things before I even tell my roommate who we've been together since freshman year, we're both animal science majors, or I'll even tell her stuff before I tell my boyfriend, which was really a huge change because I always call him first for anything. So if I got a job offer, or I don't know - It's just really refreshing to have somebody who's so non-judgmental. I feel I can talk to her about anything, and she can talk to me about anything too. And I think we're at this comfort level where it's even gotten to the point where we send Snap Chats like using the bathroom. Like, hey, I'm on the toilet, what are you doing? [Laughter] So we've really grown to that almost like a sister type comfort level just in a year, and I think it comes from us just being so open and honest with one another.</i>
Seeking alternate perspectives	no	<i>(1) My close friends are often of different ethnicities, and they have been since probably early high school. I wanted to continue that because they teach me a lot. And I really like seeing their perspective. And those are the ones who I really treasure their friendship the most. (2) That's probably been why I've been so attracted to this friendship, like just I know how I would handle something but how would Alisha handle something? What would Alisha do, I guess? So it's a whole new idea of going out and getting advice or getting information about something.</i>
Stepping outside of comfort zone	no	<i>I considered [studying abroad], but we both really encouraged each other to do it because I was really scared to do it, just being so far away from home and being in another country and not knowing anybody. So we were like, let's just do it. We'll both be gone, it's like we're not gonna be missing out on anything because neither of us will be here. So yeah, we really encouraged each other mainly to do it at the same time, too. We both knew that it was something we had thought about, but to do it at the same time.</i>

I continued initial coding through all individual interview transcripts from my first fifteen participants (17 transcripts). I did not code the transcripts in chronological order but rather chose to first code the transcripts from the participants who shared the richest information with me during their interviews, as I felt these held the most promise for developing concepts. After coding two or three transcripts I would write a memo reflecting on my analytic progress and laying out the next steps in my analysis. I would also periodically consult the grounded theory literature to make sure my analytic procedures and decisions were methodologically supported and renew my confidence that I was on the right track. As I coded the second half of these 17 transcripts, I began to consider which of the initial codes I had generated might indicate specific theoretical concepts (i.e., are indicators), in order to move toward increasing abstraction. I used memos and NVivo's sets and relationship nodes features to group these indicators into broader, more abstract concepts that focused on processes. Another reflective excerpt from my analytic memos illustrates my thought process at this point in my analysis:

What Glaser (1978) does discuss that I find helpful is the relationship between indicators and concepts. With my extensive list of open codes, I essentially have a list of indicators (some may rise to the level of concepts), and my next task, in moving to selective/focused coding, is to determine what CONCEPT each of these indicators points toward. Per Glaser, I can do this by (1) comparing indicators to each other and (2) comparing indicators to the emerging concept, looking for "similarities, differences, and degrees of consistency of meaning" (p. 62). Comparing more

indicators to each concept improves its fit until it reaches the point of saturation. I must keep modifying the meaning of each concept as I see new indicators of it. One thing I could possibly improve upon in making comparisons and refining my codes is to open the coding summary for each code when I code a new indicator; this will allow me to look at the similarities and differences between the current indicator and previously coded indicators, facilitating comparisons.

After I coded these 17 transcripts, I went back and re-coded the first three transcripts I had coded to check the rigor of my analyses and to apply codes I generated later in my analysis to these first transcripts. Aside from applying these new codes, I found that my coding was consistent from the first pass to the second, and therefore I did not feel it was necessary to re-code any additional transcripts for the sake of rigor. I also felt that the data I had and would add through theoretical sampling made re-coding the remaining transcripts unnecessary for reasons of theoretical saturation, a decision supported by Glaser and Strauss (1967). I reflected extensively upon my analysis and the concepts I had generated to begin to consider how they connected. Based on these analytic reflections, I developed initial hypotheses about the processes I was seeing in the data, and I constructed journal prompts for participants to investigate these hypotheses (Charmaz, 2003a, 2004, 2013). While participants were completing their journal responses, I coded the two pair interview transcripts. My coding at this point was still primarily focused on identifying indicators and concepts, but I broadened my focus even further to larger chunks of data that conveyed more abstract meanings and dimensional variation.

Focused coding. After I finished coding the 19 interview transcripts (individual and pair) from my first wave of participants, I stepped back from analyzing data sources to look at the “big picture” of my analysis. I reviewed my indicators and preliminary concepts seeking to determine how they fit together and what larger concepts, or potential categories, they indicated. I memoed extensively at this point on promising concepts and their possible relationships, and used NVivo’s analytic tools to help me creatively explore my data in different ways. After engaging with my data in this way for several weeks, I was ready to transition to focused coding. The goal of focused coding is to “develop the most salient categories” in order to begin integrating the developing substantive theory (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Focused coding involves comparing categories to categories in order to flesh out the full properties of each potential category as well as to determine how each category relates to other categories. Previously identified concepts and indicators are subsumed into these broader categories, which form the building blocks of the substantive theory, as the analysis grows more conceptually abstract (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006). However, initial and focused coding are not fully distinct processes, as the researcher may still identify new codes when she is engaging in focused coding (Charmaz, 2013); in practice, coding progresses along a gradient without clear demarcation points (see Figure 4). In analyzing the six additional participants I recruited in fall 2014, I primarily used the techniques of focused coding, although I did identify some new indicators and concepts at this point. My theoretical sampling for participants whose friendships had ended also allowed me to make valuable comparisons between their experiences and those of my other participants, which greatly

aided my ability to identify the properties and dimensions of each potential category and helped me to achieve theoretical saturation.

Figure 4. The progression of coding in constructivist grounded theory data analysis.

After analyzing the six transcripts from the fall 2014 participants, I analyzed journal data from all 21 participants (by prompt rather than by participant, as the prompts were designed to theoretically sample for specific concepts that had potential to become categories) using focused coding to further develop the properties and dimensions of these potential categories and fully saturate them. In all, I developed 689 initial codes, 222 of which I discarded during focused coding as they were not relevant to my developing theory. During focused coding and theoretical integration (the final stage of analysis) I grouped many of these codes under broader, conceptually abstract “parent nodes” (in NVivo’s terminology) to aid integration of my theory.

Theoretical integration. The final stage of my data analysis, theoretical integration, involved extensive conceptual memo writing to determine which of my concepts and categories warranted a place in my substantive theory, flesh out the properties and dimensions of each category, determine the relationships among them (e.g., as strategies or required/facilitating conditions), and identify data excerpts that best illustrated these properties, dimensions, and relationships. During this final, theoretical integration phase of analysis I also developed and memoed on the core category around which I built my theory. The core category has the greatest “explanatory power” (Glaser, 1978, p. 96) among the categories generated by analysis, and it has clear relationships to all other categories (Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 1999; Holton, 2007). During focused coding, I tried out different core categories around which to build the theory (Charmaz, 2004), using the technique of memoing (described below) to work with my ideas. These conceptual memos formed the foundation for chapter four, in which I present my substantive theory. In this stage I also created models in NVivo to visually document the relationships between the categories and concepts comprising my theory; I present these in chapter four as well.

Grappling with the Vagueness of Grounded Theory Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures for qualitative research methods range from imprecise at best to frustratingly vague at worst due to the interpretive role of the researcher. This problem is especially true for grounded theory. A sizeable portion of the methodological literature on grounded theory analysis is devoted to clarifying or establishing analytic procedures (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg,

2005; Piantanida et al., 2004; Rennie, 1998). A particular point of discussion in the grounded theory literature concerns categories: how they are formed, how they interrelate, and even what a “category” is at a fundamental level. Despite the insistence of Glaser and other adherents of Classic Grounded Theory that categories “emerge” or are “discovered” (e.g., Glaser, 1978, 2009; Holton, 2007, 2009), other grounded theorists have taken a more moderate—and arguably, more epistemologically defensible—perspective that categories are created by the researcher through the interpretive process of analysis, as discussed earlier in this chapter (e.g., Bryant, 2003; Charmaz, 2003a, 2005, 2006; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; Kelle, 2007). I. Dey (2007) argues for the need to ensure that categories generated by grounded theory analysis are grounded, which he defines as “when they provide logical and economical accounts of empirical observations; they do not so much represent these observations as explain them” (p. 177); that is, categories should be abstract, not descriptive.

Critical to the construction of categories is the notion of theoretical sensitivity—the researcher’s ability to use her prior knowledge of concepts and theories from the literature as well as her own experiences as heuristic devices (“sensitizing concepts”) to make meaning of the data. “Categories are not simply generated by data, but through judgement [*sic*] in terms of some cognitive frame of reference by which we make sense of experience” (I. Dey, 2007, p. 170). However, the researcher must ensure that use of these sensitizing concepts does not cause the analysis to become deductive or focused on verification, thereby “forcing” the data (Charmaz, 2003b; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; Holton, 2009; Kelle, 2007). In my discussion of rigor and credibility later in this

chapter, I describe how I ensured an appropriate level of theoretical sensitivity as well as how I engaged in reflective memoing to avoid lapsing into deduction or verification.

The Role of Memoing in Grounded Theory Data Analysis

As Piantanida et al. (2004) aptly describe, “the act of writing memos [is] a way of coming to know” (p. 340); memos help the researcher to recognize when a category has become saturated as well as to make connections across concepts to establish the interrelationships that are the foundation of theory. Therefore, memoing should begin as soon as the analyst starts to code, continue through the constant comparative process of data generation and analysis, and conclude only after the research report has been written (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 1999). As I described above, I engaged in analytic memoing throughout data generation and analysis, which enabled me to reflect on comparisons among concepts in my data and on the data generation and analysis processes overall, as well as to systemically record my ideas about the theory I was developing (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999).

Memos have several important purposes in grounded theory analysis. First, they are fundamental to the analysis process because they provide the structure for the substantive theory that is generated as well as draft text for the final report. The content of memos parallels the analysis process: as analysis progress from initial coding to focused coding with codes becoming increasingly more abstract, memos also increase in their level of abstraction. In addition, memos are critical to theoretical sampling as they help the researcher identify

questions to pursue via additional data collection. Memos also provide the researcher with space to explore ideas, test theoretical integration, make conjectures, organize thoughts, and reflect upon data collection and analysis—they are the grounded theorist’s intellectual work space (Charmaz, 2004, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Holton, 2007; McGhee et al., 2007; Mills et al., 2006a; Piantanida et al., 2004). Finally, memoing enhances the credibility and dependability of the researcher’s findings by establishing an audit trail (Cooney, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mertens, 2010), as I discuss in more detail later. In my own conceptual memos, I explored directions for further sampling, brainstormed and tried out possible relationships between categories (hypotheses), and, as my analysis progressed, worked through my ideas about how to connect concepts (indicators) into categories from which to build my theory. My procedural memos documented the analytic and theoretical sampling decisions I made throughout my research.

Researcher Subjectivity and Positionality

Qualitative researchers reject the positivist notion of researcher objectivity in favor of the belief that research cannot be—nor should be—value-neutral (Ahern, 1999; S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Mertens, 2010). Given this fact, qualitative researchers must make their positionality and subjectivity explicit because they affect the choices a researcher makes in every phase of the study (S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln, 1995). Although the terms “positionality” and “subjectivity” are closely related and are often used interchangeably in the qualitative literature, they do differ. Positionality is the researcher’s relationship to her topic and participants, including the experiences, values, and beliefs that influence these

relationships (S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Krathwohl, 2009). Subjectivity, by comparison, consists of the researcher's broader values and beliefs, sometimes called "worldview," that shape her approach to the study (Ratner, 2002). Situating myself within my study allows readers to judge my methodology, analysis, and conclusions, which is essential for the credibility and rigor of qualitative research (Ahern, 1999; Merriam, 2002). In addition, as a feminist researcher, I have a duty to place myself "within the frame of the picture that [I attempt] to paint" (Harding, 1987, p. 9) by describing my positionality and subjectivity.

Providing clear statements of positionality and subjectivity are no less important for grounded theorists than for other qualitative researchers. A researcher using the grounded theory method must "acknowledge his/her prior knowledge and tacit knowledge, to bring such knowledge into the open, to discuss how it has affected the theory development" (Cutcliffe, 2000, p. 1479). Interpretivist and constructivist (as opposed to objectivist) grounded theorists emphasize that the substantive theory that results from the analysis process is generated by the researcher and is therefore shaped by the researcher's positionality (Becker, 1993; Charmaz, 2004, 2005, 2006; Mills et al., 2006a; Piantanida et al., 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Suddaby, 2006; Thomas & James, 2006). Even Glaser and Strauss (1967), in their foundational book, stated that the researcher should use illustrative data to show how she came to her conclusions and derived the theory. Furthermore, taking a reflexive stance toward positionality and subjectivity is essential given the significant influence of the researcher's interpretations on shaping her research process and conclusions (Charmaz, 2003a, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hall & Callery, 2001; Mills et al., 2006a;

Thomas & James, 2006). Reflexivity is defined as “awareness of the ways in which the researcher as an individual with a particular social identity and background has an impact on the research process” (Robson, 2002, p. 22, quoted in McGhee et al., 2007, p. 335). In other words, researchers need to critically examine how their positionality and subjectivity affect the decisions they make throughout the study.

Below, I present statements of my subjectivity and positionality relative to my research topic and method of inquiry. I hope these are sufficiently transparent to allow readers to assess the credibility of my analysis and the substantive theory I’ve generated as well as the rigor of my methodology.

Statement of Subjectivity

Statement of subjectivity in relation to worldview. My most salient identity is as a radical feminist, and this identity colors my research, including choice of topics to study and approach to studying them. I aim to further social justice through my research, an aim that derives largely from my feminist identity but also from the recognition, which I gained as a women’s studies major in college, that I hold privilege on many levels (including my race, ethnicity, culture, language, and sexual orientation) and therefore I have a social responsibility to employ my privilege to advocate for those who do not share it. Sometimes I pursue research that is explicitly transformative in its goals, while at other times my goal is to highlight voices and experiences that are absent from or marginalized within the literature; the present study is a combination of both of these aims. My interest in social justice and equity leads me to want to surface inequities and issues of power and privilege in a variety of

contexts and social institutions. Because my field is higher education, I tend to focus on these issues within the context of higher education institutions, as the people within these institutions experience them. As Charmaz (2005) proclaims, “Social justice researchers openly bring their shoulds and oughts [i.e., their values] into the discourse of inquiry” (p. 510). My own shoulds and oughts undoubtedly shape my research, and I am proud to say so.

The constructivist researcher interprets participants’ stories and voices, which gives the researcher power over participants (S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Magolda & Weems, 2002). Feminist researchers have further problematized the issues of power and privilege inherent in studying “others” and making knowledge claims about their truths (see, e.g., Collins, 1991; Harding, 1987; Laible, 2003; Young, 2003). In this study, many of my participants were of different racial or ethnic backgrounds than me and, because I identify as a White person in a society that privileges Whiteness, I therefore hold greater racial privilege—and the power that accompanies that—than they do (A. G. Johnson, 2006). (Of course, we also differed in other aspects of our identities, and some participants may hold greater privilege than me along these dimensions, for example, male participants.) Given this power differential, I approached this study with concerns about co-opting my participants’ knowledge and voices for my own ends (Lincoln, 1995). However, as Shope (2006) notes, “To refuse to engage in cross-cultural research or any research where one is an outsider implies that it is impossible to communicate across boundaries of difference and search for mutual understanding” (p. 175). I agree, and I determined that the potential advantages of my research for promoting social justice and equity outweighed any potential harm.

To minimize the risk of exploiting my participants and misrepresenting their voices and experiences, I needed to “anticipate how the public and policy makers will receive, distort, and misread [my] data” (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000, p. 123; see also Charmaz, 2006), especially since one of the goals for my research was to inform institutional diversity policies and practices. I’ve incorporated this concern in writing chapter five. Reflexivity was also essential to my research process (Milner, 2007; Young, 2003); I strove to “be aware of these power differentials and be openly reflective about how issues of power and positionality shape the inquiry process” (Magolda & Weems, 2002, p. 503). I sought participants’ feedback on my interpretations and on the substantive theory I generated so that “one voice or narrative is not privileged over another” (Milner, 2007, p. 396). I also felt a need to “hold [myself] accountable for [my] knowledge claims and the results of [my] knowledge claims” (Young, 2003, p. 63), including how they may have affected my participants (Young & Skrla, 2003). I further discuss some of these strategies in the section addressing criteria for rigor and credibility below.

Statement of subjectivity in relation to the grounded theory method. My statement of subjectivity is not complete without a discussion of my reasons for choosing grounded theory as my method of inquiry. Although I initially selected grounded theory because it was the method most congruent with the topic and goals of my study, I have come to embrace grounded theory because the foundational values underpinning it mirror my own values and beliefs. Reading chapter one of *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Glaser, 1978) in the summer of 2012 crystallized my attraction to grounded theory: I am attracted to the trust that

grounded theory places in a researcher—even a novice researcher—and her scholarly abilities. In fact, novice researchers arguably do the best grounded theory because they are less contaminated by preconceptions and methodological and disciplinary doctrine (Glaser, 2009). Grounded theory tends to intimidate those who are unfamiliar with it, but I find it to be welcoming, inviting, and reassuring. Glaser (2009) tells me that I can do it, and do it well, without any special knowledge or tools; all I really need is an open mind. The notion of theoretical sensitivity, so central to the constant comparative analysis approach, requires the researcher to bring herself into the research process, and this appeals to me as well—my experiences and knowledge are valuable as both data and analytic tools, unlike in other methods of inquiry. The preeminent grounded theory methodologists—Glaser (1978, 1999, 2009), Corbin and Strauss (2008), and Charmaz (2006, 2013)—all reassured me that I had the capacity to do grounded theory; it is innate and natural, and if I trusted myself and trusted the process, I would make a meaningful contribution to scholarship.

Thus, the grounded theory method has empowered me as a novice researcher and scholar, and this is why I am passionate about it. In contrast, so many of the other methods of inquiry I have studied have been very inaccessible, intimidating, and frankly unwelcoming of those who are not established experts. In *Theoretical Sensitivity*, Glaser (1978) discusses how some researchers get lost in “deifying” the theories of established scholars, thereby “los[ing] his own valuable contribution” (p. 9). He further derides established scholars as “theoretical capitalists” who relegate other scholars to the role of “theoretical serfs”: “The grounded theorist is not a theoretical serf. He is merely a theorist among theorists, trying to generate

good ideas that fit and work, placing other sociologists and not defying them, claiming analytic freedom, and earning the respect and recognition worthy of *his* theory and its contribution” (p. 9). Glaser uses strong language to unequivocally paint grounded theory as a democratic or egalitarian method, in contrast to traditional research and scholarship methods.

In this way, grounded theory aligns with my social justice values because it was designed to bring marginalized voices and perspectives to light. In its original conception, these voices were those of the “theoretical serf” scholars, but in its newest version, constructivist grounded theory, it aims to elucidate the processes of justice and injustice (Charmaz, 2005). Interestingly, while Glaser’s version of grounded theory is predominately objectivist, he has recently (1999) argued that the method is much better suited for inquiry into marginalized populations and settings, compared to other research methods, because of its non-preconception requirement—it releases researchers from perpetuating dominant perspectives. I inherited a strong commitment to egalitarianism from my mother, who made sure I understood from a young age that no one is better than anyone else simply because of who they are. Glaser’s (1978) diatribe against the “deification” of “great men” and “big ideas” in social science research therefore resonates strongly with me. More recently, Glaser (1999) has noted that many researchers are attracted to grounded theory for these same reasons: “People are latching onto it and feeling confident about producing something; they are feeling creative, original, and meaningfully relevant. ... It frees the researcher to be his or her own theorist, and it is empowering” (p. 840).

Another feature of grounded theory that appeals to me is how grounded theory methods bridge the often separate worlds of the scholar and the practitioner (Glaser, 1978). A practitioner has no use for “big ideas” in her daily life and “does not want to be told what [she] already knows” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 13), but rather wants something that will help her make changes to her circumstances, and the substantive theory produced as the end product of grounded theory research provides this (Charmaz, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ultimately, I aimed for my study, and the theory that has resulted from it, to be useful for institutions and student affairs practitioners who design diversity programming. My hope in embarking upon this research was to produce a theory that would lead to change in institutional practices and policies that seek to promote diversity-related student learning. Grounded theory methods were well suited for this aim because their purpose is to generate a substantive theory with practical utility; in fact, grounded theory may be the *only* qualitative methodology congruent with the goals I held for my research (Piantanida et al., 2004).

Statement of Positionality

A qualitative grounded theory researcher (as with all qualitative researchers) “brings the whole self into the process” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 13). I brought to this study personal experience with the topic of interracial friendships, and I describe my experiences here so that my positionality is clear for my readers. My closest friend for the last two years of high school and throughout college was a woman of Asian Indian background. I had known her since eighth grade, but we became good friends toward the end of high school because we had many classes together and were involved in the same extracurricular

activities. My friend was born in India but moved to the U.S. with her parents when she was two years old. We were inseparable and spent almost all of our time in school and as much time as possible out of school with each other. I became close with her parents and siblings as well since I spent many hours at her house. It took me a while to learn to understand her parents' accent, but I loved it when her mom would cook traditional Indian dishes for me. While I clearly noticed that she and I had different cultural backgrounds, I never gave much critical thought to that fact since we were, from my perspective, so much alike.

My friend and I chose to attend the same college, and our friendship went through a difficult point during our first year. Soon after we arrived on campus, she found a network of Indian American friends and started dating an Indian American man. She and I spent less time together as she sought to spend more time with these new friends. I was hurt because I felt like she was rejecting me. We used to be so similar; why did we now seem to be so different? Looking back, I can see she wanted to immerse herself in a community of friends who shared her cultural identity; she was probably tired of always feeling like an outsider at our predominantly White university and had found others who understood what she was going through. By our third year of college, we were able to renegotiate our relationship to embrace our differences as well as our similarities. We remain close today. My experience in this friendship blended with my personal passion for and professional commitment to social justice, which I describe next, to generate my current research topic.

I have worked in the field of student affairs education since 2008, primarily in academic advising. I share the profession's value for creating inclusive campus environments

for students of various cultural backgrounds (ACPA, 2006; Council for the Advancement of Standards, n.d.; NASPA, 2013). I also believe that student affairs educators have a professional responsibility to help students develop respect for diversity as well as the cross-cultural competencies that are in high demand by employers and necessary to function in our increasingly globalized world (Milem & Hakuta, 2000). In my initial literature review for this study, I found substantial evidence documenting the beneficial effects of intercultural interaction on college students' academic and personal growth and development, and I have also witnessed these effects first-hand in my advising practice. Thus, I value intercultural interaction and relationships on both a personal and professional level, and that value shaped my decision to pursue this research. I also agree with Zylstra's (2011) assertion that "to begin to shift toward enacting means of social justice, student affairs educators must begin to see their work in terms of advocacy rather than awareness" (p. 382). Although this research did not have an explicitly transformative intent, I hope that my substantive theory will contribute, even if only incrementally, to changes in policy and practice that will enhance social justice on college campuses, increase students' (and professionals') critical consciousness, and create equitable campus environments through systemic change.

I recognize that the experiences and values I have shared here have the potential to bias my search for and interpretation of data related to the topic of this study. However, from the perspective of a grounded theorist, my experiences also helped me to make sense of and interpret my data; they are a source of theoretical sensitivity (Baker et al., 1992; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Indeed, Glaser & Strauss (1967) note

that personal experiences (the researcher's as well as others') are just as rigorous as other sources of data and can help the researcher describe the substantive theory and its practical relevance in the written report. Therefore, they encourage researchers to "deliberately cultivate such reflections on personal experience" (p. 252). Continued reflective memoing throughout my study helped me to identify these assumptions and recognize how they may have shaped my research decisions and interpretations (Charmaz, 2003a; Hall & Callery, 2001; McGhee et al., 2007; Mills et al., 2006a). As previously stated, constructivist researchers generally recognize that it is undesirable—indeed, impossible—to eliminate the researcher's experiences and perspectives in the interest of "objectivity." However, I also had an obligation to ensure that my own experiences with and perspectives on interracial friendships did not silence or marginalize the voices and experiences of my participants; rather, I sought for our voices to stand together (Milner, 2007; Young, 2003).

Ensuring Credible, Rigorous, and Ethical Research

In qualitative research, the standards for ensuring quality are closely aligned with ethical standards (S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln, 1995; Magolda & Weems, 2002; Merriam, 2002). In constructivist research particularly, the researcher's duty is to faithfully interpret participants' experiences and convey their voices (S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Merriam, 2009). The researcher must take special care to minimize bias in the interpretive process resulting from her own values and perspectives. Because of the researcher's interpretive role, ensuring credibility—which concerns how well a researcher's interpretations capture and

explain participants' realities—is a key criterion of quality for qualitative research (Meadows & Morse, 2001; Merriam, 2002).

Grounded theory methods carry an additional set of criteria for credibility and rigor, beyond the general criteria for qualitative inquiry. These additional criteria can be classified into three categories: (1) criteria for assessing the quality and rigor of the research product (i.e., the substantive theory), (2) criteria for assessing the credibility and rigor of the researcher's analysis and conclusions, and (3) criteria for ensuring methodological rigor and adherence to the defining features of grounded theory research.

Criteria for Assessing the Quality and Rigor of the Product

In *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss (1967) identified four criteria for judging the credibility and quality of a grounded, substantive theory. The first of these, “fit,” concerns how well the substantive theory fits the research context from which it was derived. “Only [by induction from the data] will the theory be closely related to the daily realities (what is actually going on) of substantive areas, and so be highly applicable to dealing with them” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 239). To aid readers in assessing fit, a grounded theory researcher is obligated to provide a clear and full description of the research context and participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Piantanida et al., 2004). The second of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) four criteria is that it must be “readily understandable by ‘laymen’” (p. 239). This criterion relates to the practical utility of the theory: if it is too abstract to be useful to those whom it concerns, then it cannot function as a substantive theory. Their third criterion is congruent with this principle: a substantive theory

must provide participants with a means to understand and control, predict, or otherwise affect the circumstances of the phenomenon or process of study. Put another way, “grounded theory is applicable *in* situations as well as *to* them” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 249). The final criterion for the credibility and quality of a substantive theory is that it must be general and flexible enough to allow for some variation in the phenomenon or process of study (Glaser & Straus, 1967). This is not to say that a grounded theory should be generalizable; indeed, a theory that is generalizable across a wide range of circumstances and situations is by definition *not* a substantive theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, the theory should not be so specific as to explain only a narrow set of circumstances in which the process or phenomenon occurs. A good substantive theory maintains “fidelity to the data” (Goulding, 1999, p. 16) and is parsimonious—just broad enough to account for variation found in the data (Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 1999).

In *Theoretical Sensitivity*, Glaser (1978) slightly modified these four criteria to “fit,” “grab,” and “work,” but the spirit behind them remained the same: credible and rigorous substantive theories derived from grounded theory methods are fundamentally practical; they explain a social process or phenomenon and can be put into use by those who experience the phenomenon or process to predict, control, or make changes to their situation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Straus, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Charmaz’s (2006) criteria for constructivist grounded theory are similar to those originally proposed by Glaser and Strauss; these are (1) credibility (How strong and believable are the researcher’s claims?), (2) originality (What is the theory’s contribution to knowledge?), (3) resonance

(Does the theory make sense to readers, especially participants and those affected by the phenomenon of study?), and (4) usefulness (Does it have practical utility for those affected by the phenomenon of study?). Table 3 summarizes Charmaz's (2006) and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) criteria for assessing the quality and credibility of a substantive theory. I considered these four criteria throughout my analysis. After I generated my substantive theory, I applied these criteria to assess its quality and credibility and also solicited practitioner and member checks (discussed below) for external judgments.

Table 3. Criteria for assessing the quality and rigor of a substantive theory.

Methodologist	Criterion	Pertinent Questions
Charmaz (2006)	Credibility	How strong and believable are the researcher's claims?
	Originality	What is the substantive theory's contribution to knowledge?
	Resonance	Does the substantive theory make sense to readers, especially participants and those affected by the phenomenon of study?
	Usefulness	Does the substantive theory have practical utility for those affected by the phenomenon of study?
Glaser & Strauss (1967)	Fit	How well does the substantive theory fit the research context from which it was derived?
	Grab	Is the substantive theory "readily understandable" by those affected by the phenomenon of study, and can they relate to it?
	Flexibility	Does the substantive theory allow for some variation in the phenomenon or process of study?
	Workability	Does the substantive theory provide participants with a means to understand and control, predict, or otherwise affect the circumstances that comprise the phenomenon or process of study?

In addition, I. Dey (2007) asserts that the validity of a grounded theory depends not just on whether it provides a convincing and sufficient explanation of the phenomenon of study (what Glaser and Strauss call “fit” and Charmaz calls “resonance”), but also on “the degree to which our theoretical claims are consistent with well-established knowledge in the field ... [with] any inconsistency [being] an occasion for further reflection and investigation” (p. 177). Although this language (e.g., “validity”) is objectivist, the essence of his statement is no less true for constructivist grounded theory research. If a researcher’s conclusions wildly differ from what other scholars have found, the researcher needs to consider whether her conclusions and the analysis process by which she produced them are strong enough to account for this disconfirming or contradictory evidence. If they are not, she may need to generate additional data via theoretical sampling or reconsider her analysis and categories; if her findings and analysis are strong, she must present a well-supported justification to defend their credibility and explain the inconsistency. Attending to interpretive rigor (Cooney, 2011), which I next discuss, helped me to establish the credibility of my research.

Criteria for Assessing the Credibility and Rigor of the Researcher’s Analysis and Conclusions (Interpretive Rigor)

Because grounded theories are generated inductively from the data via the researcher’s interpretive meaning making, it is essential that she provide sufficient justification for how she reaches her conclusions to allow readers to evaluate the credibility of those conclusions and the rigor of the analysis process that gave rise to them. This is known as interpretive rigor (Charmaz, 2005, 2006; Chiovitti & Piran, 2003; Corbin &

Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Piantanida et al., 2004; Suddaby, 2006). As with qualitative research generally,

The researcher and the reader ... share joint responsibility [for determining credibility]. The researcher ought to provide sufficiently clear statements of theory and description so that readers can carefully assess the credibility of the theoretical framework he offers. A cardinal rule for the researcher is that whenever he himself feels most dubious about an important interpretation—or foresees that readers may well be dubious—then he should specify quite explicitly upon what kinds of data his interpretation rests. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 232-233)

A grounded theorist can demonstrate the rigor and credibility of her analysis and conclusions through four techniques: (1) ensuring conceptual density and saturation of the theory, (2) developing theoretical sensitivity, (3) writing memos, and (4) taking a reflexive stance. Table 4 lists these techniques for interpretive rigor, as well as how they correspond to Charmaz's (2006) and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) criteria for the substantive theory produced by the analysis and the corresponding procedures I undertook in this study. Below I discuss each of these criteria and indicate how I complied with them in my research.

Ensuring conceptual density and saturation of the theory. In addition to the criteria for assessing the substantive merit of a grounded theory, there are several criteria for judging a theory's conceptual density and saturation. A grounded theory must be sufficiently conceptually dense that it “fit[s] a multitude of situations in its area” and “lends itself to ready modification and formulation in order to handle yet new qualifications required by

changing conditions in what is ‘going on’” (Glaser, 1978, p. 153, emphasis omitted). A conceptually dense theory consists of concepts that are richly described, with the relationships between these concepts fully elaborated and clearly explained.

Table 4. Techniques for interpretive rigor.

Technique	Pertinent Questions to Ask	Connection to Criteria for Theory	Corresponding Procedures in this Study
Conceptual density/saturation	Do the categories comprising the substantive theory seem deep and broad enough to support the theory’s explanatory power, or do the categories and theory seem “thin”?	Credibility, resonance (Charmaz); fit, grab, flexibility, workability (Glaser & Strauss)	Theoretical sampling; remaining in the field until categories are saturated; drawing upon multiple data sources; providing evidence of saturation in the final report; practitioner and member checks
Theoretical sensitivity	Has the researcher incorporated relevant scholarly and experiential knowledge to make meaning of the data and inform analysis, without applying this knowledge deductively to “force” the data?	Originality, resonance, usefulness (Charmaz); fit, flexibility, workability (Glaser & Strauss)	Conducting a second literature review during later analysis; writing reflective memos
Memoing	Did the researcher engage in memoing to document and reflect upon analytic decisions and the research process?	Credibility, originality, resonance (Charmaz); fit, flexibility, workability (Glaser & Strauss)	Writing of analytic and reflective memos throughout the analysis process

Table 4 Continued

Technique	Pertinent Questions to Ask	Connection to Criteria for Theory	Corresponding Procedures in this Study
Reflexivity and relationality	Does the researcher reflect upon how her values, experiences, and knowledge affect her analytic decisions, conclusions, and relationships with participants?	Credibility, resonance, usefulness (Charmaz); grab, workability (Glaser & Strauss)	Including a statement of positionality and subjectivity; writing reflective memos to (1) surface my values, experiences, and embedded assumptions and how they may shape my analysis and my conclusions, and (2) to reflect upon issues of relationality, power, and ethics that arise; writing analytic memos to chart the progress of my analysis

To ensure conceptual density, a researcher must aim for theoretical saturation—to collect sufficient data for each concept within the theory to ensure that it is “fleshed out” and accounts for any variation in the data, as discussed earlier. Achieving saturation requires a researcher to stay in the field long enough to collect sufficient data for each and every concept and category in the theory as well as data informing context. It also requires a researcher to engage in theoretical sampling to collect additional data on particular concepts and categories that are “thin” in terms of their properties or that do not appear to account for variation (Charmaz, 2006; I. Dey, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 1999; Holton, 2007; Suddaby, 2006). As with the other criteria for substantive grounded theories, judging saturation is subjective but relies primarily upon a researcher’s (and a reader’s) assessment of the “explanatory power” of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; also Pergert, 2009).

Researchers should not assume that saturation is self-evident; rather, they should provide evidence that they have considered how fully their categories are saturated (Charmaz, 2006).

In aiming for theoretical saturation, I aimed for Glaser and Strauss's (1967) dictum that the researcher's "job is not to provide a perfect description of an area, but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behavior" (p. 30). I believe that the substantive theory I present in the next chapter does account for the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships and the specific sub-processes and behaviors in which students in these friendships engage. To demonstrate the saturation of the categories comprising my theory, I present the properties and dimensions of each category, along with the facilitating and required conditions and strategies that relate to each category. I provide extensive data excerpts to illustrate these properties, dimensions, and conditions and the variation within them. My theoretical sampling procedures—specifically, my recruitment of six additional participants in fall 2014 using specific criteria drawn from my analysis and my development of journal prompts after coding interview data from my first wave of participants, as described earlier in this chapter—also provide supportive evidence for my claims of saturation. My recruitment of a second wave of participants also demonstrates my commitment to remaining in the field until my categories were saturated. Finally, in reflecting on whether or not my categories had achieved theoretical saturation, I drew upon Glaser's (1978) standard: "when in coding and analyzing both no new properties emerge and the same properties continually emerge as one goes through the full extent of the data," as well as his advice to "trust [my] instincts about whether a category has been saturated or not"

(p. 53). I also considered Corbin and Strauss's (2008) advice that while total saturation is impossible, saturation is "sufficient" when "a category offers considerable depth and breadth of understanding about a phenomenon, and relationships to other categories have been made clear" (p. 149). Based on the procedures outlined in this chapter as well as the level of detail and variation included within my theory, which I present in the next chapter, I feel confident that my substantive theory is saturated and has sufficient explanatory power.

However, the ultimate judgment of saturation lies with the readers of my report as well as with those who seek to apply my theory. This latter audience is especially critical: because the goal of grounded theory research is to generate a substantive theory that has practical utility, seeking practitioner feedback on the theory helps to ensure its fit and workability (per Glaser & Strauss's [1967] criteria) or resonance and usefulness (per Charmaz's [2006] criteria). Therefore, I sought "practitioner checks" (Cooney, 2011; Cutcliffe, 2005) of the substantive theory I generated. The practitioners whom I envision applying my substantive theory in their practice are primarily student affairs educators and administrators seeking to ensure their students achieve the learning outcomes associated with campus diversity by means of facilitating intercultural peer interactions (e.g., deans of students; directors of multicultural student affairs, student leadership programs, Greek life, international programs, student activities, and residence life, among others). I contacted nine practitioners at five different institutions (two public research universities, one public master's university, one private research university, and one private women's college), representing the areas of residence life, retention, leadership and community engagement

programs, and multicultural student support services; all were practitioners with whom I have established professional relationships. I provided them with both the full and a summarized version of my substantive theory and asked them to provide feedback focusing on four specific areas aligning with Charmaz's (2006) and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) criteria for quality, as detailed in Table 3 (see Appendix H for the text of email I sent to practitioners). Four of the nine practitioners I contacted provided feedback on my theory. Overall, all four indicated that my theory resonated with what they had seen among the students they've worked with at their institutions, aligning with Charmaz's (2006) criteria of resonance and credibility and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) criteria of fit and grab. They also felt that my theory provided new insight to inform their own practice as student affairs educators in different functional areas (one each in residence life, multicultural student support services, student engagement, and leadership programs), attesting to Charmaz's (2006) criteria of originality and usefulness and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) criterion of workability. A few provided feedback on specific aspects of my theory that they felt would benefit from additional elaboration or clarification, and I incorporated their comments and insights into the discussion of my theory in chapter four.

Drawing upon two sources of data—interviews and participant journals—allowed for better theory generation, as the differences among the data “[yield] more information on categories” than would a single source of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 66). It also allowed for triangulation, which enhances credibility by allowing the researcher to check for consistency across data sources (Mertens, 2010). However, qualitative researchers should not

seek confirmation among data sources, because doing so assumes that a “truth” exists (Silverman, 2006); rather, triangulation is “a means of enlarging the landscape of [a researcher’s] inquiry, offering a deeper and more comprehensive picture” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 393). In addition, because the goal of grounded theory research is theoretical abstraction rather than description, the accuracy of participants’ accounts was not my goal (Breckenridge & S. R. Jones, 2009; Charmaz, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holton, 2007, 2009). Rather, my accuracy target was “how accurately the [substantive] theory explains the situation” (Cooney, 2011, p. 19). For this reason, member checks focused on confirmation or descriptive accuracy of participants’ voices and experiences that are common in other forms of qualitative research were inappropriate for my grounded theory study (Charmaz, 2006; Hall & Callery, 2001).

However, Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) and Charmaz’s (2006) criteria for the quality of a substantive theory emphasize the fit or resonance of the theory as well as the theory’s practical utility for those affected by the phenomenon of study. Therefore, while traditional qualitative member checks were not be appropriate, soliciting feedback on the theory is still an important credibility check. This feedback does not necessarily have to come from participants; it can come from anyone who has experienced or is affected by the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In my study, I solicited feedback from participants as well as others who have had interracial friendships in college. I undertook the following member check procedures for this study: First, I sent copies of interview transcripts to all participants and asked them to confirm their accuracy. Second, the solicited journal prompts

participants completed served as another feedback mechanism in that in the journal prompts and my follow-up questions I asked participants to elaborate on and clarify information they previously provided during their interviews as well as to provide new information to help saturate my categories (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, after I generated my substantive theory, I shared two versions of it (the full version as well as a summarized version) with my participants by email and asked them to provide feedback on how well it resonated with their own experiences and what, if anything, was missing from it (see Appendix G). Of my 21 participants, one did not wish to participate in member checks and one could not be contacted because she was no longer enrolled at Southeastern University and did not provide me with an alternate email address. I asked the remaining 19 participants to provide feedback. By involving my participants in this way, I sought to “do good” by empowering them as co-constructors of knowledge and honoring principles of relationality (Hall & Callery, 2001; S. R. Jones et al., 2006). While in an ideal world all participants would provide feedback on their transcripts and on the substantive theory, I recognize that asking participants to provide this feedback made a significant demand on their time, beyond what they had already given me for interviews and journaling, and therefore I chose not to establish a minimum feedback participation target. I received feedback from two participants. They both felt that my theory reflected their experiences in interracial friendships, and they did not provide me with any specific areas to address. In addition to participant member checks, I also solicited feedback on the resonance/fit and utility of my substantive theory from three other individuals identified by convenience (two Southeastern University students and one at another

institution) who met my participation criteria (i.e., have or had an interracial friendship in college). I received feedback from the student who attends another institution, and she indicated that my theory reflected her experiences with interracial friendships on her campus.

Developing theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the degree to which a researcher is able to recognize patterns, concepts, and relationships in her data. It requires the researcher to be aware enough about the topic of study to recognize what is important and what is not, but it also requires her to be conscious of when she may be deductively imposing ideas upon the data instead of letting the data speak for itself (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 1999; Kelle, 2007). Put another way, “sensitivity means having insight”; that is, being able to understand and convey what the data and participants are saying (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 32). Indicators of researchers’ theoretical sensitivity include “their openness to new or unexpected interpretations of the data, the skill with which they combine literature, data, and experience, and their attention to subtleties of meaning” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 640). Piantanida et al. (2004) conceive of theoretical sensitivity as a “state of mind”: “A theoretically sensitive researcher strives to be as fully and completely attentive as possible to the phenomenon one wants to understand” (p. 336).

A researcher’s level of theoretical sensitivity is informed by her experiences and knowledge—academic, professional, and personal—which help her to make sense of the data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; Mills et al., 2006b; Thomas & James, 2006). Others’ experiences can also contribute to a researcher’s sensitivity (e.g., conversations, biographies, news accounts, etc.), as can the academic

literature on a topic (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kelle, 2007) or even “common sense” (Kelle, 2007). “Sensitizing concepts” drawn from these sources can help the researcher make meaning of her data by suggesting alternative perspectives or serving as heuristic devices, but the researcher must ensure that these concepts do not direct the analysis by forcing the data to fit preexisting concepts or frameworks (Charmaz, 2003b, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003; Holton, 2009; Kelle, 2007). Indeed, “a combination of both [existing knowledge and new insights] is definitely desirable” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 253) and “findings are the product of data plus what the researcher brings to the analysis” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 32-33). Therefore, researchers must be reflective about the effect these sensitizing concepts have on their analyses and only use concepts that truly fit the data (Charmaz, 2013).

In my study of college students’ interracial friendships, I demonstrated theoretical sensitivity by conducting two literature reviews, as I discussed in chapter one. In addition, I wrote reflective memos on these sources of sensitizing concepts as well as on my own experiences and positionality to consider whether I am allowing preconception to inappropriately enter my analysis. I had initially planned to incorporate my own experiences into my analysis as data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, as I also discuss above, I decided in the later stages of my analysis that inserting my own experiences as data into my study no longer made sense as my experiences were already implicitly present in my analytic interpretations, and I did not want to overshadow my

participants' voices and experiences with my own. I did reflect upon my own experiences through memoing, which helped me to understand how my experiences and perspectives might be influencing my analysis, and excerpts from these reflections are included in chapter four to help my readers assess the quality and rigor of my analysis and substantive theory.

Writing memos. Theoretical sensitivity “is not intended to critically examine the researcher’s effect on data construction” (Hall & Callery, 2001, p. 263); additional procedures are necessary to ensure the rigor and credibility of the analysis and the conclusions drawn from it. One such procedure is memoing. Memos, which should always reference the data point(s) to which they are related, are significant for the credibility of the substantive theory as well as a key aid for the researcher in the analysis process because they contain her ideas about the data and the theory she has generated, as discussed earlier in this chapter. As required by the procedures of the grounded theory method, I composed analytic and reflexive memos throughout the research process, beginning with the initiation of data generation, continuing through all phases of theoretical sampling and analysis, and concluding when I completed the written report. These memos provide an audit trail (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003; Cooney, 2011) of my thought processes in interpreting the data and of changes I made to the study design (such as those guided by the needs of theoretical sampling), thus enhancing dependability by “showing that change is documented and logical, not just careless or unintentional” (Mertens, 2010, p. 259).

Taking a reflexive stance. In qualitative research generally as well as in constructivist grounded theory research, reflexivity has two components: (1) reflexivity about

the research process (including methodological and analytic decision making and the process of interpreting the data and making conclusions) and (2) reflexivity about the researcher's relationships with participants. Memoing can help a researcher to reflect on both of these processes (Charmaz, 2006; Chiovitti & Piran, 2003; McGhee et al., 2007; Mills et al., 2006a; Piantanida et al., 2004; Suddaby, 2006). As previously noted, a grounded theory researcher cannot (and should not) separate herself and her experiences from the research process, as these help her to make meaning of the data. Reflective memoing helped me to understand how I interpreted the data to reflect upon whether my interpretations were inappropriately biased by my prior knowledge, experiences, or embedded assumptions (Charmaz, 2006; McGhee et al., 2007; Mills et al., 2006a; Suddaby, 2006).

From the perspective of credibility and rigor, providing readers of the research report with enough information about data collection and a "reflexive discussion of process" (i.e., how the research process proceeded and why decisions about the process were made) allows them to judge "the extent to which the findings reflect the personal qualities of the researcher" (Hall & Callery, 2001, p. 263) as well as the quality and credibility of the data, knowledge claims, and process of theory generation (Charmaz, 2006; I. Dey, 2007; Tracy, 2010). As I. Dey (2007) states,

It is no longer enough to present a set of conclusions, supported and expanded by illustration from the evidential base. The reflexive researcher at the very least has to monitor and present the critical steps in the development of the analysis, so that these can be followed (and possibly disputed) by the reader. (pp. 186-187)

In my previous statement of positionality and subjectivity, I have aimed to be transparent and reflective about my experiences, strengths, and weaknesses as a researcher. I continued to reflect upon these matters during my study and I include accounts of my reflections in chapter four where they connect with specific categories and concepts within my theory. Additionally, as discussed above, I incorporated reflection into my analytic memos throughout the constant comparative process to surface my values, experiences, and embedded assumptions and how they may have shaped my analysis and conclusions.

Pertaining to the second component of reflexivity, Hall and Callery (2001) argue that “reflexivity, which addresses the influence of investigator-participant interactions on the research process, and relationality, which addresses power and trust relationships between participants and researchers, have the potential to increase the validity of the findings in grounded theory studies” because they account for the way in which grounded theory is socially constructed (p. 258). Given the constructivist underpinnings of my own study, considering reflexivity and relationality and being transparent about their effects upon my research process, analysis, and conclusions was essential for the credibility of the theory I generated (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Mills et al., 2006a; Silverman, 2006). Reflexivity and relationality are also components of qualitative research ethics, as previously mentioned. Therefore, throughout my data generation and analysis I also wrote memos in which I reflected upon how my own perspectives and values may have influenced my research and how my role as a researcher changed or evolved during my study; these memos also allowed me to reflect upon issues of relationality and ethical considerations in my relationships and

interactions with participants. In embarking upon this research I had planned to refer to the literature on relationality and ethics in qualitative research (e.g., S. R. Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln, 1995; Magolda & Weems, 2002; Merriam, 2002) and to consult with my advisor and fellow doctoral students if and when any ethical dilemmas arose; thankfully, however, there were no significant ethical issues in my study.

Confidentiality is an essential component of any ethical research with human participants. To maintain confidentiality in recording data and reporting findings, I asked participants to choose their own pseudonyms, and I assigned pseudonyms to any who did not wish to choose their own. All study materials, including interview transcripts, questionnaires, and journal responses, contained pseudonyms rather than participants' actual names. I maintained a record of participants' names and contact information matched with their pseudonyms in a password-protected Excel file accessible only by me. To protect against data loss, I regularly copied all study materials to a flash drive that I kept within a locked safe in my home.

General Criteria for Methodological Rigor

As discussed earlier, the grounded theory method of inquiry has four defining features that are common to all versions of the method and that differentiate it from other methods of qualitative inquiry. These are: (1) non-preconception, (2) theoretical sampling, (3) constant comparative analysis, and (4) generation of a substantive, grounded theory as the research product. Table 5 summarizes these defining features. Adhering to these four features is essential for ensuring methodological rigor in grounded theory research.

To allow readers to assess the methodological rigor of my study, I have described in this chapter how I followed the four defining procedures of grounded theory research through my study procedures. I also documented additions and modifications throughout the course of my research via procedural memos and IRB modification requests, which provide an audit trail as discussed above. Also essential to credibility is congruence between the purpose of the study and the methods and procedures chosen (Piantanida et al., 2004; Suddaby, 2006; Thorne, Reimer Kirkham, & O'Flynn-Magee, 2004), and I presented earlier in this chapter my logic of justification for choosing constructivist grounded theory as my method of inquiry and the specific procedures I followed congruent with this method.

Table 5. Criteria for methodological rigor.

Criterion	Pertinent Questions to Ask
Non-preconception	Did the researcher derive the categories and theory inductively or deductively?
Theoretical sampling	Was the sampling strategy guided by the analysis or predetermined?
Constant comparative analysis	Did data collection and analysis occur contemporaneously, or did collection precede analysis?
Production of theory	Did the analysis result in the production of a substantive, grounded theory explaining the phenomenon/process of study, or merely in description of the phenomenon/process?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodology I used to investigate the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships. I chose to use grounded theory as my method of inquiry because it is well suited for investigating real-world processes and because its aim is to produce a substantive theory with practical utility. My positionality and subjectivity, which I have presented here, led me to select constructivist grounded theory for my study as it is the version most congruent with my beliefs and values. I have summarized the specific data generation and analysis procedures I employed in this research as well as the defining principles of grounded theory generally and constructivist grounded theory specifically. I concluded this chapter by reviewing criteria for assessing the quality, rigor, and credibility of the research process and of the research product (a substantive theory) and the procedures I followed to ensure the quality, rigor, and credibility of the substantive theory I generated through this research.

I will close this chapter by sharing that “a grounded theory is not an authoritative truth claim but a theory; it is not intended to be proven but to be used and modified” (Breckenridge, Jones, Elliott, & Nicoll, 2012, p. 67). The substantive theory of college students’ interracial friendship development and sustainment that I have generated through this research is nothing more, and nothing less, than a theory: one that will help student affairs educators better understand the process of intercultural peer interactions and illuminate promising areas for purposeful interventions to support these interactions and the student learning that results. I present my substantive theory in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND THE SUBSTANTIVE THEORY

In this chapter I present the findings of my study and the substantive theory that I generated through this research. I begin with a summary of my participants' characteristics to provide context for my findings and substantive theory. I next provide a supplemental clarification of key terms that I use throughout this chapter and the next. I also discuss my participants' meanings of race and ethnicity, drawn from my data, to contextualize my theory. I then present my substantive theory of the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships.

Participant Characteristics

I present aggregated participant demographic characteristics for my 21 participants in Table 6 below and selected demographic characteristics by participant in Table 7. One participant, Erica, discussed a friendship group rather than a single close friend; therefore the friendship characteristics in Table 6 reflect an *n* of 20 rather than 21, and in Table 7 the non-relevant characteristics are indicated with "n/a." Because neither age, age differential, nor major shaped the process of interracial friendship development or sustainment, I report these characteristics in the aggregate only to minimize the risk of compromising the confidentiality of my participants. Only one mixed-gender friendship (Isabella's) was a romantic relationship. For interested readers, I provide a vignette for each participant in Appendix I.

Racial/Ethnic Identification

I collected information about participants' racial/ethnic identification via an open-ended question on the questionnaire they completed at the first interview: "What racial

and/or ethnic group(s) do you identify with?” I designed this question to be open-ended, rather than asking them to check boxes with pre-defined categories, in order to respect the complexities of participants’ racial self-identification and honor the constructivist worldview informing the design of this study (Johnston et al., 2014; Park et al., 2013). The responses participants gave to this question, both for themselves and their friends, are indicated verbatim in Table 7. However, in Table 6 I have aggregated participants’ racial identities into more traditional racial/ethnic categories for simplicity.

Table 6. Aggregated participant and friendship characteristics (at time of participation).

Characteristic	<i>n</i>
Demographic characteristics:	
Age (range: 18-22)	
18	6
19	6
20	7
21	1
22	1
Gender	
Male	6
Female	15
Primary Racial Identity	
Asian or Asian American	2
Black or African American	4
Latino/a	1
White or Caucasian	11
Multiracial	3

Table 6 Continued

Characteristic	<i>n</i>
Friendship characteristics:	
Gender ^a	
Same gender	
Male-male	3
Female-female	10
Mixed gender	7
Age differential ^a	
0 years	8
1 year	10
2 years	1
3 years	1
Friendship length ^a	
Less than 6 months	1
6 months to 1 year	10
More than 1 year to 2 years	8
More than 2 years	1
Friendship ended ^a	
Yes, prior to participation	4
Yes, after participation	1
No	15
How friends met	
In class	2
Living together	9
Mutual friends	5
On-campus activity	5
College experiences:	
Lived on/off campus	
On campus – living-learning community	12
On campus – traditional residence hall	5
Off campus – private residence	3
Off-campus – Greek housing	1

Table 6 Continued

Characteristic	<i>n</i>
Primary major	
Arts and humanities	3
Business	3
Social sciences	4
STEM	11

^aExcludes Erica; *n* = 20

Supplemental Clarification of Terms: Relevant to my Findings and Informed by My Participants' Experiences

In chapter one I presented an initial clarification of terms based in the literature. As I noted there, given the constructivist foundation of my study, I did not feel it was appropriate to rigidly define terms central to my study (e.g., “race,” “ethnicity,” “interracial,” “intercultural”) prior to understanding the meaning my participants attached to these terms or how these terms related to their realities and experiences within their friendships. Therefore, I present here a supplemental clarification of these terms that reflects their realities and experiences along with my own interpretations informed by relevant literature.

In addition, I also clarify here some additional terms and concepts from the scholarly literature that I draw upon in presenting my findings in this chapter and discussing their significance in chapter five. As part of the second literature review that is common in grounded theory (as I discuss in chapter three), I returned to empirical literature I had previously reviewed and identified new empirical and experiential literature to inform my theoretical sensitivity, or ability to make meaning of the concepts I identified in my data.

Table 7. Selected demographic characteristics by participant.

Participant	Racial/Ethnic Identification	Gender	Friend Racial/Ethnic Identification ^a	Friend Also Participant	Friend Gender	How Friends Met	Friendship Ended?
Alisha	African-American	Female	White	Charles	Male	Mutual friends	
Amina	Pakistani	Female	Egyptian		Female	In class	
Anastasia	Mixed – Caucasian/ Guyanese/ Indian	Female	Mexican – Hispanic		Male	Living together	
Bryan	Caucasian	Male	African-American		Male	Living together	
Brynn	White	Female	African American		Female	On-campus activity	
Caroline	White American	Female	Asian, Taiwanese		Female	Living together	
Charles	White	Male	African-American	Alisha	Female	Mutual friends	
Dan	White	Male	African American		Male	In class	
Erica ^b	Caucasian, American	Female	n/a		n/a	Living together	n/a
Inga	African American	Female	Chinese	Natasha	Female	Living together	
Isabella	Caucasian	Female	Guatemalan (Hispanic)		Male	Mutual friends	Yes, after participation

Table 7 Continued

Participant	Racial/Ethnic Identification	Gender	Friend Racial/Ethnic Identification ^a	Friend Also Participant	Friend Gender	How Friends Met	Friendship Ended?
Kandace	Black, Native American, Other	Female	Caucasian/White		Female	Living together	Yes, prior to participation
Katelin	Caucasian	Female	Italian		Female	Living together	Yes, prior to participation
Maggie	Caucasian	Female	Black/African American		Female	On-campus activity	Yes, prior to participation
Marcelo	Latino	Male	Black, African-American		Female	On-campus activity	Yes, prior to participation
Max	Caucasian	Male	African American		Male	Mutual friends	
Michelle	White	Female	African American; Chinese (two friends)		Male; Female	On-campus activity	
Natasha	Chinese	Female	African American	Inga	Female	Living together	
Rachel	Hispanic/White	Female	Russian		Female	Living together	
Rick	African American	Male	White		Male	Mutual friends	

Table 7 Continued

Participant	Racial/Ethnic Identification	Gender	Friend Racial/Ethnic Identification ^a	Friend Also Participant	Friend Gender	How Friends Met	Friendship Ended?
Sloan	African American/ Multi-racial	Female	Caucasian/ Native American		Female	On-campus activity	

^aAs reported by participant on the questionnaire, except in cases where the friend was also a participant; in these cases the friend's self-identification as reported on the questionnaire is provided

^bErica's friend characteristics are not reported as she discussed a close friendship group rather than a single close friend

Participants' Understandings of Race and Ethnicity

As I noted in chapter one, I felt the constructivism guiding the design of this research, and specifically its foundational principle of honoring participants' meanings and understandings, made it inappropriate for me to impose external, "objective" definitions of race and ethnicity as usually found in a traditional "definition of terms" section. Rather, I have chosen to briefly discuss here how my participants understood and made meaning of these terms within the context of this study. Although understanding how college students make meaning of race and ethnicity was not the focus of my research, given the focus of my study—interracial friendships—it is important for myself as the researcher as well as for my readers to clarify how my participants understood these central terms. Readers interested in empirical examinations of how college students make meaning of race should refer to Johnston (2014) and Johnston et al. (2014). Although the discussion I present below is not a part of my substantive theory of the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships, it is nonetheless an important element of the context in which I developed the theory I present later in the chapter, necessitating its inclusion here.

A February 2014 *New York Times* article on the continued relevance of race in American young adults' lives noted, "In the news media and in popular culture, the notion persists that millennials — born after the overt racial debates and divisions that shaped their parents' lives — are growing up in a colorblind society in which interracial friendships and marriages are commonplace and racism is largely a relic" (Vega, 2014, p. A1). Yet millennials' understandings of U.S. society are far from post-racial or colorblind; they still

see race and color as generations preceding them have done, but the meaning they attach to race and color has evolved as racial demographics and social interaction patterns have changed (Apollon, 2011; Vega, 2014). In addition, today's college students may hold multiple understandings of race, drawing upon different meanings in varied social and educational contexts (Johnston, 2014; Johnston et al., 2014).

Congruent with recent research on millennials' conceptions of race, race and ethnicity were relevant and meaningful concepts for my participants, and they expressed multiple and flexible understandings of race and ethnicity. The first moment in which participants in my study were prompted to think about race and ethnicity was at our first meeting, when they completed the written questionnaire that asked open-ended questions about their own racial/ethnic identification and their friend's racial/ethnic identification (see Appendix E): "What racial and/or ethnic group(s) do you identify with?" and "What racial and/or ethnic group(s) does your friend identify with?" While most participants completed the questionnaire without comment, a few did ask for clarification on how I would like them to answer that question (e.g., to ask if I wanted them to put a Census-style racial category: "Do you mean like 'Caucasian'"?). As Table 7 demonstrates, most participants chose standardized racial categories to identify their own and their friends' race. Johnston et al. (2014) found that college students' racial identification varied based upon the way in which they were asked to identify (e.g., Census-style check boxes with pre-determined categories versus open-ended questions). The way in which most of my participants identified their own and their friends' races on my questionnaire suggests that despite my intentional use of open-

ended questions, by asking them to complete a questionnaire I unintentionally invoked category-based racial identifications. However, a few participants chose to only list an ethnic identification (e.g., Chinese, Pakistani) rather than a racial identification.

Interestingly, two participants—Rachel and Isabella—listed an ethnic identification for their friends [“Russian” and “Guatemalan (Hispanic),” respectively] but chose Census-style racial identification categories for themselves (“Hispanic/White” and “Caucasian,” respectively). Jones and McEwen’s (2000) Multiple Dimensions of Identity Model explains that the particular social categories with which a person identifies (e.g., race, gender, religion, nationality) are not static but rather dynamic; which identities are salient to us at any moment will depend on the context. In their interviews, both Rachel and Isabella extensively discussed moments of encounter with their friends’ ethnic cultures and the impact these moments have had on their friendships, so a possible explanation is that their friends’ ethnic identities were more salient for them in the context of their friendships than for other participants. Because their own ethnic identities were not a salient feature of their friendships, however, they chose to self-identify using standard racial categories.

Only one participant (Caroline) listed her and her friend’s national identities along with standard racial categories (“White American” and “Asian, Taiwanese,” respectively). Caroline’s understanding of race exemplifies what Johnston (2014) describes as the relational and physical contexts shaping racial conceptions: because Caroline’s friend Lily was a year-long exchange student from Taiwan (relational context) and they both lived together in an international-themed living-learning community on campus (physical context),

(inter)nationality became a much more salient component of Caroline's understanding of race than it was for other participants. Additionally, at the time of our interview, Caroline only had a few more months before Lily returned home to Taiwan and they were making plans for how to see each other and continue their relationship from opposite sides of the Earth. This impending significant change to the dynamics of their friendship, and the need for international travel to see each other in the future, likely made nationality very salient for Caroline.

Nationality was also salient for Rick. Although he identified as African American on his questionnaire, the complexity behind his racial and national identification emerged during our two interviews. He shared how although has been an American citizen since birth, he had grown up and gone to school abroad (primarily in Indonesia) and had not lived in the U.S., aside from occasional visits, until he attended college.

Tara: When you were in Indonesia, did you consider yourself to be American?

Rick: That's a good question. [laughs] Yes, but I don't think I could identify very well. Since the longest I'd lived here before moving back was a year and I was homeschooled, so I didn't really get to experience a lot. So I said I was American, but at times I wouldn't want to associate myself with Americans. So I was kind of just floating in between.

Rick discussed how his friendship with Alex, who is Romanian, helped him acculturate to the U.S., adjust to college, and come to identify as an American:

It took a little bit to get used to the U.S., the way of life here. And I think he served as one of those people who helped me feel at home here. ... he grew up in the Romanian community, [which] from what I understand is very tight-knit. But at the same time he's had the American experience. So I guess I could kind of relate to that.

Interview and journal questions did not directly ask about racial or ethnic identification, but some participants' responses did provide insight into their understandings of race and ethnicity. Amina frequently mentioned her and her friend Nawal's different ethnic identities (Pakistani and Egyptian, respectively) in both her interview and journal responses. Despite the fact that she and Nawal are both Muslim, Amina felt that their ethnic differences are a much more prominent feature of their friendship than their shared religion:

While we have the same religious culture our social culture is completely different. Nawal's ethnicity encourages early marriages, they love mehndi but are unable to do it on themselves as it is not in abundance in their areas, their food is very lightly season[ed] but highly fragranced, where I wear fancy traditional clothes to parties she wears long casual skirts, and most importantly where there is a lot of competition in my culture hers is more altruistic and affectionate.

As a result, ethnicity plays a much more salient role than race in shaping and sustaining their friendship.

Other participants discussed coming to understand race in the context of cultural differences between themselves and their friends. For example, Brynn, who identifies as White, valued being able to ask her friend Channing, who is African American, questions

that she felt she could only ask in the context of a close, trusting, non-judgmental relationship:

And when I spent the night with her, just like weird little family things that are just different from my home, but I know that could just be – it's not necessarily race either. But I think there are just subtle differences. It's not bad; it's more just like a learning experience. I know that can be awkward for people that they just don't want to address any kind of differences, so I just will ask. I'm not scared.

Sloan, who identified as African American/Multi-racial, expressed a similar experience from the opposite perspective, as her friend Ashley is Caucasian/Native American: “I feel like [Ashley] has learned a little more about [my culture] because she feels comfortable asking questions she is curious about.”

However, for many participants, race and ethnicity were not salient to their friendships. These participants were aware of race and the racial differences between themselves and their friends; these differences just had no relevance within the relational context of their friendships. Dan, who identifies as White of Slovakian descent and is friends with Sammy, who is African American, shared,

To be honest, [Sammy] is ethnic, he is African American, obviously. And ... there's a few differences in some things, in the ways he thinks and the ways he perceives stuff. But I don't myself perceive him, I don't think about him being ethnic when I hang out with him. I don't think about that stuff. He is, like, when you think about it, obviously he is [of a different ethnicity], I don't know, when I think about it. But there's a lot of

different things he does that I don't. But if somebody were to just describe him as a person, without describing his ethnicity, I wouldn't have necessarily found him to be different or ethnic, you know.

In the social context of the U.S., it is easier for those who identify as White to not see their own race or to feel they are race-less (Johnson, 2006; Reason, Scales, & Roosa Millar, 2005). However, this perception of race and ethnicity as irrelevant in the relational context of the friendship was not limited to my White participants. For example, Alisha, who identifies as African American, discussed her desire to connect with peer outside of her own racial group and her frustration with those who can't see beyond race in choosing their friends:

Like in the beginning of the year, I had met a group of Black girls that I was hanging around, and I hung out with them for two weekends, and I just – when I was with them, I was like, oh, I wonder what my other friends are doing right now? I just did not feel like I was making a good relationship as I was with the people back at my dorm, so then eventually, we just all stopped talking. ... I mean, I tried being friends with them, but they were just different from me, and I just – I don't know, I wasn't feeling it. ... I think people should start building connections off of personalities instead of races, because I feel like some people aren't even happy with their friends, but they just are friends with them because they have one thing in common, and that's their race or their religion.

It is important to note that participants who expressed understandings about race similar to Alisha and Dan were not expressing a colorblind or post-racial perspective

(Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011); they recognized their friends' racial/ethnic backgrounds and its influence on their friendships, and in other moments during their interviews they discussed race and racial prejudice and the role it plays in shaping interracial interactions and friendships on campus. Rather, these participants made a conscious choice to look beyond race and ethnicity in developing their friendships; to return to S. R. Jones and McEwen's (2000) Multiple Dimensions of Identity Model, they were choosing to demote race and ethnicity to a lower salience level in seeking and sustaining friendships. I discuss this idea further later in this chapter as it pertains to my substantive theory of interracial friendship.

However, when friends held different understandings of race and attributed different levels of importance to it, conflict could result. Marcelo, who identifies as Latino, discussed in his interview and journal entries how he grew up in a diverse and affluent community where racial differences were "not a big issue," whereas his friend Jasmyn, whom he identified as "Black, African-American," had the opposite experience growing up, experiencing racism and prejudice; for Jasmyn, her race was nearly always salient, whereas Marcelo hadn't ever truly considered his before becoming friends with her:

[Jasmyn] had grown up in a place where I guess race was kind of an issue. She didn't feel equal growing up. There were things against her. And that was something that me and my friends, we had a hard time understanding because I often forget that I'm considered a minority here. I never feel underprivileged. I have, if anything, more white friends than other friends just because there are more white people. So I never think of it as a big deal. All my friends growing up that went to [the same high

school], we laugh about racism in the news. Like, “I can’t believe people would do that.” It just seems ridiculous to us. But to her, it wasn’t a laughing matter. It was very serious.

This conflict around understandings of race and its social importance led to significant conflict between Marcelo, Jasmyn, and their mutual friends, and was ultimately a contributing factor to their friendship ending.

In summary, race and ethnicity, as concepts, were meaningful to the students in my study; they did not express perspectives that might be labeled “post-racial” (Apollon, 2011) or colorblind (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). Collectively, participants expressed multiple understandings of race and ethnicity. The salience of race and ethnicity within the relational context of their friendships varied among them based upon the particular features of their relationships and their own and their friends’ racial identifications. In addition, their understandings of race and ethnicity were flexible, shifting contextually over the course of their participation in the study based on whether they were completing the questionnaire, answering interview questions, or responding to journal prompts. My participants’ multiple, fluid, and complex conceptualizations of race echo those of the participants in Johnston’s (2014) study. Johnston asserts that holding multiple and fluid conceptualizations may serve students better educationally and in their future lives than holding static or inflexible conceptualizations; if this is true, most of my participants occupy a developmentally healthy space regarding their understandings of race. The meanings my participants make of race and ethnicity undoubtedly shape the substantive theory of interracial friendship development and

sustainment I've generated with them. Therefore, although these meanings are not in and of themselves a part of the theory, they provide important contextual background for understanding the theory.

“Interracial” and “Intercultural”

In chapter one I provided a literature-based clarification of the nouns “race” and “ethnicity” and the adjectives “intercultural”, “interethnic”, and “interracial,” along with a justification and clarification of my own use of the terms. Here, I supplement that initial clarification of terms here in light of my findings regarding my participants’ friendships and experiences.

Intercultural: Broadly, intercultural friendships are those in which the two members of the friendship pair are culturally different in at least one way: race, ethnicity, worldview, national origin, class, sexual orientation identity, etc. Put another way, the two friends come from different cultural backgrounds and/or identify with different cultures.

Interracial: The specific focus of my study, defined in the context of friendships as the two friendship pair members being of different races or ethnicities, in their own perception. Because of the constructivist foundation of my study, I did not impose an external, “objective” definition on my participants, but rather allowed them to define for themselves whether or not their friendships are interracial. Of the 21 participants in my study, twenty would qualify as interracial by my own definition; however, I did not exclude the one that did not because to do so would violate the principle of participant self-determination. As I discussed in chapter three, my participants were recruited on the basis of having an

interracial friendship; I did not seek to recruit participants who were in other forms of intercultural friendships (e.g., from different religious backgrounds or of different nationalities). However, many of my participants are (or were) in friendships that are intercultural in other ways: for example, participants differed from their friends in terms of national origin (international students and American students), regional origin within the U.S., gender, and religion or worldview. In addition, interracial friendship is one form of intercultural friendship, so while not all intercultural friendships are interracial, all interracial friendships are intercultural.

Throughout the remainder of this dissertation I use “interracial” to refer to my participants’ friendships, as this was the focus of my study and the primary criterion for participation. However, in presenting my theory and discussing its implications I use the broader term “intercultural” because, as I note above, all of my participants’ friendships can also be categorized as intercultural and because in describing their experiences in and beliefs about their friendships, they primarily focused on cultural difference broadly (which often, but not always, included racial differences) rather than racial differences specifically. In other words, my participants illuminated a conceptually significant clarification that informed my theory generation: while their friendships were *interracial*, the relational processes in which they engaged, and the learning and growth that resulted from their friendships, were *intercultural*.

Relational Connection and Disconnection

Throughout chapters four and five I frequently use the terms “relational connection” (or simply “connection”) and “relational disconnection” (or “disconnection”). Relational connection and disconnection are important concepts related to any relational process, and because my theory explains a relational process, I use these terms to discuss the functions and effects of the processes that comprise my theory. Brown (2012) defines connection as “the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment” (p. 145). Walker and Miller (2004) define connection and disconnection by their effects or outcomes: “Our conversation rests on the belief that connections with other people are the source of growth for all people and that disconnections are the source of major problems” (p. 129).

In my use, “connection” refers to something (e.g., a strategy, activity, process, or emotion) that brings participants together and/or has a positive effect on their friendship, in terms of deepening or sustaining it. “Connecting,” by extension, is the process of establishing a connection; it can be active (i.e., something done with the intention of fostering connection) or passive (i.e., it can be a result of something not specifically intended to foster connection). In contrast, “disconnection” is not usually an intended outcome or goal, but can be the result of something within the relationship that causes a division between the friends (e.g., conflict); alternatively, it can result from failure to establish sufficient relational connection (e.g., lacking mutual trust).

Types of Difference and Diversity

Two additional terms I use throughout my chapters four and five are “demographic diversity” and “deep diversity” (Mannix & Neale, 2005; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Demographic diversity, also known as “surface,” “visible,” or “social category” diversity, refers to ways in which we are different from each other on the dimensions of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, and so forth. In most cases we can perceive demographic diversity immediately upon meeting someone; this is why it’s sometimes referred to as “surface” diversity. In contrast, deep diversity (sometimes called “invisible” diversity) refers to such aspects of difference as religion, worldview, values, educational background, political beliefs, and goals. These forms of diversity are not usually perceivable (except in the case of external religious markers such as the hijab for Muslim women or the yarmulke for Jewish men), and therefore we can only discern deep diversity once we’ve gotten to know someone (and sometimes only through close interpersonal relationships). However, visible differences (demographic diversity) are often assumed to represent, or are used as a proxy for, deep differences, as I note in my discussion of the theory of similarity-attraction in chapter two. For example, I might assume that a man who is 90 years old and has been married to his wife for 70 years would not support gay marriage, but upon getting to know this man I could discover that he actually makes a monthly contribution to the Human Rights Campaign. I use these terms congruent with the definitions I’ve presented here; for example, I classify race as demographic (or surface) diversity (or difference) and values as deep diversity (or difference).

Overview of the Substantive Theory

As I discussed in earlier chapters, I designed this research study to answer the following question: How do interracial friendships develop among undergraduate college students, and how are they sustained? To answer this question I used the constructivist grounded theory method of inquiry, which led to development of a theory with practical utility, also known as a substantive theory. A substantive theory reflects real-world phenomena and is context-specific rather than generalized and abstract (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The product of my research, which I present here, is a substantive theory of the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment among college students. I encourage readers to evaluate my theory by applying the criteria for quality, rigor, and practical utility that I outlined in chapter three.

Through the procedures of constructive grounded theory data generation and analysis I identified four central processes that occur within interracial friendships to develop and sustain the friendship: Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures. These four processes, while conceptually distinct, are nonetheless interrelated and synergistic as I discuss in the sections that follow. To unite these four processes, I developed an abstract core category: Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference. The purpose of the core category is to unify the theory by linking the component categories; in doing so, the core category maximizes the explanatory power of the theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Holton, 2007).

I introduce my theory with a discussion of the core category. I then discuss each of the four central categories of my substantive theory (which represent the four central processes of developing and sustaining an interracial friendship) in subsequent sections. In presenting my theory I also include, where relevant, reflective excerpts from my analytic memos. The purpose of including these excerpts is to be transparent about how my own experiences, knowledge, and values may have shaped my analysis (Charmaz, 2006; McGhee et al., 2007; Mills et al., 2006a; Suddaby, 2006). I hope that my decision to include these reflective passages will aid my readers in assessing the quality and credibility of my interpretations and substantive theory.

Comparing Interracial Friendships with Same-Race Friendships

As indicated by my purpose and research question (see chapter one), the focus of my research is on understanding the process by which college student develop and sustain interracial friendships, since it is in the context of these peer relationships that students achieve important learning and development outcomes. Therefore, I did not design this research to compare the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment with that of same-race friendships. However, when presenting my research to others, I occasionally have been asked about how my theory compares to (or differs from) the process of developing and sustaining a same-race friendship. This question usually arises when I discuss the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” as the racial differences between two friends have the least bearing on that process, compared to the three other processes within my substantive theory. The specific question I’ve been asked usually

resembles, “But don’t same-race friends develop trust too?” Indeed, it’s probably true that the process of Cultivating Trust—and possibly some of the other processes within my theory as well—takes place in both interracial and same-race friendships.

However, the present research, and the substantive theory I generated through it, did not seek to answer this comparative question, and this was an intentional design decision on my part for several reasons. First, the purpose behind my research focuses exclusively on interracial friendship; same-race friendships do not lead to achievement of critical 21st century skills such as reduction in prejudice and appreciation for pluralism. Second, I did not wish to compare interracial friendships to same-race friendships because to do so would establish same-race friendships as a norm, suggesting that interracial friendships are abnormal or deviant by comparison. Not only would this send an inappropriate message, given that we as educators want to help *more* students develop these friendships, but my participants’ experiences also contradicted this comparison; they did not see their interracial friendships as abnormal, strange, or unusual in any way. Third, my positionality as a social justice-oriented and feminist researcher has led me to be troubled by research on women, or on students from underrepresented cultural backgrounds, that assumes that the experiences of members of these groups are only valid in comparison to the experiences of the majority group, rather than positioning members of these groups and their experiences as worthy of study in their own right. Similarly, I wanted to validate interracial friendships as worthy of study in their own right, not just in comparison to same-race friendships. Perhaps future research can focus on comparing how the processes of same-race and interracial friendship

development and sustainment are similar or different. My research, however, does not address this comparison.

Grounded Theory Terminology

In presenting my substantive theory in the sections that follow, I use key terms drawn from the grounded theory methodological literature. I define these terms here to aid readers in understanding the presentation of my theory. The definitions I provide below are a synthesis of multiple sources (e.g., Boeije, 2002; Charmaz, 2004, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Holton, 2007).

Concept. A *concept* is the fundamental building block of a substantive theory. The procedures of grounded theory sampling and data analysis are focused on identifying concepts, which “represent an analyst’s impressionistic understandings of what is being described in the experiences, spoken words, actions, interactions, problems, and issues espoused by participants” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 51). Concepts are usually broad and somewhat abstract rather than precisely descriptive; this abstraction from the specific to the general allows the researcher to generate a theory that explains a process or phenomenon rather than describes it, as I discussed in chapter three. Categories, properties, dimensions, and conditions (discussed below) are all concepts because they are all conceptual ideas grounded within the data. However, their specific functions within a substantive theory differentiate categories, properties, dimensions, and conditions.

Category. While all categories are concepts, not all concepts rise to the level of theoretical significance and centrality represented by a category. A *category* is a concept that

is central to the process or phenomenon explained by a substantive theory, and each category within a theory is usually composed of multiple sub-concepts (known as *indicators*) that taken together define that category and the theoretical idea it represents. My theory consists of a core category, Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference, around which the theory is organized. Four additional categories represent the four central processes of developing and sustaining an interracial friendship: Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures.

Two additional categories comprising my theory, Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism, which I discuss toward the end of this chapter, are not processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment but rather outcomes of interracial friendship; from a grounded theory perspective, however, they still represent categories as they are foundational explanatory concepts grounded within my data. For the same reason, I also present a facilitating condition, Exploratory Orientation, as a category; it was the only facilitating condition within my theory that was sufficiently conceptually abstract to rise to the level of a category. Throughout the discussion of my substantive theory, I capitalize the names of all categories that comprise my theory (e.g., Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference), and in some instances I shorten their names for simplicity (e.g., Embracing Similarity).

In the models (Figures 5-8 and 10-11) I present to accompany each section of my theory, categories of my theory generally appear as blue rectangles. However, for each model

detailing one of the four sub-processes of my theory represented by a category (e.g., Bridging Difference to Connect), the category central to that model appears as a red rectangle to distinguish it as the focus of the model (Figures 6-8 and 10). In the overall model of my substantive theory (Figure 5), the core category appears as a green rectangle and the two outcome categories appear as purple rectangles to differentiate them from the categories that represent the central processes of my substantive theory (blue rectangles).

Property. A *property* of a category is a defining feature of that category. It is always present in all instances where the concept or process represented by the category is present, although its strength or depth may vary from instance to instance. Put another way, a category stripped of its properties would no longer exist as a category. The properties of a category also differentiate it from any other category; some properties may overlap among categories, but the particular combination of properties are unique to a single category and that category only. A category is theoretically saturated when no new properties of that category can be found in the data (as I discussed in chapter three). In describing each category comprising my theory, I begin with a description of its properties, as these are the defining elements of the category.

Dimension. A *dimension* of a category represents variation within the category; grounded theorists often discuss “dimensional variation.” While the properties of a category are consistent across the data from case to case and instance to instance, dimensions vary among instances or cases (participants). When a category refers to a process, as most of my categories do, dimensions represent the ways in which that process varies; in my theory,

dimensions show how the process (e.g., of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference) varies among my participants' friendships or even at different moments within their friendships. Because dimensions vary by definition, the absence of a dimension does not negate the category as a theoretical concept in the way that the absence of a property would. Dimensions can lie on a continuum (e.g., high to low, more to less), or they may be categorical (e.g., in my category Exploring Other Cultures, the "visa-sherpa dynamic" is present in some friendships but not in all of them). In presenting each of the categories of my theory, I first describe its properties and then its dimensions—the different ways in which the concept can manifest or appear as participants engage in the process it represents.

Condition. *Conditions* are central to defining a category because they explain the "conditions under which [the category] arises, is maintained, and changes" (Charmaz, 2004, p. 510). I discuss three types of conditions in presenting my substantive theory: facilitating conditions, required conditions, and strategies. *Facilitating conditions* and *required conditions* are those conditions that make possible the process represented by a category within my theory. As indicated by its name, a required condition is essential to the category to which it pertains; if that condition is not present, the process represented by the category cannot take place. In contrast, a facilitating condition facilitates the process represented by a category, but the process may still take place even if that condition is not present. Although facilitating conditions are not essential for a process to take place, they are especially significant for applying a substantive theory in practice, as I discuss in chapter five, because

they suggest leverage points at which a practitioner can intervene to enable a process to arise or continue.

The third type of condition I refer to in presenting my theory is a strategy. A *strategy* can be thought of as a condition that is put into use by a participant and facilitates a specific process represented by a category. For example, in my theory, “connecting through music” was a strategy used by many of my participants in order to Embrace Similarity (one of the central processes of interracial friendship). The level of intentionality behind a participant’s use of a strategy may vary, however. For example, most participants who discussed connecting through music did not do so with the strategic goal of Embracing Similarity in mind; indeed, if asked, I suspect most of them would probably not consider connecting through music to be a “strategy” in the usual definition of the word as a “a plan, method, or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result” (from Dictionary.com). Nonetheless, at some level they employed this strategy in the interest of facilitating relational connection with their friends, which in turn helped them to develop and/or sustain their friendships, suggesting that there was at least some intentionality behind its use and making it a strategy for the purposes of my substantive theory.

In my models accompanying each section of this chapter devoted to a central process of my theory (Figures 6, 8, 10, 13, and 15), conditions are represented by green circles, and their relationships to the category are represented by orange arrows labeled with their specific relationships (e.g., required, facilitating, or strategy). For simplicity, I do not include conditions in my overall model of my substantive theory (Figure 5).

Consequence. A *consequence* is something that results from a sub-process represented by a category within the substantive theory (i.e., in my theory, Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures). A consequence may be guaranteed—that is, it *necessarily* results from the process with which it’s associated—whereas other consequences may be *possible* results of the process. For example, finding a sense of belonging is a possible consequence of the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” as I discuss in the section below on that category. A consequence cannot occur unless the related process has taken place; the process must precede the consequence. In this way consequences and outcomes are similar; however, consequences differ from outcomes in that outcomes result from the process represented by the entire substantive theory (i.e., in my theory, represented by the core category process of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference), whereas a consequence results from a sub-process represented by one of the four central categories comprising my substantive theory. I only discuss those consequences for which I have evidence within my data, and therefore I have not identified consequences for every category within my theory.

In my models accompanying each section of this chapter (Figures 6, 8, 10, 13, and 15), consequences are represented by dark blue circles. (Not all categories have consequences, however.) For simplicity, I do not include consequences in my overall model of my substantive theory (Figure 5).

Core Category: Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference

The grounded theory method of inquiry permits researchers to arrive at a core category in one of two ways: to promote a category within the theory to core category status or to develop an abstract category that unifies the other categories within the theory to explain the process of study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I chose the latter approach to develop my core category. The core category I developed, Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference, is an abstract concept that is defined by the four central processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment: Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures. These four central processes share two common themes, represented within the name of the core category.

First, the process of developing and sustaining an interracial friendship is an *interpersonal* process of relational connection. All four of the central processes concern, to a greater or lesser extent, developing and sustaining relational connection, or, alternately, avoiding or ameliorating relational disconnection. The central process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” plays a particularly important role in creating and maintaining the interpersonal connection that develops and sustains the friendship. Together, trust and the silent contract provide the foundation of relational connectivity that supports the other central friendship processes, represented by the other three categories comprising my theory (Bridging Difference to Connect, Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures).

Second, developing and sustaining an interracial friendship necessitates that the friends attend to and incorporate their *cultural differences* within their relationship. As I discussed earlier in this chapter in clarifying my use of the terms “interracial” and “intercultural,” race is only one aspect of cultural difference that was salient to my participants within the context of their friendships. Furthermore, the salience of specific cultural differences (whether race or other differences such as faith or national/regional origin) varied from friendship to friendship as well as within a single friendship at different relational moments. Nonetheless, cultural difference universally played a role in shaping all participants’ friendships and their relational experiences within those friendships. Accordingly, three of the four central processes of developing and sustaining an interracial friendship involve cultural differences—exploring them, bridging them, and never forgetting them. Among the participants who sustained their friendships, incorporating cultural differences into their friendships in a mutually satisfactory way that facilitated their relational connection was the central “task” or “challenge” of the friendship. The participants who were unable to sustain their friendships also faced this same task or challenge; however, they were unable to incorporate their cultural differences into their relationship in a way that facilitated ongoing relational connection.

Overall, the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment is a process of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference: creating and sustaining an interpersonal relational context of trust and security in which the friends’ cultural differences are included and valued as part of their relationship, although the centrality or salience of those

differences to the friendship will vary across friendships. The four central processes of developing and sustaining an interracial friendship—Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures—work together synergistically to comprise the broad process of Interpersonalizing Cultural Differences. Developing and sustaining an interracial friendship requires two friends to engage in all four of the central processes, and each of the four central processes facilitates the other processes to enable the friends to develop and sustain their relationship. The way in which Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference manifests will vary somewhat from friendship to friendship as there is room for dimensional variation within the four central processes (which I discuss in more detail in the sections of this chapter that follow), yet this variation does not alter the fundamental nature—the properties—of each of the four central processes. In other words, if we could look at college students’ interracial friendships through a microscope as though they were cells from our own bodies, we would first see the process of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference at the lowest level of magnification. If we increased the magnification, we would then see each of the four central processes taking place within each friendship. At these two levels of magnification, all friendships would look the same, just as blood cells, for example, taken from any two individuals will likely look the same when viewed under a microscope of average power. However, if we have a powerful scientific microscope, we can use a high magnification setting to see that the specific mechanics of each process, and the way it interrelates with each of the other central processes, look a little different in each

friendship we examine. Yet despite these differences, if we zoom back out, we again will recognize the four central processes that together comprise Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference.

Below I present the comprehensive model of my substantive theory of college students' interracial friendship development and sustainment (see Figure 5), which consists of the core category, Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference, and its four component processes: Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract," Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures. The model illustrates the relationships between each of the four central processes of my theory. The model also presents two possible outcomes of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference: Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism. Although my study was not designed to examine outcomes of interracial friendship, and therefore the concepts these outcomes indicate are not fully conceptually saturated, I have chosen to include these outcomes as components of my theory because my participants' experiences suggest that at least some of them have achieved these outcomes through their friendships. In addition, these outcomes demonstrate the powerful effects interracial friendships can have on college students' learning and development, and they have important implications for educational practice, as I discuss in chapter five.

Figure 5. Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference: A Substantive Theory of College Students' Interracial Friendship Development and Sustainment.

Summary

The process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships is a process of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference, which in turn is composed of four synergistic and mutually facilitating central processes: Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures. In the sections that follow, I discuss each of these four central processes, each of which is represented by a category within my

theory. I describe the properties and dimensions of each category and the required and facilitating conditions, as well as its relationships to the other categories and conditions that comprise my theory. Where relevant I discuss the strategies that participants may use to achieve the central process represented by each category as well as any consequences for the friendship that may result from the process. To provide contrasting comparative evidence, I discuss the effects on the friendship when the process is weak or unsuccessful and the implications for friendship sustainment. Throughout I include excerpts from my participants' interviews, journal responses, and questionnaires to illustrate each of these components of the process. I also discuss the two outcomes of interracial friendship, Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism, and provide evidence to illustrate their relationships to the theory and processes of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference.

Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract"

I expect Nawal to always be there and never tell anyone about my troubles, but there is always this underlying fear that she will tell someone. Our friendship has edged onto an element of burden due to our expectations of keeping secrets as if someone finds out that would destroy the relationship, but there is also a value that is placed on our friendship. It means something to us both. It's this social silent contract and expectation, similar to one you have with your spouse not to chatter about your private relationship. ... It's really difficult to find people nowadays that aren't going to go off and tell everyone else what demons you're battling inside or what you're going through. That's really hard. And Nawal is the only one I've really spoken to

about [a personal challenge I've been facing]. So that really helped, too. So she was the only person I could be really open and trustworthy with.

– Amina

As its name indicates, the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” involves two related components: trust and a silent contract. Cultivating trust requires the friends to initially develop trust in each other and then, as the friendship progresses, to continue fostering and deepening that mutual trust. When the friends have cultivated trust together, they feel able to share their emotions, their beliefs and perspectives, and ultimately, their whole, authentic selves with each other. The silent contract component of this process is a reciprocal, implicit understanding that enables the two friends to feel comfortable in revealing their inner selves to each other without fear of judgment or ridicule, secure that what they reveal will be held in confidence. The contract is established, or “sealed,” when the friends feel confident that they can trust each other and are comfortable sharing their authentic, inner selves and emotions with the expectation of receiving support and validation in return. Establishment of the silent contract usually occurs during the transition from casual to close friendship, and it creates a strong foundation that enables the friends to deepen and sustain their friendship.

The properties, or defining features, of the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” are emotional intimacy, authenticity, and relational security. The process can vary along two dimensions: (1) whether or not there was a pivotal moment when trust developed and (2) the way in which the friends feel they can rely upon each other

as a result of having cultivated trust and established a silent contract. Sharing mutual respect for differences is a required condition for the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” to take place. Three facilitating conditions enable (but are not necessary for) the process: (1) the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, (2) developing memories through shared experiences, which also relates to the process of Exploring Other Cultures, and (3) propinquity. An additional condition that can be employed as a strategy to facilitate this process is emotional arousal and vulnerability. Finally, two consequences can result from the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”: (1) finding security, belonging, and validation through the friendship and (2) positive challenge. In the sections that follow I discuss each of these properties, dimensions, conditions, and consequences, along with illustrative examples drawn from my data. Figure 6 details the relationships between Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” and the other categories in my theory, as well as the required and facilitating conditions.

Figure 6. A model of the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.”

Properties

The process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” consists of two closely components, or sub-processes: (1) Cultivating Trust and (2) Establishing a “Silent Contract.” Because these two sub-processes are interdependent, I have integrated them into a single category, representing a larger process, within my substantive theory. As an integrated process, there are three broad properties of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”: emotional intimacy, authenticity, and relational security. All participants who sustained their interracial friendships demonstrated these three properties within their friendships.

When trust and the “silent contract” are present, the friends can share their positive and negative emotions and can be vulnerable with each other; conversely, their presence within the friendship means that the friends do not have to hide or minimize their emotions around each other. This ability to be emotionally intimate represents the first property of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.” The second property is the ability to be one’s whole, authentic self within the friendship. When friends have cultivated trust, they do not have to filter or hide their values, beliefs, and innermost thoughts with each other because they know they will be accepted for who they are. Finally, the relational security property of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” means that the friends have confidence that in sharing the deeper and more intimate parts of themselves with each other, they will be met with respect, not ridicule, and they know that what they have shared will be kept in confidence. In addition, the relational security property necessitates reciprocity—the friends must feel that trust and intimacy does not flow only in one direction, but rather that it will be reciprocated, and this reciprocation helps to “seal” the silent contract and deepen their mutual level of trust. Furthermore, the relational security provided by a “sealed” silent contract enhances the friends’ ability to share their whole, authentic selves with each other going forward, to deepen trust and sustain their friendship.

Interestingly, among my four participants whose friendships ended prior to their participation in my research (Kandace, Katelin, Maggie, Marcelo), loss or violation of trust did not seem to be an immediate cause of the friendship ending, which seems to conflict with common wisdom about friendships. (For Katelin, loss of trust occurred at the same time her

friendship with Abby was ending for other reasons, as I discuss in more detail later in this section; in her case, loss of trust and their friendship ending were “co-morbid.”) Rather, it seems as though Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” may create a stabilizing force in the friendship; when these are absent or broken, they cannot inoculate the friendship from the relational disconnection resulting from conflict. Marcelo’s experience of his friendship with Jasmyn illustrates this effect:

I tend to trust my friends pretty quickly, so I trusted Jasmyn as much as I trusted any of my friends, though I tend to keep things to myself unless they directly involve the other person. On the other hand, Jasmyn was often quite reluctant to trust people. It seemed her trust had been betrayed many times in the past, so this was understandable. That being said, I eventually noticed that she trusted me much more than her other friends, though she wouldn’t share everything with me anyway. When she was upset, I used to be the only one she would talk to, except for her mom, who was in constant contact with her. When Jasmyn would go to her room, it wasn’t always clear that I needed to go after her and listen to why she was upset; she also tended not to volunteer anything without a little prodding, but eventually I could always get her to talk. As the year progressed, Jasmyn made some close friends that shared her racial background, with whom she felt more comfortable bonding and sharing information.

Although Marcelo indicated that he trusted Jasmyn as much as any of his other friends, he felt Jasmyn did not fully reciprocate his trust, which may have kept them from establishing a

silent contract. His experience suggests that Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” may serve a protective function in friendship sustainment.

Emotional intimacy. Caroline’s example above also illustrates the second property of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” which is the ability for the friends to be emotional intimate with each other. Emotional intimacy necessitates that the friends feel secure that in exchange for being vulnerable in sharing their deepest feelings and beliefs, they will receive support and validation. Emotional intimacy fosters positive relational connection and helps to further develop trust and sustain the friendship. Amina related how her friend Nawal provides her with emotional support and validation that she doesn’t receive from any of her other peers:

I’d just say our friendship is very enlightening and supportive. And from the time that we have been together as friends, I would say she has been that and so much more. Getting to know her has been a phenomenal experience, because I feel like there’s constantly this burden in my chest: From school, from home, from my peers, and then when we’re together, not only does she intellectually stimulate me, but she encourages that burden to go away, because I feel like someone finally gets it. And I don’t really find that a lot with other people.

The emotional support and validation she receives from Nawal leads her to want to invest more emotional energy into their friendship, deepening and sustaining their relationship.

Inga also provided an example of receiving emotional support and validation from her friend Natasha. She also discussed how knowing that Natasha will “always be there to listen” helps to deepen the trust they share and honors their silent contract:

There was a guy that I liked in the first semester ... And when I kind of decided or realized that I did have deeper feelings for him and I told him, he basically friend zoned me and he got another girlfriend. And Natasha really did help me with that and realizing that it doesn't matter. ... she was like, “You could do so much better. This guy's this, this, this, this, and this, but you are just amazing. You could do so much better.” ... I was really grateful that she was on my side. And anytime I would like to talk about it or how weird I felt about it—because I'm not a love expert or anything, but I just don't usually do relationships like that—she would always listen even though at times I felt like I sound like a broken record, I need to stop. She would always be there to listen.

Overall, these examples show participants being emotionally vulnerable with their friends and receiving support and validation in return; some also describe knowing implicitly that their friends will uphold their “silent contract” in these moments by keeping what they've shared confidential and not thinking less of them for being vulnerable or for what they've shared.

Authenticity. When trust is present, friends can be their whole, authentic selves with each other; they do not have to hide any aspect of themselves due to fear of judgment or relational disconnection. One aspect of authenticity is the ability to not have to censor one's

thoughts or feelings in front of the friend, but rather feeling comfortable and confident that the friend will accept you for who you are without judgment, as Dan described:

... we talk about everything now and [Sammy] understands what I'm talking about, I understand what he's talking about, and we just have a lot of the same ideas. We just really understand each other well. I have no worries, I just talk to him. I don't have to think about it. You know, I don't have to like try and like impress, or I don't have to act cool or act some type of way. I can just be myself and it's fine.

Dan's example also shows how Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" allows the friends to feel confident not only that they will not be judged by each other, but also that they will be heard and understood by each other. Similarly, Sloan discussed feeling confident that her friend Ashley will always respond receptively to anything Sloan wishes to discuss with her, a confidence that she doesn't have with her other friends:

Really, I think that I talk to her more than I talk to anybody else, just about any and everything. Like we talk about what macros are, and how to plan out your meals for the week, or we'll have silly conversations, or we'll watch like the funny YouTube videos. I feel like I have more dialogue with her than I do with anybody else that I know, like even my sisters, because, I don't know, we can talk about anything and the conversation is never shut down. She's never like, "That's stupid, what are you talking about?" or "Why are you asking that question?", which sometimes I find with other people.

Brynn also discusses feeling like she can talk about anything with her friend Brittany. The level of comfort Brynn has with Brittany, in terms of feeling that she does not have to hide or censor herself around her is similar to that she feels with family members, and as a result Brittany serves as a surrogate sister for Brynn:

Probably just having someone to talk to about literally anything. Because I'm really close with my family, so sometimes it's hard. I mean, it's only three hours away, but still sometimes it's hard being far from them and not being able to talk to my sister every day, just because we're both so busy and whatnot, so having somebody here that I literally anything – I will tell her anything. So just someone to vent to and hang out with all the time.

For Caroline, this security in being able to bring her whole, authentic self to her friendship with Lily means she no longer has to hold back what she's feeling, whereas prior to becoming close friends, she would have felt unable to share her innermost thoughts and feelings with Lily:

... before [Lily] had the emotional distress [the pivotal moment when they became close friends], when we talked it was pretty casual, small talk about things like school and you know, going to the gym, or things like that. But now we can talk about like things like emotions and things like that. If I have a problem, like with my roommate or something, I can talk to her about it. If she's having problems, she can talk to me about them. So it's a lot more open now. Yeah. And I don't really feel like I have to hold back what I'm feeling.

Relational security. Some of the examples above also illustrate the property of relational security that is critical to Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.”

When the silent contract has been established, the friends have faith that what they share will be kept in confidence; this faith, in turn, makes possible future moments of disclosure and vulnerability, further cultivating trust and sustaining the friendship. Sloan provides a lighthearted but apt example of what security means in her friendship with Ashley:

Mostly our promises and agreements come in the form of “I just did this embarrassing thing, promise you won’t tell my sister/mom/boyfriend.”

Sloan’s example shows that she not only trusts Ashley enough to share embarrassing moments with her, but she can be confident in doing so that what she’s shared with Ashley will not leave the context of their relationship (i.e., relational security), and that security allows her to continue to be vulnerable and authentic with Ashley.

Dan also provides an example that illustrates the level of security he has in his friendship with Sammy:

We’re close, we’re pretty close. We’ll confide in each other and other things. Like if I have some problems or something or I’m in a bad mood. Especially at work because a lot of times I’ll be in a bad mood at work for some reason and I just don’t wanna be there. And when [Sammy] shows up ... then I’m glad he’s there and we get to talk and stuff and just catch up and whatever, because we don’t have classes anymore together. And I’ll just tell what’s happened, what’s new in the past few days and stuff like that. And it’s just, he’s nice to talk to and I can talk to him and he won’t tell

anybody anything, like I can confide in him. And he, I can just rely on him and stuff, you know.

As the quotes above demonstrate, participants in general felt a degree of trust with their friends that they didn't feel with their other friends on campus, and that trust is what led them to deepen their friendship from casual friends to close friends who share intimate details of their lives and feelings with each other and feel secure in doing so.

Dimensions

My participants' experiences provided evidence of three dimensions—ways in which the process can vary or manifest differently—associated with Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.” These are recounting a pivotal moment in cultivating trust, being able to be honest and open with the friend without fear of causing offense, and being able to rely upon the friend.

Recounting a pivotal moment in cultivating trust. Most participants recounted a pivotal moment in cultivating trust or realizing their friend could be trusted. These pivotal moments usually occurred early in the friendship at the transition to a close friendship, and they often required one friend to take a risk in disclosing a secret or portion of his/her inner self—a risky moment of vulnerability. These pivotal moments are often moments that “sealed” the friends’ “silent contract”; afterwards, the friends knew that they could invest trust in each other and be secure within their friendship. Several excerpts from my participants’ interviews and journal responses exemplify these pivotal moments. A few participants related a specific incident or event that led them to recognize that the friend was

someone who could be trusted. For example, Inga discussed a specific time when she opened up to Natasha; this moment was pivotal for their friendship not only because Inga recognized she could share her emotions openly with Natasha, but also because it served as a critical moment in establishing their silent contract:

After two or three Wal-Mart trips and spending time with [Natasha] just talking, I began to trust her because of her openness with me. One key moment of trust for both of us was when I broke down crying talking about my family issues dealing with my mother and other complications that gave me so much of an emotional burden to carry. I knew that very moment that she would keep everything I told her in confidence.

Rachel also discussed a pivotal moment in realizing she could trust her friend Anya. Like Inga's example, it also represented a moment in which they established their silent contract; unlike Inga's example, however, Rachel's pivotal moment did not involve sharing emotions but rather signified Anya's commitment to their friendship:

One time I was putting on an event for the residents on campus where we live. I had been advertising this event to a lot of the students and expected a big outcome. I had not even expected my roommate to come, but she did. And, it turned out, that no one else came and only my roommate showed up. She came out to support me and even when others weren't there she still stayed. It meant a lot and I knew I could trust her out of everyone else to have my back. I think trust between us means to continually be there for one another, even if it's just physically, and to support each other as we

progress through the more concrete factors in life: career, classes, projects, desires, etc.

Kandace discussed a moment in which she shared her one of her values with Jill, not knowing how Jill would respond; when Jill responded positively rather than with judgment or ridicule, Kandace knew Jill was someone she could trust:

I also grew to trust [Jill] when I realized that she wouldn't judge me for some of my tendencies. Growing up, I was always talked down to by my friends because I wasn't sexually active—for whatever reason, that supposedly makes someone immature. One day, Jill was talking about sex and I just stared at her with a blank face. I knew what she was talking about, but I never had experience with the situation so I couldn't share in the excitement of the conversation. I then I just said, "I'm a virgin," and Jill became so ecstatic. Although her elatedness about me being a virgin was a bit creepy, it was nice not having someone talk down to me and actually treat me like an equal despite that fact.

Although Kandace and Jill were not able to sustain their friendship, they did cultivate some amount of trust, as this example indicates, and this trust helped them to develop their friendship.

For some participants, the pivotal moment was not a specific instance or event but rather reflected a moment of awareness that the friendship had deepened from a casual to a close relationship, as in the following example from Caroline:

A moment that I realized that my friend was someone I could trust was when we really just opened up about our personal lives, because before we always talked about school and our classwork. But one day, we talked about our family and relationships, and from then on out we were always able to trust each other with the knowledge of not just our outside selves, but our emotional lives too.

Brynn came to recognize that Brittany was someone she could trust when she needed someone to confide in about a conflict she was having with another friend:

I believe the trust in our friendship was solidified when there was strain on the friendship I had with another girl as Brittany and I became closer. My other friend had become very jealous, on top of a lot of other things, and Brittany became the person I could vent to and ask for advice, which I trusted her to keep confidential and which she always has.

Her use of the word “solidified” at the opening of this excerpt suggests that by confiding in Brittany, she realized not only that Brittany could be trusted, but also that trust was something that would endure within their relationship—a recognition of the silent contract between them.

Being able to rely upon the friend. Another dimension of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” is reliability, especially in the form of always being able to count on the friend or knowing the friend is always there for you. For Rachel, knowing she can rely and depend upon her friend provides a foundation for their mutual trust:

I think the trust in my friendship with this person is different than any other friendship I have. I would say foremost that our trust resides in the fact that we know we can both depend on one another; however this could come in more physical forms: showing up on time, meeting up with one another, doing things together so the other is not alone, supporting one another's endeavors, acknowledging the other's passions and accomplishments, etc.

Similarly, Amina discussed a significant moment when she realized she could count upon her friend Nawal to be there for her. This moment, which led Amina to recognize what a “phenomenal friend” Nawal is, helped to seal the silent contract between them:

...we were trying to study together as a group for the statistics test that was coming up, and we had been trying to get together a group of friends to study with us for so long, and so finally we decided a day, and no one showed up except for me and Nawal. And I sat there, and I was like, wow, that's a major commitment. Because she knew nobody was going to show up, because she knew the girls better than I did, even, and she knew that I was gonna be there, and she wanted to be there, and she helped me through everything. And like I said, I think it means a really big deal to people when you feel like you're the only one there for yourself, and then all of a sudden, there's this person who's right there by your side that you didn't think was there. So it was probably the one moment I realized that, wow, she is a phenomenal friend.

However, reliability doesn't just include relying upon your friend to always be there for you in a physical or emotional sense, but also as Max aptly describes, to be able to rely upon each other to honor their friendship in their actions and decisions:

To [Nelson] and I, trust means reliance. To say that we trust each other means that we can rely on each other. We can rely on each other to make the right decisions for our friendship, to be open with each other, and to know that we will both maintain our integrity. It means that in times of hardship, the decisions that are made will be the ones that most positively impact the friendship.

Although not all participants discussed feeling confident that they can rely upon their friends to be both physically and emotionally present for them, many did, and for those who did discuss this dimension, it was a significant indicator that the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" had been achieved. In contrast, Katelin discussed in her interview (as well as in her journal responses) how trust ended within her friendship, when she felt she could no longer rely upon Abby:

... maybe trust kind of goes along with reliability. Like when I started feeling I couldn't rely on [Abby], like she wasn't physically there or she wasn't even emotionally there – sometimes she'd just be on her phone. Like if we're having a conversation, it's like, "Are you even listening to me anymore?" And that's when I started to really feel like we weren't getting along, is when I felt like I couldn't rely on her to either be there or things we used to do like go to church or whatever. She

was just not there and I couldn't count on her to be there. So I guess I stopped trusting her.

In Katelin's case, it wasn't necessarily that she lost trust in Abby *per se*—Abby didn't do anything to directly violate her trust—but rather that Abby's absence essentially dissolved their implicit contract by violating the reliability property of the silent contract. Her example illustrates how trust and the silent contract are separate, yet interrelated, elements that work together to sustain a friendship—or, in the absence of one or both, contribute to it ending.

Figure 7 summarizes the properties and dimensions of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.”

Figure 7. Properties and dimensions of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.”

Conditions

As depicted in Figure 6 at the beginning of this section, the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” has one required condition, three facilitating conditions, and one strategy that relate to the process. I describe each of these next.

Required conditions. One condition, sharing mutual respect for differences, is required for the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” to take place within an interracial friendship.

Sharing mutual respect for differences. A required condition for Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” is mutual respect; without mutual respect, the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” cannot occur. Having respect for who the friend is, as a whole and complete person, allows the friends to feel comfortable sharing their emotional, authentic, and innermost selves with each other, resulting in the development and deepening of trust. This respect is also a critical component of the silent contract, as the key provisions of the contract (comfort, freedom from judgment and exposure, and reciprocity) are founded in mutual respect. Natasha discussed how respect is central to her friendship with Inga, allowing them to have faith that their disagreements will never threaten their silent contract:

... we actually talk about [differences in our beliefs] a lot, but it's based on a mutual respect and acceptance of each other's beliefs. So we've talked about it quite a few times. But it's not like she would turn her back on me if I did something that went

against her beliefs. She would take care of me or something. It's based on mutual acceptance, that we're human beings and stuff like that.

Amina made a more explicit connection between mutual respect and the cultivation of trust between herself and Nawal:

The way we handle disagreements in my perspective shows that we respect one another and our opinions, and for that reason I think it encourages trust in our relationship. It makes us closer because we know that even though we are hardwired to think one way by our genes, our upbringing, and our environment that the other person will be willing to listen to our rambles and they won't judge us.

As these examples demonstrate, mutual respect is a critical condition that enables the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” to take place and enables an interracial friendship to develop and be sustained; without mutual respect, this process cannot take place and friendship, if it develops at all, cannot endure.

Facilitating conditions. Conditions that facilitate the cultivation of trust, but are not required for it to be cultivated, are propinquity (especially in the form of living together), developing memories through shared experiences (which may include those involved in the process of Exploring Other Cultures), and the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is a facilitating condition for cultivating trust.

Feeling someone shares your background, experiences, values, worldview, or perspectives makes it easier to trust that person, at least initially. For example, Max says,

Trust between us gradually developed. I don't remember if there was a key moment where I realized that I could really trust him. Over time, I began to see the thinking process that he possesses, the types of priorities he has, and what decisions he's made. I gradually began to realize that they aligned so closely to my own. I can almost see a mirror of myself in him. When I met his family, and he told me stories over time about how he was raised, I saw how similar it was to my own childhood experiences. Because we share many of the same values, our trust developed naturally as more of these values were uncovered.

Similarly, Kandace discussed how knowing that she and her first-year roommate Jill (who became her friend) had things in common, such as an interest in running and both having parents who grew up in a similar part of the state, led her to feel a connection with Jill that facilitated the cultivation of trust between them:

... trust came when I realized that [Jill] was similar to me in some ways. Upon coming to [Southeastern University], I was fearful of not meeting someone who somewhat coincided with my interests.

For Kandace, discovering similarity with Jill in the form of shared interests and parental geographic backgrounds enabled her to look beyond their racial differences to see Jill as a person worthy of trust; had she not been able to discover similarity with Jill, she may not have been able to develop trust with her either. Like Kandace, Amina was initially attracted

to her friend Nawal in part because of what they shared (their Muslim faith), and in discussing how she came to trust Nawal, Amina mentioned religion as one factor that gave her confidence Nawal was worthy of trust:

I'm very quick and easy to trust other people, and over the years have learned from my failure to look past fleeting first impressions and see which friends stick around for the long run. Nawal was my classmate so I was able to see her work ethic, she was moderately religious, and gave excellent advice even if I didn't inquire.

Michelle's contrasting examples of her two friends Trey and Janelle in her journal responses suggest that while similarity can help friends initially develop trust, it's not sufficient to grow trust to the deep level necessary to sustain a close friendship. As she described,

I developed trust with Trey very easily because he seemed to be a person that was similar to me as far as personality and interests go.

In contrast, she described cultivating trust with Janelle by learning to rely on her through their shared work and classes. With Trey, their friendship and trust level deepened through opening up to each other and feeling comfortable that they would keep each other's confidences, whereas she and Janelle never achieved this deeper level of trust; not achieving this deeper level kept them from "sealing" their contract. As she says,

Our trust [between herself and Janelle] is simpler than what I have with Trey because I don't trust her as much as him. I only trust Janelle to do simple work tasks or

homework assignments and that'll she do a good job when we're working on something together.

This simpler level of trust does not facilitate the development of a close friendship nor friendship sustainment; indeed, Michelle feels much less close to Janelle and indicated in her interview that she doesn't expect her friendship with Janelle will continue once they're no longer at college together.

Developing memories through shared experiences and Exploring Other Cultures.

A facilitating condition of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" is engaging in shared experiences together. While experiences that lead to the development of memories or stories that become a part of the fabric of the friendship are especially powerful in cultivating trust, more mundane, one-on-one moments can be significant as well as they can provide the friends with opportunities to connect at a deeper level. Alisha provided an example of how a moment with Charles early in their friendship helped them to become closer:

We had a bonfire at my roommate's house, and I don't know – that's like when I had a first serious talk about life with Charles. Like, I don't know. I just like talking about life and how it's crazy that we're all gonna die one day and stuff. So that was like the first night that I really had a very, very deep conversation with Charles. And he sat there and listened to me, and I was like, oh my gosh, no one ever just listens to me. And he was like replying and giving feedback. So it was very memorable. We had a good time.

Alisha described this moment as a critical moment when she and Charles transitioned from being casual friends to close friends. The cultivation of trust is more implicit than explicit in this example, but it was the first time Alisha realized she could trust Charles with her innermost thoughts.

In some cases developing memories through shared experiences can be a strategy as well, if it's used intentionally by one or both friends as a means of deepening the friendship and cultivating trust. For example, Dan talked about spending time in his car with Sammy listening to music, and how that one-on-one time helped them to grow closer:

Every time I just think about it, it's just those car sessions [with Sammy]... [it] was just us two alone, and we didn't really have many friends at the time, we didn't have other things. You know, just kind of us two. And for weeks we would have a plan where to go for lunch and stuff and we just spent a lot of time together. And we'd be fine with just staying in the car and listening to music and talking and we would just do that. And that's what I think about, a moment of our relationship. And we had no worries, we didn't do anything special, but we're still having fun, you know. And you don't do that with many people, you don't really just like chill in the car, for like a few hours on a regular basis. We didn't even think about it. Every day then we'd just get in the car and drive somewhere to eat and then came back and just chilled. ... The kind of moment we were sitting in the car and stuff, that's how we became close. Because at first we weren't close, and we just started going to lunch together because

we didn't go with anybody else, and then slowly over time just, just hanging out with at lunch, we just became good friends. It's just cool.

Although Dan didn't necessarily plan this time with Sammy in order to develop trust between them, this time together nonetheless facilitated their closeness and ability to cultivate trust. His example also illustrates the role of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference in cultivating trust as well, as their shared interest in music gave them a reason to spend time together, which allowed them to grow closer. Overall, participants who discussed cultivating trust through shared experiences talked extensively about the role doing so played in bringing them closer together as friends, regardless of whether the activities that developed the memories were pursued by one or both friends specifically to deepen their friendship (i.e., a strategy) or the deepening was an unintended but desirable consequence.

Shared experiences that involve Exploring Other Cultures (another central process of interracial friendship) may also facilitate the cultivation of trust because, as I discuss later in this chapter, Exploring Other Cultures often requires stepping outside of one's comfort zone, which is a form of vulnerability. Additionally, if the friend who is "traveling" to another culture receives support from the friend whose culture s/he is traveling to, that process can contribute to the cultivation of trust between them and help them to seal the silent contract. Stepping outside of one's own culture into the friend's, and receiving support and validation from the friend in return, can be a significant moment in helping the friends realize they can trust each other, and it creates a sense of mutual security within their relationship.

Propinquity. Two participants, Rachel and Sloan, discussed in their journal responses the role that living together (a form of propinquity) plays in facilitating and deepening trust. For example, Rachel commented, “the fact that we are roommates and living together has really brought our two lives together where trust is exercised daily.” In Rachel’s case, being around her roommate Anya all the time because they live together provided them with frequent opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to each other and their relationship, building a strong silent contract between them. In contrast, Sloan began living with her friend Ashley after they graduated from college and moved to another state together to begin law school. In their case, trust developed prior to their living together, but living together helped them to deepen their commitment to each other and strengthen their contract:

I think that our trust has grown stronger, even just over this summer, since we are now living together. And as of two days ago she decided she wasn’t really happy with going to law school so she decided not to start grad school this year. I know she was hesitant to tell me because she thought I would be mad, but in all honesty I want her to be happy and it would be selfish of me to be mad just because I wanted a partner in the law program.

Choosing to move to another state and live together seems to have transformed their silent contract into a more “official” contract; signing a lease together was a tangible way in which they demonstrated their commitment to their relationship. Indeed, even when Ashley told Sloan she had changed her mind about law school, their mutual trust and strong silent contract allowed Sloan to understand Ashley’s position and not see her decision as a threat to

their friendship. Thus, while living together is clearly not a necessary (nor sufficient) condition for cultivating trust, it can play an important role in facilitating the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” to both develop and sustain an interracial friendship.

Propinquity may also have been a factor in Michelle’s friendship development with Janelle, even though she doesn’t discuss it directly, in that the amount of time she spends with Janelle through academics and having previously worked together provided opportunities in which they could learn to trust each other. Living together may also have facilitated initial trust development Kandace as well; however, for her, living with someone she felt was not genuine—and therefore couldn’t fully be trusted—hastened the demise of her friendship with Jill because she was confronted with Jill’s lack of genuineness on a daily basis. Katelin’s experience in her friendship with Abby, which ended, also illustrates the negative case relationship between propinquity and trust; as she described in her journal responses, once Abby stopped being around as often, Katelin felt she could no longer rely on her and her trust in Abby diminished:

I am not sure how the trust developed, but I can tell you how it dissolved. One aspect of our friendship starting to dissolve was when I felt like I couldn’t rely on her anymore. We lived right next door, and there were 4 of us who were best friends and basically did everything together or knew where we were and when we were coming back. And we hung out all the time. There were also things this friend and I did, such as go to church, on a regular basis. When she started dating this new boyfriend, she

basically fell off the face of the earth. We never knew where she was, and at first, the first night she slept at his place, we were concerned for her safety since we hadn't heard from her at all. Eventually she told us this was just how it was going to be, so we stopped asking. Then it really began to feel like she wasn't there anymore, and even when she was physically there, she was on her phone, or zoned out. I would tell her things and she would mention the exact same thing moments later and I would be like, "I just said that," and she would be like, "Oh." We began to feel very distant, and she started showing up late or not at all to things we had always done together, such as church. I started to feel like I could no longer rely on her, to be there physically or support me emotionally, and that is really when the changes in our friendship became prevalent and also permanent. In retrospect, I think maybe this is when I really started to feel like I didn't trust her anymore, and didn't know her anymore.

It seems, therefore, as though propinquity can facilitate the initial cultivation of trust, but for long-term sustainment, it can work for or against the friendship—it amplifies strengths in the silent contract but also magnifies any weaknesses as well, especially when one friend feels s/he can no longer rely upon the other friend to mutually honor their contract.

Strategies. One strategy, emotional arousal and vulnerability, pertains to Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.”

Emotional arousal and vulnerability. Emotional intimacy is a property of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” as I discuss above. However, allowing oneself to

be emotionally intimate and vulnerable with someone else (a new or potential friend) *before* the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” has taken place can facilitate friendship development and the transition from a casual friendship to a close friendship. Brown (2012) defines vulnerability as “uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure” (p. 34). She elaborates that vulnerability in the context of relational connection

... means sharing our stories with people who have earned the right to hear them—people with whom we’ve cultivated relationships that can bear the weight of our story. Is there trust? Is there mutual empathy? Is there reciprocal sharing? Can we ask for what we need? These are the crucial connection questions. (p. 160)

Vulnerability can be an intentional strategy to deepen a friendship, or it can occur “in the moment” as two friends began spending more time together and grow closer. Either way, however, it carries risk because the person being vulnerable may not yet be confident that s/he can trust the other person (i.e., the “silent contract” has not yet been established). If done intentionally, this willingness to open up and be vulnerable can be a sort of “test” of the friendship: “Can this person bear the weight of my story?” The other friend then must reciprocate the vulnerability to demonstrate mutual respect and willingness to invest trust in the other.

In their pair interview, Charles and Alisha discussed the role that vulnerability, which Charles aptly termed “emotional overextension,” played in the development of their friendship:

Charles: I was thinking about emotional vulnerability. So now I'm starting to think about how Alisha does this, but we put our emotions out front and we just open ourselves up to being vulnerable, to being maybe criticized or just judged, and just instead of presenting just our outside selves, we like, I don't know, blurted something out and just like, "This is who I really am," and we just kind of accepted that in each other. It's hard to at the first meeting of someone just to like really open up and expose yourself to them, because you don't want to be rejected, or you don't want to be criticized for that. When it's successful, it's like a really powerful bonding experience. I don't know if I brought it up in the first interview, but I coined the term "emotional overextension." It's just funny that I came up with it at the beginning of the year ... but just the idea of overextending yourself early can build a stronger bond than just – As powerful as it is to gradually have a friendship and gradually become life friends is just to give that boost at the beginning, it was like Krazy Glue or something. It's risky because if people aren't willing to reciprocate that and just open up when you try to open up, it might not work out and there could be effects to how you want to continue being friends with them because they weren't willing to do that. But if it works, you find the people that were meant to be true friends with you, and it builds stronger friendships.

Alisha (a little later in their pair interview): Yeah. I mean, I didn't even realize that I did that, just put my emotions out there first, because I really never even did that ever before. Never really thought about it, either. But yeah, I mean, I can see how it works,

and it's very risky because, I mean, someone could just be sitting there and just knowing that, "After this talk, we're never gonna talk again, because they're gonna think you're super weird or something." But it's risky and I guess you just gotta take it or leave it.

Charles and Alisha's discussion illustrates that while "putting your emotions out there" is a risky strategy, it can also yield significant rewards in terms of cultivating trust and deepening the friendship more quickly than might otherwise occur if neither friend were willing to take this emotional risk. Because Alisha was receptive to and reciprocated Charles's "emotional overextension," Charles knew he could trust Alisha and felt comfortable sharing more of his inner self with her, allowing them to develop trust and transition to a close friendship.

Consequences

The process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" may lead to two consequences for members of an interracial friendship. The first of these consequences is finding security, validation, and belonging through the friendship. The second consequence is when the presence of trust and a strong silent contract creates a relational context in which positive challenge—caring conflict that leads to growth—can occur.

Security, belonging, and validation. While relational security is a property of the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract," it can also be a consequence of this process. Specifically, my participants provided evidence that the trust they've developed in their interracial friendships helps them to feel validated and emotionally supported, a sense of relief or unburdening, or like they belong. For example, Alisha

discussed feeling cared for by her friend Charles, and how knowing that Charles will always be there for her gives her a sense of comfort within her daily life:

I had come home from work one day and was exhausted and just really needed someone to rub my feet while I vent to them about my life. Charles literally rubbed my feet while I told him about my life. He was really the only person that I had opened up to all year and it just made me feel comfortable because I could tell that he was truly listening and the massage was perfect. Charles has not told anyone else in our friend group what I told him (although I would not have a problem with it) but it's just the fact that he does not feel like he needs to. Everyone else in the group can wait until they have reached that trust level with me to open up to them. Trust in our friendship means listening when it's really important and being there when it really matters.

Amina experiences a different sense of security in her friendship with Nawal. She discussed how Nawal has helped Amina to feel like she belongs at Southeastern University, something she struggled with prior to their friendship:

[It] is very difficult to find Pakistanis here [in the Southeastern U.S.], even more difficult to find Muslims at the time [in middle and high school], so I felt singled out everywhere I went. People were not accepting of anything about me. People thought was I was very weird, how I did not actually start grooming my eyebrows or waxing until I was pretty old. I think I was like mid-high school, and most girls had started in middle school. Most girls were wearing makeup and had a ton of piercings, which I didn't have. I always smelled like Indian food, which girls didn't like, either, so I

never fit in anywhere. I just got really depressed over time, because I'm like, I just don't belong. And Nawal was one of the first few people that actually made me feel like I belong somewhere, and that I have a place.

Max expresses a sentiment similar to Amina; although Max, as a White male at a predominately White institution, doesn't struggle to fit in or find where he belongs at Southeastern University, he nonetheless was unable to find anyone whom he felt truly understood him prior to becoming friends with Nelson:

The main way that I feel how our friendship has changed is that we both have a very similar struggle and we relate to it more and more. Our friendship started out with naturally spending time together in groups, then spending time together, and then living together, and now relating our very similar life experiences together. We both have the same major, and we take many of the same classes. This year we fully realized how neither of us can share or discuss our struggle with time, energy, and work with anyone else that we know including our families. We can only really share it and discuss it with each other. We're not sure why that is, but we know that it is this way. During a long 2-hour conversation I told him how no one that I know can fully relate to what I'm going through and it's difficult to find anyone to talk about it with other than him. He told me that he felt exactly the same way about me. The high point of our friendship I'd say is now, because it's the best and closest that it's ever been.

Max's example illustrates how finding someone whom he trusts enough to share his struggles with and who provides him with validation and support by relating to what he's "going

through” is both a positive consequence of his friendship with Nelson as well as a condition that has allowed them to grow closer, deepen their level of trust, and reinforce their silent contract.

Positive challenge. Positive challenge refers to conflict that is relationship-enhancing (and connection-fostering) rather than relationship-destabilizing (and disconnection-fostering)—what might be simply called “fighting.” Having cultivated trust and established a silent contract enables friends can be honest with each other without fear of causing offense; they can “shoot straight” or “tell me what I need to hear” and feel confident that the friend will understand that what they say comes from a place of caring and respect. Sloan discussed a particularly illustrative example of this dimension:

Our friendship has changed for the better over time because we have really learned how to trust each other and learn more about what makes each other tick. We have grown to be very, very honest with each other which I think a lot of people naturally can't handle or don't like to confront. Especially women, we tend to sugar coat things or not be completely honest because we are scared of hurting someone's feelings or causing resentment. Yet we (my friend and I) are honest about 100% of the time and sometimes it results in hurt feelings but we are grateful to hear it because chances are no one else will say it. For example, one of the low points in our friendship was when she told me she didn't think my boyfriend was “the one.” She explained her point of view and didn't know that he was in the living room and heard everything. I didn't know he heard until he mentioned it a few days later, and I told her he heard

and she felt terrible about it. She kept saying she was the worst friend ever – but actually she really helped our relationship. He said hearing her say that made him realize that she really had my best interest in mind and that he knew he had been slacking off (pressure from work, his parents losing their jobs, other personal issues) and stressed out and not paying as much attention to our relationship. So in a way her honesty helped us and made our relationship better and also helped me see how she was invested in my happiness as a friend, enough to tell me the man I'd been dating for almost three times as long as I had known her, wasn't "deserving" of me based on what she had observed.

In this excerpt, Sloan discusses a “low point” in their friendship, and yet it wasn't truly a low point because it led her and Ashley to grow relationally. The fact that Sloan and Ashley had developed deep trust and authenticity with each other facilitated their ability to have a moment like this lead to connection and growth, rather than disconnection and separation. Ultimately, this moment of conflict resulted in Sloan feeling even more cared for by Ashley. In a weaker friendship (one without trust or in which the friends don't feel they can bring their whole, authentic selves), a moment like this potentially could have destabilized the friendship and caused a rift that might never be mended. Their silent contract, rooted in trust, enables them to have difficult discussions and to challenge each other with respect rather than anger, and the level of support they provide to each other keeps them from feeling attacked. In this way, the trust they have developed also helps them to

engage in the process of Bridging Difference to Connect, as I discuss in more detail in the section of this chapter pertaining to that category.

Max also discussed how he and his friend Nelson challenge each other in a positive way. Although he doesn't directly mention the role of trust in the moment he described, it seems as though a deep level of trust and a "sealed" contract would need to be present to create a relational context in which positive challenge can occur:

[Nelson] was really just there to listen what I had to say [after a conflict with another friend], and he told me that there's a reason you're feeling the way you're feeling and it's good. He said that it's good that you're crying and that you're feeling the way you're feeling because if you weren't, it wouldn't have any impact on your life and it wouldn't mean anything to you, you know. And it's like exactly what I needed to hear. That was exactly what I needed to hear. And he was really just there for me even though he wasn't even there when it happened, you know. He didn't even know what was going on. But he was really there for me and it picked me up right back on my feet, just kinda like that conversation and his presence in the – I felt fine after that and I felt like everything was okay.

Max's example demonstrates how, when trust and a silent contract are present within an interracial friendship, the friends can engage in respectful, caring conflict that leads to growth and deepened relational connection—positive challenge. In contrast, Katelin's experience with her friend Abby demonstrates what may happen when the level of trust between friends is insufficient, or when the silent contract is too weak, to allow positive

challenge to occur. She challenged her friend Abby about Abby's boyfriend, but because the trust foundation between Katelin and Abby was not as strong as that between Sloan and Ashley, Katelin's challenge led to conflict and ultimately precipitated the end of their friendship:

One major disagreement [Abby] and I had that really was the downward turning point of our friendship was after she, her boyfriend, myself, and a mutual friend all were going to this 5K race and after party kind of together but kind of not. We did not drive together and we got split up at the event and did not really find each other after. We had been kind of tense leading up to this, and we did not talk for several days after. Then she texted me that she needed to speak with me. We had a discussion that was really a dispute and did not end well at all. She told me she was mad I did not try to be friendlier to her boyfriend. I told her I really didn't know how to respond to her boyfriend because in the months they had been together I never interacted with him and saw less and less of her. She was mad, and I was upset because our friendship was really hurting. Sometimes I wish I had tried harder to be friends with her boyfriend, but I never really had an opportunity and by the time I did I already felt pretty strongly that I didn't like him. I feel like I would have had to pretend to like him and that just didn't seem right. There really was no right thing to do, though. It was a very tricky situation. That fight was really the turning point in our friendship and maybe the beginning of the end in some ways because we did not solve or resolve

or come to any sort of agreement. We just left with no conclusions, still feeling tensions, and our friendship never really recovered after that.

These contrasting experiences suggest that the strongest interracial friendships—those that are most likely to be sustained—are those in which the level of trust and the strength of the silent contract allow positive challenge to occur. Similarly, Maggie, Marcelo, and Kandace also experienced conflict with their friends that ultimately ended their friendships, and all three lacked strong contracts with their friends that might have otherwise enabled them to weather conflict with their friends in a positive way that would have reinforced, rather than weakened, their friendships (as I discuss in more detail in my section “Effects on the Friendship When the Central Processes Are Unsuccessful” later in this chapter).

Researcher Reflection²

One of the earliest indicators of the category that eventually became Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” was Charles’s idea of emotional overextension, which I felt was powerful and resonated strongly with me. However, I also considered that perhaps my own past friendship experiences might have led me to react more strongly to his ideas than was warranted, and so I decided to reflect on his idea and my reactions to it in a reflective memo passage:

While interviewing Charles and Alisha as a pair yesterday afternoon, Charles made a comment that really resonated with me. He talked about “emotional overextension,”

² Here and throughout this chapter, where relevant, I share reflections to help my readers understand how my own experiences, values, and perspectives have influenced my theory and to allow others to assess how these may have shaped my analytic interpretations and theory generation.

a term he coined. It's similar to the idea of emotional vulnerability, but more about putting yourself out there around others and stepping outside of your comfort zone in order to make a connection with someone that would lead to friendship. As he noted, it's risky to do and it can backfire (i.e., lead to rejection), but it's also one of the most effective ways to really get close to someone, and doing so is what allowed him to become close friends with Alisha. As he was talking about this, I was thinking about when we moved to Fairfax Station from Woodbridge the summer before I started 5th grade. I remember my first week or two at my new elementary school, and especially riding the bus, when some of the "popular" girls initially flocked around me to test me out and see if I was worthy of becoming part of their clique. I tried what I think would qualify as emotional extension and it backfired—I clearly remember the leader of the clique saying to me, "You're weird," and that was the last chance I ever had to become friends with her. Obviously there are a lot of differences between the process of friendship formation in elementary school and the process in college, emotional maturity being a key difference—it's likely that college students are more able to effectively extend themselves emotionally (keeping their overextension within reasonable bounds) and manage the personal risk it involves (of rejection, chiefly), and college students are probably better able to respond appropriately to other who (over)extend themselves emotionally. But the notion of risk (of rejection) inherent in overextension is an important point to consider, and I may want to theoretically sample for that somehow—not sure how just yet—or at least ask about in journals.

This reflection helped me to recognize how my own reactions to Charles's idea may have shaped my conceptualization of the role of vulnerability and risk in the friendship development process. Not long after I wrote this reflective passage, I experienced a challenge in my personal life for which I sought counseling, and my counselor recommended I read Brené Brown's (2012) book *Daring Greatly*. The focus of her book is on how vulnerability and authenticity facilitates relational connection (and not allowing ourselves to be vulnerable prevents connection). Because vulnerability and authenticity were components of my developing category Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract," I reflected upon this in an analytic memo:

However, as compelling as this concept [of vulnerability] is, I'm not sure it's really a prominent feature in other participants' friendships. I'm also conscious of the fact that this concept/indicator may be so compelling to me right now because I recently read Daring Greatly (and am currently reading Carry On, Warrior, which expresses similar ideas) and it resonated with me because of what I've been going through this summer; I've really come to value openness and authenticity in a way I never have before. So I want to be mindful of the fact that while the ideas I express here about emotional overextension and vulnerability seem very powerful, they may only be powerful from my perspective but not actually relevant to my theory.

Reflecting on my own experiences, knowledge, and values in connection to the concepts with which I was working in my analysis helped me to become aware of where my analysis might be inappropriately skewed to favor my own experiences rather than my

participants'. To address this potential issue in my analysis, I theoretical sampled for these concepts by asking participants how they cultivated trust in the journaling phase of data generation. Their responses helped me to understand that for them, emotional vulnerability was not always risky, nor was it necessarily required to develop trust and their friendships. The additional data they provided led to me recognize that Charles's idea of "emotional overextension" was more accurately a form of vulnerability, which in turn fit into my theory as a facilitating condition for Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract."

Summary

Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" is an essential sub-process of the larger process of developing and sustaining an interracial friendship. The process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" is a critical factor in the transition from a casual to a close friendship. When the process has taken place, the two friends feel secure and comfortable in sharing their inner emotional and authentic selves with each other without fear that what they have shared will be ridiculed or disclosed to others; these are the properties of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract." Some participants displayed variation in this process along the dimensions of recounting a pivotal moment in cultivating trust and the specific ways in which they felt they could rely on their friends as a result of having an established silent contract. Mutual respect is a required condition for the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract," while three conditions facilitate it: (1) the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, (2) developing memories through shared experiences, which also relates to the process of

Exploring Other Cultures, and (3) propinquity. Emotional arousal and vulnerability is a possible strategy that students can use in order to facilitate cultivation of trust and the transition from casual to close friendship. Finally, friends who have cultivated trust and established a silent contract may experience two possible consequences. First, they may find a sense of security, belonging, or validation through the friendship. Second, they may be able to engage in positive challenge—conflict driven by caring and respect that promotes relational connection rather than disconnection.

Although my participants' experiences do not provide clear evidence of the corollary—that if trust doesn't develop and/or a silent contract is not established, a close friendship can't develop—their experiences do at least suggest that this may be the case, as Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” is a central process of developing and sustaining an interracial friendship. Overall, mutual trust and an established “silent contract” provide the friendship with a solid foundation upon which it can deepen and be sustained over time. When that solid foundation develops weaknesses, however, the sustainability of the friendship is threatened.

Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference

To be honest, [Sammy] is ethnic, he is African American, obviously. And there's a few differences in some things, in the ways he thinks and the ways he perceives stuff. But I don't think about him being ethnic when I hang out with him. ... I see him as like, day to day, what we're doing, what's going on in our lives. I don't really think about all that other stuff. Sometimes we'll wanna go do something but we can't because he has

to go to church or something. And that's part of his background. That's part of his ethnicity and stuff. But that sometimes plays a role. But like other times it's just like a friend, you wanna hang out. We think about everyday problems: girls, grades, sports, and stuff like that. You don't think about, "Oh boy, I gotta talk about this with him because he's this or whatever." "I can't tell him this because he's that." Nah. I never think about that.

– Dan (who identifies as White)

This process of interracial friendship development and sustainment arose from my own reflection on what my participants had to say pertaining to the theory of similarity-attraction (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978; Newcomb, 1961, 1962). Although I didn't ask them questions pertaining directly to the theory, I did ask them about how they met their friends and what attracted them to their friends, with the goal of understanding the factors that influenced their desire to become and stay friends with peers from other racial groups. I noticed that while what my participants said provided some support for the theory, in that discovering and building upon shared interests was an influential factor in their friendship development and sustainment, their experiences also added valuable nuance to the way in which similarity influenced their relationships. Specifically, I noticed that when my participants expressed support for similarity as the basis of interpersonal attraction, they were often discussing deep similarity (e.g., shared personalities, values, beliefs, goals), not surface-level, demographic similarity. This phenomenon represents the first property of the

process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference: focusing on deep rather than surface similarity as a basis for interpersonal connection.

However, as I continued coding my participants' interview transcripts, and later their journal responses, I realized that similarity did not account for the whole story. Although they predominately discussed similarity as a factor in both initial and ongoing interpersonal attraction to their friends, and many discussed not seeing their friends as "different" from themselves or paying much attention to their racial/ethnic differences in their everyday interactions, they also discussed a respect for, and willingness to engage with, their racial/ethnic differences at specific moments. In other words, while participants preferred to focus on what they share rather than on how they differ when asked about their friendships, their differences were nonetheless an important—and often positive—influence in their friendship as well. I struggled with how to incorporate these seemingly conflicting, but clearly related, influences into a single category until I came across Pat Parker's poem "For the White Person Who Wants to Know How to Be My Friend." The opening lines of that poem state:

The first thing you do is to forget that I'm black.

Second, you must never forget that I'm black.

(reprinted in Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004, p. 162)

I realized that Parker's words reflected the exact phenomenon I was seeing with my participants: they were embracing similarity yet never forgetting difference. This

phenomenon represents the second property of this category, which involves honoring the paradoxical mandate to “forget and never forget” their cultural differences.

The quote from Dan that opened this section provides an excellent illustration of how the two properties of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference work together. For Dan, the racial and cultural differences between himself and his friend Sammy are irrelevant to the quotidian moments of their friendship, but at the same time he acknowledges and shows respect for their differences. He and Sammy are able to embrace their similarities without forgetting their differences, and this process is critical in sustaining their friendship. Among my participants who sustained their friendships, they honor these conflicting mandates by overlooking their friends’ racial and ethnic differences in terms of developing the friendship and the ongoing relationship maintenance work and interaction needed to sustain the friendship, while also understanding that they need to appreciate and respect their cultural differences at appropriate moments rather than denying that any differences exist. This process occurred in all racial dyad permutations (e.g., White-Black, Black-Asian American, etc.), and it did not vary based upon the racial identities of the two friends.

The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference relates to what Eboo Patel (2014) has termed “embracing similarity while honoring differences” in the context of interfaith work. There seems to be a tacit agreement within each friendship pair to both forget and never forget their cultural differences, and it seems to work well for them. As I discuss in more detail below and in the other sections of this chapter, Embracing Similarity facilitates the other processes central to sustaining an interracial friendship (Cultivating Trust

and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Exploring Other Cultures, and Bridging Difference to Connect); these processes could not occur, or would not be as effective in sustaining the friendship, if the friends were not able to embrace their similarities without forgetting their differences.

Below I discuss in more detail the defining properties of the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, as well as four areas of dimensional variation (i.e., ways in which the process can vary among friendships): (1) discovering similarity through difference, (2) balancing “forgetting” and “not forgetting,” (3) having (or lacking) pre-college exposure to diversity, and (4) feeling more similar to different-race peers than to same-race peers. I also discuss the five conditions that facilitate this process, which include the three other central processes of interracial friendship as well as propinquity and Exploratory Orientation, a new concept that I identified through this research. Finally, I discuss two strategies friends can employ to facilitate their ability to embrace similarity: (1) connecting through shared interests and (2) developing memories through shared experiences. Figure 8 details the relationships between Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and other categories in my theory, as well as the facilitating conditions and strategies friends may use to Embrace Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

Figure 8. A model of the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

Properties

As I discuss above, there are two properties that define that process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. The first property involves focusing on deep rather than surface similarity as a basis for interpersonal connection. The second property involves never forgetting the cultural differences between oneself and one's friend. Next, I further discuss each of these properties and provide illustrative examples from my participants.

Focusing on deep rather than surface similarity. The central property of the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference involves the “Embracing Similarity” part of this category’s name. Specifically, college students who Embrace

Similarity are those who see their peers as whole individuals rather than representatives of specific racial or cultural groups, which then allows them to discover similarity at the deep level (values, beliefs, interests, goals, and so forth). Their initial connection at this deep level is a significant factor in the development of the friendship, and their ongoing connection through what they share, as well as the discovery of new things shared, sustains the friendship. As Alisha aptly summarized in her interview:

After hearing about Charles's background and how his high school really wasn't diverse and just hearing his story – like my mind just was seriously just blown, because I didn't really know anything about him when I first met him. But then he just started telling me about his hometown, and I did a little Facebook creeping here and there, and it's just – like I really got to know him, and it's just race isn't even a factor to me anymore. It's just there, I guess ... I think people should start building connections off of personalities instead of races, because I feel like some people aren't even happy with their friends, but they just are friends with them because they have one thing in common, and that's their race or their religion. I just feel like people just need to get over what they're afraid of and just go for it.

Like Alisha, other participants discussed making a decision to focus on personality (a form of deep similarity) rather than racial or other surface-level differences in seeking potential friends with whom to connect. For example, Brynn (who identifies as White) discusses how she sought out peers with similar personalities as potential friends, which eventually led her to become friends with Brittany, an African American woman:

I wasn't trying to make a friend of a different race; it just happened that way because I just didn't care. It's about personality.

Erica, who lived in Southeastern University's internationally focused living-learning community and had a large group of international students as friends, made the following recommendation to other college students who want to develop friendships with international students:

Probably to not think of [international students] as foreign, to just think of them as more friends. Because sure, they're foreign, but they pretty much act the same as any other normal college student. So make friends based on their own selves and their personalities more than on their ethnicities.

Although she specifically refers to international students, her advice applies more broadly to interracial friendships and other forms of intercultural friendships as well—when students are able to discover deep similarity and connect at that level, rather than at the level of surface differences, intercultural friendships can easily develop.

Anastasia provides an example of how she and her friend George connected embraced their shared commitment to working hard to achieve their individual life goals:

We're both really goal-oriented. [George] has his eyes set: he's going to be a programmer, he's going to like program the next Microsoft and become a billionaire. My goals aren't the same but we're both really hardworking and really goal-driven. We both know what we want and we're willing to work towards it. So I kind of see a

little bit of myself in him. And it reminds me, like, you could do this; George is doing this, you can do this.

Anastasia's example illuminates how focusing on deep similarity (in her case, through sharing a desire to work hard to achieve their goals) allows her to embrace similarity with George—to “see a little bit of myself in him.” Had she and George focused on their cultural differences instead (she is from the United States and multiracial, he is from Mexico and Latino), they may not have found sufficient common ground to allow them to develop and sustain a friendship.

Never forgetting cultural differences. Yet students who are able to connect with their peers at a deep level are not willfully ignoring or naïve about the racial and other cultural differences between themselves and their friends (or potential friends); they are not colorblind. Rather, they recognize the existence and importance of cultural differences between themselves and honor those differences at appropriate moments, but those differences aren't salient to the day-to-day relational processes that shape the development and sustainment of their friendships.

Charles and Alisha's friendship provides an example of how the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference works. In both their individual and pair interviews, they discussed attending cultural events together (which I discuss in more detail in the section of this chapter on Exploring Other Cultures), and Charles, who came from a predominately White pre-college school and neighborhood, credits Alisha with helping him learn about other cultural groups on campus. Yet on a day-to-day basis, their different racial

backgrounds have little bearing on their relationship (which, as he indicates, involves a lot of mutual teasing and joking):

So it's just funny that we almost judge each other on each other's clothing or like style choices but that has nothing to do with – it's just ironic that we make fun of each other for the clothes we wear but we're not making fun of each other so much for like who we are. Like we're judging each other based on our outside, what we look on the outside, but we're like ignoring the idea of race and the associations with that. I think it's just funny that we're doing such a good job of being interracial or whatever and being open but then when we wear something that's silly looking or whatever, it's just we go right back to making fun of each other or judging each other [for that].

Max provided another example of how he and his friend Nelson “never forget” each other’s cultures; in the context of their friendship, religious differences, rather than racial differences, are what is “never forgotten” between them:

We differ in many ways, but we are both very accepting of these differences. [Nelson] is a Christian (and has been for his entire life), but I don't believe in Christianity at all. I am non-religious. Yet we are able to have intelligent and positive discussions about life, religion, our relationships and our happiness. In fact, I spent a week with him and his family in 2013 and they invited me to go to church with them. I said yes, not out of a feeling of obligation, but because I was deeply interested in the community that has impacted my friend's life in such a positive way. I was the only white male at the service, yet everyone talked to me, was very friendly, and very

accepting. He has never tried to convert me or persuade me, but he has explained to me why his religion is so important to him. And I have explained to him my own path, beliefs, and way of living. And we simply accept each other. I believe that we have never argued because this way of accepting each other is how we approach all of our interactions.

Max and Nelson's religious differences are not a prominent feature of their friendship, and what Max described in this excerpt from his interview was a one-time event, not a daily occurrence in their relationship. However, it was a significant moment of honoring their differences. Moments such as these, even though they may not be frequent, allow the friends to demonstrate to each other that they value and respect not only the ways in which they are similar but also the ways in which they differ.

Dimensions

The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference varied among participants along four dimensions. First, some participants discussed being able to discover similarity through engaging with their differences. Second, the particular balance between "forgetting" and "not forgetting" difference that was most effective for the friendship provided another source of variation. Third, whether or not participants had been exposed to and interacted with other cultural groups prior to college affected their ability to Embrace Similarity and how they approached the process. Finally, several participants discussed feeling more similar to their interracial friends than to their same-race peers on campus.

Below I discuss each of these dimensions and provide examples to illustrate the variation they represent.

Discovering similarity through difference. Racial/ethnic and other cultural differences between friends can provide an opportunity for them to discover deep similarity (e.g., shared values); their differences can highlight their similarities by contrast, facilitated by open and honest conversation (the approach-style strategies for Bridging Difference to Connect can facilitate this connection as well, as I discuss in the section on the process of Bridging Difference to Connect in this chapter). An excerpt from Max's journal responses illustrates how this dimension of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference appears in the context of his friendship with Nelson:

What we have in common allows us to accept and embrace our differences. I don't think that we overlook our differences (or make them irrelevant), but we actually talk about them and explore them with each other quite frequently. I feel that when we explain our differences to each other, there is so much that opens up in terms of life perspective, culture, and understanding. One key value that we both fully relate to and embrace is the value of one's "path." We both strongly believe that everyone has their own "path" and that no person's path is identical to anyone else's, and that's perfectly okay. Explaining your path to another person may open up more for that person in their own path through life. Because we both believe in this, we are strongly AGAINST the belief of imposing your path onto other people. We are opposed to activities such as religious preaching and condemnation, even though he is a Christian and I am not. We

*are opposed to such things because it's almost as if (in that moment) the person is saying, "My path is the right one, and YOU should be living the way I do." We both believe that everyone has their own life to live, and living in a way where you intrude on people's path isn't a fulfilling way to live. **This belief has connected many of our various conversations and it's one that keeps coming up between us.*** (emphasis added)

As he so aptly describes, Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference doesn't require the friends to ignore or minimize their differences, but rather that the differences between them can provide an opportunity for them to discover similarity—for example, as Max describes, in a shared value (a form of deep similarity) underlying their racial and religious differences. Furthermore, the type of open and honest conversation Max described, which allows him to find similarity at a deep level with his friend Nelson, requires friends to have cultivated trust, showing how the central interracial friendship processes of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" are mutually facilitating. I discuss this facilitating relationship in more detail below in the section on facilitating conditions.

Charles and Alisha provide another example of how the discovery of deep-level similarity (a "mental connection," as they refer to it) facilitates friendship development:

Charles: I guess this is more as far as towards the beginning [of our friendship], but when we – I guess I was surprised at how open we were about our opinions, what we thought of, I'll just say, other people, or something. [Laughter] Wait. I don't wanna say

our whole connection was on like gossiping and bashing other people, but that's a big part of our friendship is just we share a lot of the same opinions on things and activities, but also people. [Laughter] So it's just surprising that I would be thinking something and that maybe Alisha would approach me about it, and we have the same thoughts about something without talking about it. So it's just I've had a lot of mental connections with her I guess.

Alisha: Hmm. What is surprising? I don't know. Just from looking at Charles, you wouldn't think that he – looks can be deceiving, I guess. I don't know. Charles can actually somewhat dance. He's – I don't know. I misjudged him I guess. That was the biggest surprise, yeah. Because again, we have the same thoughts on things and I don't know. I wasn't expecting him to be sassy, and he is.

As their example illustrates, two friends may realize that beyond their cultural differences, they actually have a lot in common. The specific things they have in common, and how salient these things are to the friendship and its development, may vary from friendship to friendship (a form of dimensional variation in the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference), but what they share allows the friendship to grow.

Balancing “forgetting” and “not forgetting.” Another dimension of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is the requirement of striking a balance between “forgetting” and “not forgetting” that is mutually satisfactory to both of the friends. The importance of this dimension to sustaining an interracial friendship is best illustrated by negative cases—examples from friendships that ended in which one or both friends perceived

the balance between “forgetting” and “never forgetting” to be unsatisfactory (i.e., too much of one and not enough of the other). In these cases, the imbalance may lead to conflict that jeopardizes friendship sustainment. The following example from Kandace’s interview illustrates how the racial differences between herself, as an African American woman, and her friend Jill, as a White woman, were a specter looming in the background of their friendship that neither of them wanted to address directly; they wanted to “forget” but not “never forget,” which led to inauthenticity and relational disconnection. For context, it’s important to note that earlier in her interview Kandace had described having negative interactions with Jill’s friends, all of whom were White, which Kandace attributed to the stereotypes and prejudice they held about African Americans. She references this in the excerpt below when she states, “I obviously knew her friends didn’t care for me for obvious reasons”:

[Tara: So most of the time it sounds like you would rather share that with your other friends that you were upset rather than confront Jill about it.] Yeah. [Tara: Were you afraid of how she would react or you just didn’t want to go there?] I was afraid that – because one thing I always questioned with Jill was I obviously knew her friends didn’t care for me for obvious reasons, but I never knew if how she felt about me was a fake I’m-trying-to-get-along-with-you feeling or a genuine “I don’t care what my friends think; this is how I think of you.” So I didn’t want to do anything to shake the – to test the waters. And plus, I knew that one encounter I had with her father, her father was just giving me a strange look. And I was just like, she had to tell him

something because he has never met me before. So whatever she thinks, I don't want to do anything to seem like that Black girl who always has an issue.

Maggie provides another example of experiencing an imbalance of “forgetting” and “never forgetting” with her friend Nikki. Maggie, who is White and had grown up in the Northeastern U.S., felt that she was able to look beyond race in her peer relationships until she came to college and became aware of the racial stereotypes that predominate in the South:

Because when I came, I feel like, if anything, these stereotypes have clouded my judgment. Although it's good to know about them in order to understand other people's perspectives and be like, “Oh my gosh, people say that to you? That's not funny.” That's – I don't even understand most of it, but – and it can be very harmful, so I think it's good for me, if I'm gonna live here forever, to know that. But at the same time, I came kind of as a blank slate, or that's how I felt, and so I was really open to everything. And I never really thought about race at all until she would bring it up. And that's when things, I think, started to get uncomfortable. So I think if she never brought it up, our friendship would be fine. Like probably still continuing.

Because of her background, Maggie would have preferred to primarily “forget” about race in her friendship with Nikki, whereas Nikki, an African American woman who had grown up in the South, placed greater importance on “never forgetting”; her racial identity was much more salient for her. Conversely, it's likely that if Nikki had participated in my study, she would have been frustrated by Maggie's minimization of their racial differences;

she may have felt there was too much “forgetting” in their relationship and might have been frustrated that Maggie would become uncomfortable whenever Nikki broached issues of race. The imbalance between Maggie and Nikki on this dimension created conflict between them that led to relational disconnection and was ultimately a contributing factor to ending their friendship, as illustrated by an excerpt from a different part of Maggie’s interview in which she described a critical moment of conflict that led to relational disconnection:

So when [Nikki] would always come over [during their first year], she would hang out with the both of us [Maggie and her roommate, who is from the Dominican Republic]. And there was a moment where – I don’t really know the conversation that we were having, but [Nikki] was like, “Yeah, I mean, you guys are fun, but I really need to hang out with more Black people.” And I was like, “What?” Because I hadn’t really considered our races being a factor in this relationship at all. And she was like, “Oh, no offense, but I need that kind of community.” And I really struggled to understand, and I do understand, because, I mean, things are different. And the more I learn about Black culture and African Americans, how they’re treated in society, I can see how you would need a connection and someone to talk to. But at the same time, I didn’t feel it was right for her to push us away because she wanted to find this other friend group. ... for [Nikki], I feel like nothing really changed besides the fact that she made this verbal decision to not hang out with us as much. But then when she hung out with us, I kind of got the feeling she didn’t think anything had changed. But

for us, I think it was a little awkward, and I was thinking of our relationship so much differently.

Clearly, the salience of race to their friendship differed for Maggie and Nikki; Maggie wanted a friendship in which she could largely forget about race, whereas Nikki seemed to feel that Maggie's desire to "forget" minimized her experiences as an African American woman attending a predominately White university in the southern U.S.

Both Kandace's and Maggie's examples illustrate the need for two friends to establish a mutually acceptable balance between "forgetting" and "never forgetting" in order for an interracial friendship to be sustained. Relational disconnection that threatens friendship sustainment occurs when one or both friends feel that the other has disrupted the desired balance between "forgetting" and "never forgetting" that is critical to the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference—for example, if one friend brings race into their friendship too often or in a way that leads to conflict, or fails to acknowledge or show respect for their racial differences. The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference may also be compromised in a way that threatens friendship sustainment if one or both friends is unable or unwilling to look beyond race in order to discover and build upon a shared basis for connection. In other words, if race is *all* the friends can see, or conversely if the friends refuse to *ever* see race, Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference will not be successful and the friendship will likely be unsustainable. Ayvazian and Tatum (2004) note that

Cross-racial relationships are complicated by barriers of validation—we need to be validated to “feel a strong sense of connection,” but when one member can’t talk about her experiences of racism [or, I would add, other experiences pertaining to cultural background], disconnection results, and if that member has to invalidate her own experiences to maintain the relationship, violation results.” (p. 148)

Although none of my participants whose friendships ended illustrated the case of experiencing relational disconnection due to feeling a friend did not pay sufficient attention to their racial differences (i.e., the case of too much “forgetting”), both Maggie’s example above and Marcelo’s experience with his friend Jasmyn in the following example suggest that being unable to talk about one’s experiences of racism do, in fact, lead to disconnection and threaten friendship sustainment. As Marcelo described,

... we [the members of the friendship group to which he and Jasmyn belonged] all had a hard time dealing with the race issue mostly because it was not in any way a deal for all of us. We didn’t see any problem with it. So we weren’t being as cautious as maybe we needed to be about the things we said. Because to us, there was no difference whatsoever. [Jasmyn was] not my only Black friend. She’s just the only one that I had to be careful what I said around. My other Black friends would laugh about the same jokes with us. So I don’t know what her childhood was like growing up, but it was something we had a hard time understanding.

It’s likely that his friend Jasmyn felt invalidated by being unable to discuss her own experiences with racism and prejudice in the context of a friendship group that addressed

these issues with humor. Jasmyn eventually distanced herself from their group and ended her friendship with Marcelo, and the relational disconnection and “violation” she may have experienced as a result of too much “forgetting” among their friends may have been a significant factor.

In contrast, Natasha provides an example of how cultural or value differences may arise between her and Inga, but that their willingness to engage with each other in communication about their differences allows them to maintain a mutually favorable balance between “forgetting” and “never forgetting” to foster relational connection:

Sometimes we have some accidental racial miscommunications, I guess. Like – we’re not racist towards each other, but sometimes we don’t understand each other’s cultures as well because we are from different cultural backgrounds. Like I was born in China and then I moved to Los Angeles, and then I moved here. My family’s values are very different from hers. Like family value-wise, education value-wise, stuff like that. So we come from different backgrounds, so sometimes there might be accidental miscommunications, but they’re really small. And as long as we openly talk about things, then it’s not a big deal or anything like that.

This example also illustrates one of the other central processes of interracial friendship, Bridging Difference to Connect; “talk[ing] openly” about their differences helps Natasha and Inga to maintain their relational connection even when “accidental miscommunications” occur. I elaborate on that process later in this chapter.

Maggie also provided an example of finding a more successful and mutually acceptable balance between “forgetting” and “never forgetting,” in contrast to her unsustained friendship with Nikki. She discussed how her friends, who are all Latina, occasionally make her conscious of her racial difference from them. However, they do so in an appreciative way rather than in a way that threatens their friendship or leads to relational disconnection. They also seem to “forget” at times that Maggie is of a different race:

And I don't mean to say my roommate and I – we don't sit down and have a conversation about race, or she's never like, “Maggie, you're so White.” But I mean, it comes up. Like during my interview [done for a multicultural social work class Maggie took], she was like, “Oh, yeah, I'm totally scared of blonde White girls. Like when I go into Bojangles.” [Laughter] And I think she wasn't even thinking, because we'd been best friends for so long. I'm like, “You do realize I'm blonde and White, but okay.” [Tara: So did you make her aware of that, of what she had said?] Yeah, because after that, I was like, “Well, I'm glad we're friends. I'm glad you let me in.” But yeah. It's less weird for me, I guess, than it is probably for her, I guess. Because I never think about her race, but we hang out with almost only Latina or Latino people, and they'll always be like, “Oh, Maggie's the only White girl we like,” or something like that. I think, if anything, it's weird but not like an awkward or uncomfortable or they're scared of me weird. It's more like they're excited because they like me and I'm White, I guess. And for me, it's just they're my friends. So it's less race-oriented, I guess, than this relationship [with Nikki] ended up being about.

Interestingly, although Maggie felt she would prefer more emphasis on “forgetting” in both the relationships with her Latina friends she described in this example as well in her friendship with Nikki, she experienced less relational disconnection with her Latina friends than with Nikki. This suggests that the balance between “forgetting” and “never forgetting” is not a static preference inherent within each of the two individuals that comprise a friendship but rather a relational process of give and take in and of itself, influenced by the specific relational context of the friendship.

Overall, sustaining an interracial friendship requires the friends to find a mutually agreeable balance between “forgetting” and “never forgetting” that allows them to effectively engage in the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

Having (or lacking) pre-college exposure to diversity. Pre-college exposure to diversity can play a role in college students’ ability to engage in the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference in order to develop and sustain interracial friendships. For Alisha, as her quote above illustrates, basing interpersonal attraction on something like race or religion, rather than personality, leads to superficial relationships; focusing on deeper similarity leads to deeper relationships. However, she also qualifies that statement with the recognition that she was raised in a heterogeneous community and had heterogeneous peer relationships growing up, so she feels that it’s easier for her to establish intercultural friendships because she doesn’t have to step outside of her comfort zone to do so. She feels that her peers who were raised in homogeneous or segregated environments (like her White roommate, whom she discussed in the example below) may have more

trouble forming intercultural relationships because of the prejudices they've inherited and stereotypes they hold, and because doing so would require them to step outside their comfort zones:

I mean, [my roommate] comes from a small town. I could've automatically assumed that she was like a redneck hick from nowhere, but I didn't, because that's the way I was raised, I guess. But her parents are like – I mean they didn't shelter her, but she didn't get out that much to realize that all Black people aren't the same, because they all were the same at her school. They were all ratchet and just didn't take care of themselves, really. And when I got here at the beginning of the semester, she would always stay stuff: "Oh, you dress like a White girl. You talk like a White girl." And I was like, "Well, what's a Black person supposed to do?" Like, you can't identify something with a race, like talking White. Or am I supposed to speak in another language? I don't understand what you're saying here. And it's just – I was getting mad at her, but then I went to her house, and she told me about her high school and stuff, and I realized that she honestly does not know any better. And I had to bring myself back together and just start from scratch and be more understanding of that, because I got to know her background and why she is the way she is, I guess. ...

[Tara: It sounds like your experience has been there's more people at [Southeastern] that are like your roommate and come from these sort of backgrounds where they really haven't been exposed to a lot of people from different cultural backgrounds, as opposed to you, where it sounds like you have.] Yeah. [Tara: And do you think that's

maybe one of the challenges, or maybe one of the reasons why people at [Southeastern] tend to flock towards those who are similar to them?] Yeah, because they – honestly, they just don’t know. And they’re just – I think they’re afraid to just branch out, I guess.

Indeed, the consensus within the empirical literature examining the effect of pre-college experiences on college interracial interaction and friendship is congruent with Alisha’s perspective (antonio, 2004; Bowman, 2012b; Bowman & Denson, 2012; Fischer, 2008; Odell et al., 2005; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz, 2010; Schofield et al., 2010; Stearns et al., 2009); in general, students who lack pre-college exposure to diversity are less likely to attend racially diverse colleges and less likely to interact and develop friendships with peers from other races. The experiences of Alisha and other participants suggest that this may be because students who come from homogeneous pre-college environments may be unwilling or unable to look beyond surface cultural differences to connect with their peers at a deep level (i.e., Embrace Similarity) or to find the right balance between “forgetting” and “never forgetting” cultural differences.

Inga provides a similar example of how her pre-college exposure to people from other racial groups facilitated her ability to find similarity with culturally diverse peers in college:

... because aside from family I would always have people other than my race [around me] because I identified with them more, with everything that I believe in based on religion, skin color and ethnic background. I would focus mainly on the personality and to the way they acted as opposed to what community they belonged to, what

pretty much a survey would qualify them as. ... it also goes to back with the church that I'm raised in. We had a mixture of Caucasian and African American people, and even though it wasn't a lot of ethnicities in there, at least you had a mix and not just one predominant. And we were taught about how love is colorblind and it shouldn't be the sole focus on who someone is or what someone can be. I've carried the lessons that I've learned from church and from the friends that I've made in the past pretty much throughout here and through the rest of my life, because it's just what I've been conditioned to do and what I know.

As Inga described, she was taught that race “shouldn't be the sole focus on who someone is,” a value that has facilitated her ability to find and embrace deep similarity with fellow students on campus, leading her to develop a racially diverse friendship group at Southeastern and become close friends with Natasha.

And yet my participants' experiences in their interracial friendships suggest that the effect of a student's pre-college background and exposure to diversity on their interracial interactions and friendships in college may not be as clear-cut as the empirical literature suggests. Indeed, some of my participants (Charles, Kandace, Maggie, and Marcelo) who came from homogeneous pre-college environments intentionally sought diverse friendships and experiences in college *because* they didn't have access to these growing up. As Maggie discusses, in some cases a lack of childhood exposure to the “smog” (Tatum, 1997) of stereotypes and prejudice due to living in a racially homogeneous environment may make interracial interaction and friendship easier (in the sense of less risky or less uncomfortable)

for such students because they don't bring any social baggage or expectations to these interactions; they are, as Maggie says, a "blank slate":

But I think I've also learned a lot about racial stereotypes and stuff. Being from Connecticut and being surrounded by majority White people, it's not – I'm not saying that there weren't stereotypes, but none that I really ever heard. And so when I came here, I think Nikki thought I was really stupid, because she'd be like, "Oh, White people and their watermelon jokes." And I'm like, "What are you talking about?" I'm like, "I love watermelon." What do – so? And she was like, "Oh, well, apparently Black people love watermelon." I'm like, "Why is that a thing?" And I was so confused, and there were so many things that I think I had to learn my first year being in [the South]. I mean, it probably helped a lot, having friends of different races, but also moving to the South – I think it was a big culture shock for me. So it was like learning to balance these things, maneuver, and trying to understand – I don't know – these stereotypes, I guess.

In other words, because students like Maggie haven't been socialized from birth to hold certain beliefs about or expectations for people from other cultural groups, they can potentially enter interracial encounters without the same assumptions and prejudices as students who have internalized the "smog."

So although the empirical literature suggests that coming from a homogeneous pre-college environment makes interracial interaction and the development of meaningful interracial relationships less likely, paradoxically, it seems that it can also function to make

these relationships *more* likely for some students. I suspect there may be some kind of interaction effect at work that relates to the student's attitudes and values, which of course are shaped by a student's background and family values (e.g., whether the family encourages learning and openness, tolerance, etc.). So it seems like perhaps some forms of colorblindness as Maggie describes—the kind that's coupled with an open and tolerant disposition—can lead students to more easily find and embrace similarity with culturally different peers, compared to students who grew up in more racially diverse environments where stereotypes, prejudices, and expectations for other cultural groups were prevalent. Students like Charles, Maggie, and Marcelo grew up not seeing racial differences among their peers, and they continue to be able to look beyond them to find similarity and form friendships with culturally different others in college. However, other students—such as Inga and Alisha—were raised in racially heterogeneous environments that allowed them to interact with peers and adults outside of their own racial group. As a result, they developed an ability to embrace similarity over difference prior to college, and in coming to college they continued their commitment to seeking deep, rather than demographic, similarity in potential friends.

Feeling more similar to different-race peers than to same-race peers. Another dimension of Embracing Similarity involves feeling more similar to, or better able to relate to, peers from other racial/ethnic backgrounds than to peers from their own. This form of similarity can be due to feeling like cultural outsider due to having grown up outside the U.S. or feeling like some aspects of the self have to be suppressed around peers from one's own

racial/ethnic group. Three participants discussed this dimension. The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference manifested somewhat differently for these three participants because they were not able to fully relate to, or be fully authentic with, same-race peers to the same extent that they could with peers from other racial groups. Compared to other participants, they didn't have to look beyond surface difference to find deep similarity because they already felt greater levels of similarity-based connection with racially different peers.

Two of these participants, Dan and Rick, grew up primarily outside the U.S., and in attending an American university discovered that they didn't quite fit in or understand the majority culture on campus despite the fact that Dan, as a White student, was a member of the majority racial group on their campus and Rick, who is African American, is a member of the second-largest racial group on campus. Both Dan and Rick expressed that feeling like cultural outsiders helped them find similarity with their friends despite their racial differences—for Dan, with an African American student whose family had immigrated to the U.S., and for Rick, with a White student who had strong ties to his Romanian culture. Both Dan and Rick discussed appreciating how their friends had helped them acculturate to Southeastern University. Furthermore, in Dan's case, he and his friend Sammy share the experience of occupying marginal space outside of the dominant culture at Southeastern University, and this similarity (in addition to sharing similar interests and perspectives) has brought them together:

I understood [Sammy] pretty well compared to some of the other people. I don't know, I just didn't like the way some people were just — it can be very separated here, so like you have your typical Southern people, and you have your other people, and they're kind of used to their own kind of norms, that's what they deal with. You know, they go hunting and stuff like that a lot. I've never been exposed to that stuff, so it's never been of interest to me. And so when I was around them, I didn't really have much to talk about. But me and [Sammy], he understood kind of where I came from, and just by talking we had similar interests and we agreed upon a lot of things.

For Dan, relating to his same-race (White) peers on campus required him to step outside of his comfort zone further than he had to in order to relate to Sammy, even though Sammy is African American. Dan was also able to find more common interests with Sammy—and therefore to establish a relational connection that led to friendship—than he could with his White peers.

The third participant who discussed this dimension of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, Sloan, felt that a significant influence on her friendship with Ashley was that Ashley was the first friend with whom Sloan felt she could “be my whole self.” Sloan primarily identifies as African American, although she also identifies as multiracial, but through her four years at Southeastern University she spent most of her time with the African American student community until befriending Ashley (who is White) in her senior year. With Ashley, Sloan feels she can honor and explore parts of her identity that she has to hide or deny when she's with her African American friends. For example, with Ashley, Sloan

can listen to country music, which she loves but feels like she can't share with her African American friends:

So that's another benefit is that we can have fun, and I found that I can do things that I haven't really felt comfortable doing. ... stuff that I felt that I was being judged for by the Black community, I can do with [Ashley]. And I feel I can really be myself with her and show both sides of me that I normally have to push onto the side and be this other person. ... I love country music, but I can never play the country music station in my car with my roommate or with my boyfriend or with anybody else because they're like, "Turn this crap off, what are you listening to?" Same thing with rock, that was all I listening to in middle school and high school. But then you get around a certain group of people who judge you for it, and then they say things, "Oh, you're so white," or stuff like that. But me and [Ashley] rock out. ... I feel I can really be my whole self with her because she's so open and she's had a lot of experiences too. ... I think that knowing that, or finding out that there was someone out there that I could connect to so deeply and just so fast, like it was so natural, made me realize that some of the people who I thought I had that connection with friend-wise, maybe I didn't. And maybe they really don't understand who I am. And it was more so people who identify with the same race or ethnicity as I do, that they just really didn't understand who I was or like where I was coming from on a lot of things. So it kinda opened my eyes to that. Because at first, before I met Ashley, I was like, maybe I'm just so unique and different that there's nobody out there that I can discuss this with, or that feels

the same way about something that I do, or maybe nobody else likes country music [laughter]. None of my friends do. Maybe I'm the oddball out. But it's just nice to find out that I'm not the oddball. So it's made me look at those people, like, you probably just didn't understand me. We're just in two different places.

Paradoxically, Sloan discovered that she had more in common with someone who identifies with a different race than she did with peers from the racial group with which she primarily identifies. Unfortunately, it took until her senior year in college for Sloan to find a friend with whom she could be her whole, authentic self. Her friendship with Ashley developed and deepened very quickly because the relational connection between her and Ashley, rooted in deep similarity, was much stronger than the connections she had within her longer-term, same-race friendships.

Figure 9 summarizes the properties and dimensions of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

Figure 9. Properties and dimensions of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

Conditions

Figure 8 at the beginning of this section shows the five conditions that facilitate the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference as well as the two strategies that pertain to this process. There are no required conditions for this process to occur. I discuss each of these facilitating conditions and strategies next.

Facilitating conditions. The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is facilitated by the three other central processes that comprise my substantive theory (Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” and Exploring Other Cultures). Other conditions that facilitate Embracing Similarity include propinquity (e.g., living together), which allows for sustained interaction

in a comfortable environment, and an Exploratory Orientation on the part of one or both friends, which eases the process of discovering and embracing similarity and allows the friends to approach their differences with an open mind and desire to learn about (i.e., not forget) their differences.

Exploring Other Cultures. The example from Max included above in my discussion of the “never forgetting” property of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, in which he discussed attending a religious service with his friend Nelson’s family, illustrates how the process of Exploring Other Cultures can facilitate the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. Cultural exploration allows participants to both discover similarities they may not have expected to find and also to respectfully honor and learn about their differences, while discovering and embracing similarity at a deep level makes cultural exploration a more comfortable and less risky endeavor and enables the friends to identify appreciative knowledge (Patel, 2012) about each other’s cultures. Because I discuss the process of Exploring Other Cultures in a subsequent section of this chapter, I describe the mutually facilitating relationship between Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Exploring Other Cultures in more detail in that later section.

Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” are also mutually facilitating processes within an interracial friendship. I discussed how Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Different facilitates the cultivation of trust in the section on the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” that appeared

earlier in this chapter. Here, I discuss how Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” facilitates the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

The emotional arousal and vulnerability that is a dimension of the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” as well as mutual respect, which is a required condition for Cultivating Trust, may facilitate the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. The deep discussions about spirituality Max and Nelson have (of which I provided an example earlier in this section) illustrate how these two processes mutually facilitate each other. Having discussions about the “big things” such as religious beliefs or values often necessitates a level of self-disclosure that requires vulnerability, intimacy, and mutual respect (associated with Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”), while sharing one’s beliefs and values through such discussions can lead to the discovery of similarity at a deep level, deepening relational connection. As the friends become closer, these discussions may become deeper and more intimate as the friends deepen their level of trust, leading them to discover more that they have in common and helping to sustain their relationship. Additionally, as Davies et al. (2001) note, “deep levels of self-disclosure and other forms of intimacy [which may lead friends to discover and embrace deep-level similarity] do not typically occur at once. Rather, these grow over the course of developing relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973) and should become increasingly likely to the extent that people experience reduced anxiety and increased comfort with their cross-group friends” (p. 342). In other words, as the friendship grows, the reduction in

anxiety and increased comfort may liberate the friends to discover and explore shared values and beliefs at an even deeper level, further strengthening and sustaining their relationship.

Bridging Difference to Connect. Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Bridging Difference to Connect are also mutually facilitating, complementary processes within an interracial friendship. Although two members of a friendship may focus upon their similarities as the primary basis for relational connection, when differences do arise (i.e., when “never forgetting difference” becomes salient), they may need to engage in the process of Bridging Difference to Connect in order to maintain their relational connection. (I discuss specific strategies for accomplishing this in my section on Bridging Difference to Connect later in this chapter). Reciprocally, when the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference occurs successfully, what the friends have in common helps to create a relational context in which their differences can be approached in a positive, connection-fostering way because the friends have established common ground. To draw again upon the example Max provided of discussing religion and faith with Nelson,

What we have in common allows us to accept and embrace our differences. I don't think that we overlook our differences (or make them irrelevant), but we actually talk about them and explore them with each other quite frequently. I feel that when we explain our differences to each other, there is so much that opens up in terms of life perspective, culture, and understanding.

In other words, to speak metaphorically, their similarities provide them with a seaworthy ship from which they can together navigate the potentially churning sea of their differences without fear of capsizing.

Similarly, Rachel describes how, through her friendship with Anya, she feels she has become more adept at finding similarity with culturally different others:

It has allowed me to be more comfortable when I am in an environment with others who I do not understand. Beyond that though, I do not have that much insight about her culture. I do feel more comfortable though with others who are Russian because before her I had never known someone who was. Now it is something relatively familiar to me. In the same way, I think my friend has learned that I have different quirks than her and grown to accept them too and understand they are a part of my culture.

What Rachel describes exemplifies the mutually facilitating relationship between the processes of Bridging Difference to Connect and Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference: through having the opportunity to discover deep similarity with a peer from another cultural background (one whom she initially doubted she's have anything in common with), she has developed more confidence in her ability to connect with culturally different others and to bridge differences with them (to accept their "quirks"). In turn, those perceived "quirks," or differences, are no longer an obstacle to her ability to connect with culturally different others because she has faith in her ability to find common ground to connect with them (i.e., to bridge their differences).

In contrast, Amina represents a sort of middle ground among my participants in terms of her ability to embrace similarity with culturally different peers. However, her experiences illuminate another way in which the processes of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Bridging Difference to Connect are mutually facilitating. Amina's faith and values are very important to her, and she struggles to find common ground (or Bridge Differences to Connect) with White students especially, whom she perceives to not share her core values; in this way, she's using demographic difference as a proxy for value difference (Allport, 1954/1988; Newcomb, 1961). However, when she finds a fellow student who does share her values and faith, such as Nawal, ethnic and racial differences become much less salient, allowing her to embrace what they share as a foundation for building a friendship:

A lot of times now, with Caucasians in my classes, all they talk about is sex, partying, drugs – or drinking, drugs. Those three things are always consistent conversation starters. Even with girls, most of them are very materialistic, so it's makeup, brand names, clothes, fashion. I just – I don't know. I think part of it is personality, too, but it's very difficult to find common grounds with them. But I've always had the easiest time making friends with people ... [who have] the same faith as me...

In other words, Amina needs additional support, in the form of a clear cultural similarity (a shared faith), in order for her to fully engage in the processes of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Bridging Difference to Connect. Without some surface level connection, she struggles to find common ground with culturally different peers. However, with Nawal, their shared Muslim faith served as a proxy for deep-level values

similarity, enabling Amina to feel comfortable building a bridge across their ethnic differences and allowing her to discover other deep similarities between them (beyond their shared faith) to develop and deepen their friendship.

Exploratory Orientation. Another facilitating condition for Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is Exploratory Orientation, a disposition characterized by openness to new perspectives and experiences and willingness or ability to step outside of one's comfort zone to seek those experiences and perspectives through relational connection with peers. (I discuss the properties and dimensions of Exploratory Orientation in more detail in a later section of this chapter.) Because students with Exploratory Orientation are more inclined to seek alternate perspectives and step outside of their comfort zones, they are better able to look beyond surface-level differences to connect with potential friends who have similar values, beliefs, and personalities (i.e., deep similarity). Additionally, students with Exploratory Orientation may be more inclined to intentionally seek similarity at a deep, rather than surface, level in developing friendships, and they are less inclined to see difference as an impediment to developing and sustaining friendship.

For example, Alisha, who has Exploratory Orientation, discussed her philosophy of making friends in college:

I feel like people just need to know what's out there and just not clump to what they're comfortable with. Because I don't know what the real world is like, but I'm sure it's not like what people are comfortable with. So I think that's why college is such an important time to take advantage of this opportunity. Because there's a lot of

different people here, but there's only like a little bit of different people here, but I feel like you should still just take that opportunity and just don't go with what you know. Just take a chance. Get to know somebody.

Alisha exhibits a willingness to step outside of her comfort zone to pursue opportunities to connect with and learn from those who might appear, on the surface, to be different from herself. Although Alisha doesn't specifically mention finding deep similarity, it's implicit in her directive to "don't go with what you know. Just take a chance. Get to know somebody," because doing so allows for the discovery of deep similarity that leads to friendship development (as her friendship with Charles exemplifies).

Propinquity. Another condition that facilitates the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is propinquity, especially in the form of living together. Living together allows participants to discover deep similarity through repeated interactions in a non-threatening and comfortable space. In this way, living together is especially effective in facilitating the ability to discover and embrace deep similarity of students who are less inclined to intentionally seek deep similarity in potential friends or who have trouble stepping outside of their comfort zones (i.e., those who lack Exploratory Orientation). Rachel, who identifies as Hispanic and White, provided an example of how being randomly assigned to live with Anya in her first year enabled her to look beyond her initial assumptions about Anya based on Anya's Russian ethnicity to discover shared interests and develop a friendship:

It's definitely taught me not to judge based off of all these assumptions, because when I was first coming in, I was like, "Oh, she's Russian. She's gonna be very strict or very structured." I was like, "She's an engineer. I'm gonna be so crazy with all my Design and she's just gonna be very organized or maybe it'll be weird having, I don't know, all these Russian things, or, I don't know, with family, or maybe I'll feel out of place." Even with her major, I was already thinking, "I'm going to an all-engineer school." But it's funny though, because despite all those differences, she's the person that I get along with the most. And she's not like any of those things. She knows how to have fun. She laughs a lot. So, it's just taught me not to, I guess, assume stereotypes and things like that, which I was definitely guilty of.

Had Rachel not been assigned to live with Anya in their first year, her assumptions about Anya might never have been challenged and she would not have been able to discover how much she and Anya actually have in common in terms of their personalities and shared interests (which she discussed at another point during her interview). She may have only been able to see Anya as "that Russian engineer" (i.e., by her surface-level differences from Rachel) rather than as a potential close friend.

Strategies. The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference has two associated strategies that one or both friends may employ to facilitate their ability to discover and connect through deep similarity. These strategies, which I describe next, are connecting through shared interests and developing memories through shared experiences.

Connecting through shared interests. Connecting through shared interests is one of the most powerful, and frequently discussed, strategies by which my participants developed and sustain their interracial friendships, chiefly because it allowed them to connect across their racial differences (i.e., to Embrace Similarity). Shared interests include activities (such as aerobics classes, videogames, or attending concerts), academic interests (such as a shared major or interest in foreign languages), or tastes (such as for specific cuisines or movies). Rachel described how connecting through shared interests facilitated the development of friendship with Anya:

[Tara: Was there anything about Anya that really led you to want to be friends with her? So as opposed to just being like, “Oh, she’s my roommate, she’s okay. We get along,” to like, “I actually want to be her friend?”] I feel like it was so unconscious, but we found out that we had a lot of the same interests with music, so we had all these things to connect with. And then we would get excited about things with each other, looking forward to things. One of the first weeks when we were just hanging out, there’s this one band that we both really liked, and so we made it a point to go to one of their concerts the following month. So, just someone to hang out with who you had that commonality with.

As Rachel mentioned, one of the most prevalent—and powerful—shared interests participants discussed was music, which played a significant role in both the development and sustainment of many of my participants’ friendships. While not the only example of how my participants embrace similarity, 11 of my 21 participants mentioned, to some extent,

music playing a role in their friendship development and sustainment. For example, Dan discussed how listening to music in the car together helped him to both initially connect with his friend Sammy as well as to sustain that connection and their relationship:

[Tara: Can you think of a moment where you were like, “You know, I really like that Sammy guy”?] Actually it was when we were going to lunch a lot. We went to lunch a lot because at the time I didn’t have too many friends, and that time of the day, we were just us two. So we’d go to lunch and we’d eat lunch in like the car and stuff and you know, just listen to music and just talk until lunch was over, until we had to go somewhere else. And just by listening to music a lot was what kind of brought us [together], because we had a lot of very similar interests and since I’m from Slovakia and I listen to a lot of Slovak music, which people here don’t listen to at all, he actually liked it and he started listening to it to and he listens to that music sometimes too. So by hanging out in the car and stuff and just talking, not worrying about much and just realizing that he’s a good friend. You know. A nice person to be around. ... the kind of Black rap music that a lot of like the White kids and stuff that don’t listen to... it’s aggressive music but it gets me like full of energy, pumped up when I hear that. I like it, [Sammy] likes it too. We just have it, it’s cool stuff. ... We have a new song we share amongst each other ... [and] it’s just something that we’re able to bond upon I guess. We went to events downtown and stuff that play that type of music, concerts, so that was cool.

Dan's example also illustrates how their shared interest in music (a similarity between them) also facilitated their ability to explore each other's cultures (another central process of interracial friendship development and sustainment); I elaborate on this relationship in the section of this chapter on the process of Exploring Other Cultures.

Like Dan, Max also described how what he and Nelson had in common—a shared interest in music—provided them with an important source of relational connection:

And we also connect a lot through music as well. I listen to just a diverse range of music. I play guitar and I play harmonica but I also really enjoy hip hop and I enjoy rap. I got really into it because I was able to find the poetry and art and the cultural significance behind it, and I was able to delve into certain artists and kind of their background and where they came from. And I was actually able to really understand the music and have appreciation for it, and Nelson is the same way. Nelson really kind of – he'll listen to some mainstream stuff but he really appreciates things that have more of a message or deeper meaning to it. And we were able to like have those conversations about certain artists in that respect because we both understood. And that's something that we still talk about and we still like to talk about in terms of music and just some other things.

In the case of both Dan's and Max's friendships, even though the friends differed in terms of their specific taste in artists and genres (a more surface-level difference in interests), they shared an appreciation for music as an art form, a deeper level of similarity arguably akin to a similarity of values.

Sharing an interest in music, whether generally or for a specific band, not only gives participants a basis for connection but also helps them to find common ground; they come to realize that any superficial cultural differences are just that—superficial—and that underneath those superficial differences they actually have more in common than they might have otherwise thought prior to discovering their shared interest. Other shared interests function this way too, of course, but in my participants' experiences, music was a prevalent influence on the development (i.e., by coming to regard each other as worthy of friendship) and sustainment (i.e., by giving them a reason and opportunities to spend time together and deepen their relational connection) of their friendships.

Developing memories through shared experiences. Another strategy that participants may use to facilitate the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is developing memories through shared experiences. Engaging in activities in which both friends share an interest allows them to connect through their similarities not only provides them with a basis for connection, but it also enables them to develop memories and stories that support their ongoing relational connection and friendship sustainment. Brynn provides an example of one of the most memorable moments to date in her friendship with Brittany, founded upon their shared love of music and singing:

So we are ridiculous and we like to just sing all the time. My boyfriend came and visited the other weekend and he was just like, "Do ya'll really just sing?" And we were like, "Yeah." We'll go out to dinner, we'll go back to one of our apartments or whatever and we'll just sit and listen to music and sing and be weird. And so last year

I really don't even know how the idea came up, but we were like, we're gonna make a CD, and nobody believed us. And we're like no, we're gonna record a CD. We're awful singers but we're gonna make a CD and ya'll are gonna love it. So we came to [the library] two Saturdays in a row and recorded songs. It's awful. It was the funniest thing ever. We play it in our cars and sing along to ourselves. It's awesome. I love it [laughs]. ... I have it burnt onto my laptop and I'll just play it and bust out laughing because it's so awful and so ridiculous. We have our moments when it actually sounds good and we're like, "Yes, we could be singers." ... Yeah, so that's by far the best memory.

She also shared how they named their CD “Bryntanny” (which is the hybrid nickname they were given by their fellow orientation counselors during the summer they became friends). Her example illustrates how their love of music and singing not only gave them a reason to connect and spend time together, but also to develop a strong symbol of their friendship—for which they even have a physical artifact—through the process of creating music together. They can, and do, reminisce about creating their CD, and they can play it whenever they're apart to remind them of what they've shared.

Charles and Alisha provided a similar example during their pair interview, although in their case, their connection and the memory that resulted from this experience came from a shared desire to *not* do something:

Charles: I'm thinking about the Glow Run that we did, the three miles.

Alisha: Yeah.

Charles: The rest of our friends are track and cross-country, so they wanted to run and they wanted to be in the front or whatever. And we were just like, “We’re gonna walk it, and we’re gonna just relax about it.” And then we trusted each other just to go – just have fun with it.

Alisha: We ran some.

Charles: She recorded me trying to run. She thinks it’s hilarious, and I think it’s just stupid. [Laughter] But it was just funny, just like that’s something I never would have done alone – to sign up for a 5K or whatever you call ‘em – and just being able to do it with someone who was just not so overly worried about it, I guess, and just have fun with it.

Alisha: Yeah. Like our friends were like stretching and warming up and stuff, and me and Charles were trying to put on all of our glow gear.

Charles: We were like, “Where are the snacks?” [Laughter]

Even though this example may seem trivial, it was clear in observing their interaction as they reminisced about this experience that it’s something they remind each other of and laugh about often, and that it’s one of the moments of their friendship that they’ll continue to return to as long as their friendship endures. Furthermore, Charles’s comment that “we trusted each other just to ... have fun with it” is an insightful comment about their relational connection. At the point in their friendship when this moment occurred, they were close friends and clearly shared a tacit understanding about not just the interests they have in common (e.g.,

running, or not running as the case may be), but also about the way in which they prefer to share an experience together—a level of deep similarity.

The Glow Run that in which Charles and Alisha participated took place on the campus of Southeastern University, and other participants also discussed the importance of on-campus activities in developing and sustaining their friendships by participating in memorable shared experiences. For example, Rachel highlights how a variety of events on campus have facilitated her and Anya's ability to embrace similarity and sustain their friendship:

Well, if it wasn't for Southeastern University, [laughter] we wouldn't have this friendship. As far as like – living on campus is the number one thing, and especially because we attend so many for-fun events on campus together, so whenever something interesting is going on, "You free? I'm free. Okay, let's go together." Whether it's movies or ... events going on, we'll go to it together. Group fitness. So living on campus has really provided a lot of opportunities for us to further our friendship. Because in my opinion, friendships are built off of experiences, so the more experiences you share with a person, the deeper your friendship is going to be. So that's the number one way, because the campus has provided so many opportunities for us to spend time with one another over those activities that we really like. Especially even the craft center. We've been able to bond over that. And then, at the same time, you're also developing memories...

Rachel's examples showcase a significant area in which colleges and universities can provide support for the development and sustainment of interracial friendships, which I address in my discussion of implications for educational practice in of chapter five.

In their individual as well as pair interviews, Inga and Natasha discussed not just developing memories through shared experiences, but having inside jokes, ways of behaving together (e.g., talking like old men sometimes), and repeated shared experiences (e.g., late-night grocery shopping and Wal-Mart trips, watching bad movies). These experiences and the resulting memories have collected into a repertoire of jokes that they call upon to continually re-establish relational connection by collaboratively recalling the shared memory. Many examples arose during their pair interview, including this one, which began with Natasha describing how she grew up in a predominately White pre-college environment:

Natasha: So we didn't have as much diversity. So I feel like once I got to college it's a lot of diversity and it made me happy.

Inga: Just a happy little clam, aren't you?

Natasha: Yep.

[Laughter]

Inga: Okay, just to give content on that there was one time where over spring break we went to this restaurant called [Mario's] and I ordered a dish that had clams –

Natasha: She had clam alfredo.

Inga: And I was bored and to make conversation because of the clicking noises they actually made I was just like hey, I made castanets!

Natasha: She ate the clam meat and then she just took the clamshell.

[Laughter]

Inga: I'll stop. This is terrible.

For Natasha and Inga, developing memories through shared experiences is a relational process of its own: they discovered shared interests; sought shared activities based on those interests in order to connect; deepened their friendship by engaging in these activities and spending time together one-on-one and in a group; developed memories, stories, and inside jokes through these experiences together; and then continue to call upon these memories and jokes—and the shared story they've woven with them—to continue deepening their friendship through new shared experiences that lead to new shared memories.

Summary

The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference involves prioritizing connection based upon deep similarity, such as shared interests, values, and goals, over their surface-level cultural differences in developing and sustaining their friendships. For friendship development, Embracing Similarity means looking beyond racial differences to discover similarity at a deep level with potential friends. For friendship sustainment, it involves choosing to focus on what the friends share rather than their cultural differences in their everyday moments of relational connection, whether having deep discussions or just hanging out together. Embracing Similarity is rooted in Newcomb's (1961, 1962) theory of similarity-attraction, in that when two potential friends discover similarities, they are likely to experience interpersonal attraction and develop a friendship.

This initial attraction is the basis for the development of their friendship, while their shared interests provide them with a continued means of sustaining and deepening their friendship. This ability to Embrace Similarity represents the first property of the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

However, Embracing Similarity does not mean that the friends ignore or minimize their cultural differences (i.e., they are not “colorblind”); rather, they feel their similarities are more immediately relevant (or they choose to make their similarities more relevant) within their day-to-day relational moments. In the context of an interracial friendship, the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference also requires the friends to “forget while never forgetting” their cultural differences. Friends who are successfully able to “forget while never forgetting” strike a balance that is unique to the specific relational context of their friendship in which their racial and other cultural differences are not salient to their day-to-day interactions (“forgotten”), yet are recognized and respectfully addressed at appropriate moments (“never forgotten”). This “never forgetting” represents the second property of the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

Participants exhibited variation in the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference along four dimensions: (1) discovering similarity through difference, (2) balancing “forgetting” and “not forgetting,” (3) having (or lacking) pre-college exposure to diversity, and (4) feeling more similar to different-race peers than to same-race peers. The three other central processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment that comprise my substantive theory (Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and

Establishing a “Silent Contract,” and Exploring Other Cultures) are facilitating conditions for the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. Additional facilitating conditions include propinquity, especially in the form of living together, and possessing Exploratory Orientation—a desire to seek novel and challenging experiences and perspectives. In addition, many participants discussed using two strategies to enable them to discover and embrace similarity at a deep level to develop and sustain their friendships: connecting through shared interests (especially, but not exclusively, through music) and developing memories through shared experiences. Because the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is essential to the development of interracial friendship, it represents an especially promising leverage point for educational interventions to encourage more college students to develop these friendships and achieve learning outcomes that result from them. I discuss these implications for educational practice in the next chapter.

Bridging Difference to Connect

In the disagreement [with a friend], there'll be some sort of bridge that can help you connect.

– Rick

Because no two individuals are alike, any friendship will always involve differences between the friends, and those differences can become sources of conflict that leads to relational disconnection. In an interracial friendship, the racial differences between the friends are one source of difference that may become salient within their relationship, but

other types of difference arise as well, including other cultural differences (e.g., religion, sexual orientation identity, geographic origin) and differences at the level of deep diversity, such as beliefs, goals, and values. Sustaining an interracial friendship, therefore, necessitates not only connecting across racial differences but across these other types of difference as well. To accomplish this, the friends must engage in the process of Bridging Difference to Connect. While the central friendship process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, as discussed earlier, focuses on fostering relational connection around what is shared, the process of Bridging Difference to Connect represents a complementary process, the other side of the “coin” of connection. Specifically, Bridging Difference to Connect, as its name suggests, is a process of maintaining relational connection despite differences. When Bridging Difference to Connect is successful, relational connection deepens, facilitating friendship sustainment. However, when the process is unsuccessful (for example, if the process fails to prevent relational disconnection or if the friends do not engage in the process at all), the resulting relational disconnection will weaken the friendship and damage its prospects for long-term sustainment.

As a process, Bridging Difference to Connect is characterized by a set of specific strategies friends can use in order to maintain relational connection despite their differences. The particular strategies the friends employ vary along two dimensions: (1) whether preventing conflict and disconnection, or reconciling after conflict or disconnection, is the desired goal of the bridging process and (2) whether the friends prefer to actively approach and engage with their differences or to avoid and minimize their differences. Variation along

these two dimensions means that the process of Bridging Difference to Connect, as well as the strategies the friends choose to engage in the process, will differ from among friendships as well as from moment to moment within any friendship. Two conditions are required in order for the process of Bridging Difference to Connect to take place successfully. The first of these is the central friendship process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” and the second is sharing mutual respect for differences. Trust and mutual respect are essential in order for the process of Bridging Difference to Connect to achieve its purpose of maintaining relational connection. In addition, the complementary process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference facilitates (but is not required for) Bridging Difference to Connect, as does Exploratory Orientation on the part of one or both friends. Finally, the strategies friends can use to bridge their differences, which vary along the two dimensions of approach-avoidance and prevention-reconciliation, include (1) Exploring Other Cultures, (2) challenging each other to grow (positive challenge), (3) choosing harmony over conflict, (4) defusing disagreements by moving on, and (5) respecting separate spheres. Figure 10 details the relationships between Bridging Difference to Connect and the other categories of my substantive theory, as well as the conditions and strategies associated with this process.

Figure 10. A model of the process of Bridging Difference to Connect.

Properties

A single property—maintaining relational connection—characterizes the process of Bridging Difference to Connect.

Maintaining relational connection. As noted above, the process of Bridging Difference to Connect is defined by its purpose: to maintain relational connection despite differences between the friends. This defining feature represents the sole property of Bridging Difference to Connect. The differences that arise between two friends may be cultural differences (e.g., race, religion, nationality); differences in personalities, preferences, or interests; or “deep” differences (e.g., beliefs, goals, values). Regardless of its type, any

difference between two friends can potentially lead to conflict and relational disconnection. Bridging Difference to Connect involves addressing, managing, or negotiating their differences in order to minimize the potential for disconnection. Friends that successfully bridge their differences maintain relational connection even when disagreement and conflict arises, allowing them to sustain their friendship.

The ability to Bridge Difference to Connect is not a characteristic of the individual students within a friendship but rather of the relational context of the friendship. In a successful friendship (i.e., one that is sustained over time), the two friends together create an environment in which Bridging Difference to Connect can occur, facilitated by trust, mutual respect, and embracing what they share (conditions that I discuss below). In friendship contexts where these conditions are absent, the bridging process may be unsuccessful and the friendship may end as a result. Maggie's contrasting experiences in her friendships with Nikki (which ended) and Viviana (which is ongoing) provide an example of how the process of Bridging Difference to Connect depends upon relational context: Maggie and Nikki struggled to bridge their differences, as I mention later in this section, whereas Maggie and Viviana have been successful at bridging their differences to maintain relational connection, thereby sustaining their friendship.

Dimensions

Although the process of Bridging Difference to Connect focuses on maintaining relational connection and minimizing disconnection, it can vary along two dimensions. The first of these dimensions concerns whether the friend employ Bridging Difference to Connect

as a preventive process (to prevent conflict and disconnection) or as a reconciliatory process (to restore connection after disconnection has occurred). The second dimension concerns that type of bridging that the friends prefer to engage in: do they actively embrace and negotiate their differences, or do they prefer to minimize their differences?

Prevention versus reconciliation. The process of Bridging Difference to Connect can be a *preventive* process—that is, participants can engage in it in order to prevent their differences from becoming disagreements that lead to relational disconnection—or it can be a *reconciliatory* process, to minimize or repair the disconnection that results from a specific moment of conflict over their differences. In this sense, the preventive dimension of Bridging Difference to Connect represents a general relational approach that the friends take within their friendship; they are engaging in the process of Bridging Difference to Connect from day to day within their relationship in order to maintain their relational connection (and prevent disconnection), similar to what Oswald, Clark, and Kelly (2004) would term a “maintenance” process. In contrast, the reconciliatory dimension of Bridging Difference to Connect is a process that occurs when needed in order to minimize or repair relational disconnection that has resulted from a specific moment of conflict or disagreement over their differences. This dimension of Bridging Difference to Connect—whether the friends desire to prevent disconnection or reconcile after it has occurred—influences which strategy(ies) (discussed below) they employ in order to bridge their differences.

For example, in his journal responses, Bryan discussed having an argument with his friend Erik over something insignificant that he later regretted, but Erik was willing to proceed with their friendship as though the argument had never happened:

I thought of how far I'd been willing to go to win the argument and felt deep regret. I do wish I would have backed off of my side sooner or at least had a bit more tact about the situation. The next day, however, Erik seemed fine and I didn't bring it up so as not to provoke our respective tempers again. This may not seem like a maneuver that would encourage future conversation, but that is just the kind of friendship we have. We don't let our differences overshadow our similarities. We accept each other warts and all, no matter how difficult it may seem at the time. Our way of settling disagreements has stayed the same because there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with it at this time.

As Bryan said, he and Erik “don’t let out differences overshadow our similarities.” They have a tacit agreement to move forward after a disagreement by focusing on what they share rather than on what divides them. In this way, Bryan’s example represents the reconciliatory dimension of Bridging Difference to Connect.

In contrast, Rick provided an example of Bridging Difference to Connect as a preventive process, in the context of discussing differences in their political beliefs with his friend Alex:

Well, [Alex is] probably a little bit more conservative than I am, but we definitely, hmm. I guess there are some points we probably disagree with in terms of like, I

guess, Obama. But for the most part we are understanding of each other's views. Like [when] we discuss topics like that, it doesn't turn into like a personal attack. Like I know with some of my friends who are other races, they'll turn it in[to], or I may even turn [it] into some sort of like personal attack. And when discussions like that happen, you don't start talking about the facts; you start talking more about like personal things.

When Rick and Alex discuss their differences, they work to keep those differences from becoming conflicts that might lead to disconnection (e.g., a personal attack, which Rick has experienced with some of his other friends). Instead, by expressing “understanding of each other's views,” he and Alex are able to prevent their differences from coming between them, thereby maintaining relational connection.

Approach versus avoidance. The process of Bridging Difference to Connect varies along another dimension as well; specifically, my participants displayed two styles or types of Bridging Difference to Connect. These two styles align with conflict management styles (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977) or approach-avoidance temperaments (Elliot & Thrash, 2002): on one side are participants who actively engage in disagreement or debate over their different beliefs and perspectives with their friends, while on the other side are participants who prefer to avoid or minimize discussion of differences. The former, “approach” style of Bridging Difference to Connect involves actively embracing difference and even conflict as a means of relational connection; the friends move toward their differences, even those that lead to disagreement or conflict, and actively acknowledge, discuss, debate, and negotiate

them. Thus, even though I define Bridging Difference to Connect as a process of maintaining relational connection *despite* differences between the friends, for friends utilizing the approach style it may actually be a process of maintaining relational connection *through* difference. For example, Max discussed how exploring differences between his spiritual beliefs and those of his friend Nelson allows them to find points of connection:

Because I mean I'm not a Christian at all. I don't believe – I don't have a faith and I guess I could consider myself agnostic, definitely not atheist, but yeah. And so I really understand where [Nelson's] coming from and I understand why he believes the things he believes, and I think that they definitely make him a better person and help him develop his growth and his friendships. And the best thing is he isn't condemning in any way and he definitely believes that everybody has their own path, and I believe the same thing. I mean, I'm very for that, I think that's great. And so we kinda connected a lot through there. We had a lot of discussions about religion and about the different things the Bible says and all this stuff. And they aren't conversations about this is right or this is what God wants for me, but like "how is this applying to my life right now" type of thing. And we've had a lot of those kind of really interesting conversations. And we never really had any type of disagreement over religion. We've been very tolerant and accepting of each other.

In contrast, friends using the latter, "avoidance" style of Bridging Difference to Connect wish to avoid introducing conflict into their relationship in order to reduce the risk of disconnection, and if conflict does arise, they prefer to minimize their differences or focus

on their similarities to re-establish relational connection. For example, Bryan described how he and his friend Erik bridge their differences:

I don't think [our conversations about our political differences] are ever adversarial, because we never really take any of it to heart. If we say something offensive or whatever, it just kind of rolls off, that's just how we are. We kind of consider it like, oh, this is what this person's perspective is, I'm learning about that. We usually just keep our own perspective. ... [Tara: Have you had any disagreements with him that you can think of?] No, not anything that would cause like an argument. We just usually say, "Oh, I feel this way." "I feel this way." And we just don't really talk about it more.

In this way, Bryan and Erik position their differences as immaterial to their relationship, as in the maxim "you say tomatoyto, I say tomathto." They let their differences stand at face value and elect to avoid engaging with them, thereby reducing the potential for their differences to cause conflict or create disconnection and allowing them to instead focus on what they share (i.e., to Embrace Similarity) at the center of their relationship. Caroline described taking a similar approach with her friend Lily:

If we disagree, which I'm not sure we've ever had any really big disagreements, we just sort of accept it because neither of us really like arguing. So if there's something we don't share, like a common belief, we tend to just reach the middle and be like, okay, that's how you view it, that's how I view it. But otherwise we really don't

disagree that often. If we have any differences, we more or less just discuss them instead of just disagreeing. So really it'll be more like a discussion.

The specific relational context of the friendship is important in determining which style—approach or avoidance—will most effectively aid the friends in Bridging Difference to Connect. The preference for one style over the other may be a static preference within the friendship (i.e., the friends will always choose to engage with or minimize their differences), or they may alternate between the two styles depending upon the nature of the differences or conflicts that arise between them. For example, Rachel discussed how in the context of her friendship with Anya, she understands which differences can be approached in a connection-fostering way and which cannot (i.e., would be effectively addressed through avoidance):

...me and my friends, we have this Facebook message that we keep in touch over, and it's a group message. And so one of them had brought up the whole abortion [protest] that is going on in the [central area of campus]. And it was Anya and one of my other friends were talking about it on there, and they basically agreed with one another. But I didn't feel inclined to join, because I was like, "Hmm, I don't agree, but you're sitting right next to me, so I'm not gonna do this over Facebook." But it was interesting hearing her opinions, but I saw that they were just so far from my own that I just decided to sit back and let them enjoy each other's talking about it. Let's see – there was recently, one of my friends, she'll go to [meetings of a Christian organization on campus] and she'll come back and be like, "I'm not sure about this or that or this." Or like, "This person said these things." And so me and Anya will

talk to her about it. And sometimes, on those things, we've shared the same opinions and it's been like – we can talk about those things. So it just depends if I'm up for it. With abortion thing, I was like, I just don't really feel like getting into this right now, and having to defend myself, and I feel like I might be too passionate about it. So I just decided to hold my tongue on it. ... I feel like we could, but at the same time, maybe not, because when I think of her personality, it's more reserved. So, she's not wanting to fight at all or ever get worked up over something. So whenever I think of conversations I've had on these topics with other people, it'll be really passionate, respectfully. Or challenging, and not being afraid to doubt yourself. But I feel like maybe with our personalities, it might be uncomfortable to do that with one another. But I don't know. Yeah, I guess that could be – that would allow us to get deeper or just expand each other's minds on those things – why we believe those things. But for the most part, we just stop at that: acknowledge it, respect it, let's move on to something else.

In this example Rachel explained how she sometimes chooses to approach her differences with Anya and at other times chooses to avoid directly engaging their differences, instead preferring to “acknowledge it, respect it, and ... move on to something else.” When a particularly sensitive topic arises about which Rachel knows she and Anya have different beliefs, Rachel feels that avoidance will be most effective at maintaining relational connection because of the potential for their differences relative to this issue to lead to conflict. On the other hand, she feels comfortable engaging in discussions about Christianity

with Anya and one of their other friends, and therefore is willing to approach their differences through open conversation because she is confident that “we can talk about those things,” and that doing so doesn’t carry the risk of disconnection. Whether she chooses approach or avoidance, however, the underlying goal is the same: maintaining relational connection. Her example demonstrates how approach and avoidance can both be effective means of Bridging Difference to Connect, and also how determining which style is best can vary from moment to moment within a friendship, depending upon which differences arise.

Figure 11 summarizes the properties and dimensions of Bridging Difference to Connect.

Figure 11. Properties and dimensions of Bridging Difference to Connect.

Conditions

The two required conditions for Bridging Difference to Connect—Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” and sharing mutual respect for differences—together create a relational context in which the bridging process can effectively foster relational connection and minimize potential disconnection. Two additional conditions, Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Exploratory Orientation, help facilitate the bridging process. I discuss each of these conditions next.

Required conditions. Two conditions are required for the process of Bridging Difference to Connect to be successful at its goal of maintaining relational connection: Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” and the related condition of sharing mutual respect for differences.

Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.” The process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” is required in order for the process of Bridging Difference to Connect to be successful (i.e., to achieve its purpose of strengthening relational connection to sustain the friendship). Trust and an established silent contract create a safe and secure relational context in which efforts to bridge their differences are perceived to be offered in good faith and reciprocated. Amina discussed the role of trust in Bridging Difference to Connect with her friend Nawal:

When there are disagreements in our interpretation of Islam or of a situation it generally ends in either one of us dissipating into silence and letting the moment pass. We are both very amicable and friendly people so typically this silence lasts for

a fleeting moment before we switch topics and discuss another topic. We will not approach this topic again since we respect each other's opinion and don't want to dissolve into an argument or debate. Looking back I think we handled this situation ideally. People are shaped by their environments and their parents, so it isn't shocking to hear that each of us have a different interpretation of various situations and it's better to differentiate when it's a good time to have a steady debate and when to let it pass. ... The way we handle disagreements in my perspective shows that we respect one another and our opinions and for that reason I think it encourages trust in our relationship. It makes us closer because we know that even though we are hardwired to think one way by our genes, our upbringing, and our environment that the other person will be willing to listen to our rambles and they won't judge us.

Amina's example illustrates how the mutual trust she and Nawal have established defuses the disconnective potential of any disagreements that arise between them.

However, when trust is weak or absent from the friendship, attempts to bridge difference will likely be unsuccessful and may lead to conflict and disconnection rather than the intended goal of connection. The lack of trust may also lead friends to conclude that attempts to bridge their differences will be futile; as a result, they may choose not to engage in the process potential or actual conflict arises, leading to relational disconnection and, over time, threatening friendship sustainment. Kandace provides a negative case example of how trust operates as a required condition for Bridging Difference to Connect. As she discussed in her journal responses,

I did care about Jill quite a bit. Frankly, I don't think she ever showed the same level of care – and if she did, I have to question whether or not if it was genuine. For example, Jill threw me a birthday party: invited our entire building, bought me a cake and made me a card. Although I appreciated the gesture, I still have to question whether or not she did it out of the kindness of her heart or if she just felt obligated to since I was her roommate. ... The amount of trust and respect I had for Jill wasn't up there with the trust and respect I have for my closest friends. Unlike with Jill, I could blow up and be secure that my friends wouldn't look at me as the "crazy, black girl." I could talk out my issues with my friends and best of all, I know that our values align, unlike with Jill.

Kandace felt she couldn't trust Jill, and she questioned whether Jill was genuine toward her, so she didn't feel comfortable addressing conflict with her. She also feared that Jill would see her as an "crazy, black girl"; as many interpersonal scholars have discussed, the specter of the "angry Black woman" is a real and omnipresent force of disconnection in Black-White interracial relationships despite being an inaccurate, racist caricature (see, e.g., Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Childs, 2005; Dace, 2012). Therefore, rather than trying to forge a bridge across their differences when they arose, Kandace and Jill would take their conflict outside the friendship for resolution (e.g., by venting to their other friends), and as a result of being unable to bridge their differences, their conflicts led to disconnection and weakened their friendship.

Sharing mutual respect for differences. A required condition for Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” sharing mutual respect for differences is also a required condition for the process of Bridging Difference to Connect. As the previous example from Amina illustrates, respect for each other as individuals encompasses respect for the things they share as well as for the ways in which they differ. This mutual respect for their differences therefore minimizes the potential for disconnection when disagreement or conflict arises; their differences no longer pose a threat but rather offer opportunities for the friends to demonstrate respect for each other’s perspectives as well as for each other as individuals. As another example of the role of mutual respect in Bridging Difference to Connect, Rachel discussed disagreeing with her friend Anya on the issue of marriage equality and coming to understand that holding firm to her own beliefs is sometimes less important than demonstrating respect for each other and preserving relational connection:

At first I was really unsettled at the fact that [Anya] disagreed with me, and the same discussion has come up several times since. As time goes on, I have begun to respect her decision more and we tell each other our reasoning in respectful ways where we are genuinely curious as to why the other thinks that way – whereas before it was more like “How could you think that way?!”... I think over time our responses to disagreements have become more tolerant and considerate of the other person’s view. Nowadays, it seems that our discussions acknowledge the validity of the other person’s views as we also state our own different belief[s] on the matter. I think this is a good way to approach disagreements, but it has perhaps softened our sense of

*urgency on our own beliefs. For instance, if you firmly believe in something and someone disagrees with your stance, you will stand resolutely by your belief, lay down all necessary defenses, and question the other person as to how they could believe differently. This could also be a good approach, to some degree, because I think it is important to stand by that which you believe and work towards enlightening others on that belief. However, as to all things, balance is key. And while I had this initial approach to my beliefs, **I think this friendship has shown me that sometimes when it comes to someone you care about, you should respect them by allowing them to think differently** and not necessarily converting them to think exactly as you do. (emphasis added)*

As Rachel so aptly puts it, the process of Bridging Difference to Connect requires the friends to demonstrate respect for each other as individuals with different beliefs and values—in other words, to show mutual respect for each other.

Inga also shared an example of how mutual respect for their differences helps her and Natasha connect and sustain their friendship:

And one of the biggest things about our relationship too, another factor, is that when you look at it from a far distance and you know stuff about us, you'll think, "How does this even work?" because Natasha is an atheist and I am a Christian. Even though I told her about my beliefs and whenever she would ask questions, I would answer them the way I think would be best. Natasha has always respected that, and I would in turn have respect for that too.

In her journal responses, Natasha expressed a perspective congruent with Inga's; she confirms that they can discuss their differences with civility while respecting each other's right to their individual beliefs:

We like to talk them out face to face. We try not to yell. One time we differed on views of homosexuality and religion. In the end we decided to respect each other's decisions and just not bring it up anymore. I think even though we have differing views on these topics we are still great and supportive friends to each other. Our responses to disagreements have always been really civil and respectful. I really appreciate the maturity of it.

Even though Inga and Natasha have some significant differences in their beliefs, they do not consider these differences to pose a threat to their relational connection because of the mutual respect they have for their differences.

However, if one or both members of the friendship lacks respect for these aspects in which they differ—or if one member *perceives* the other to lack this respect—attempts to bridge difference will be perceived as inauthentic or offensive, leading to conflict and disconnection rather than the desired bridge and connection. Alternatively, as with lack of trust, if mutual respect is lacking, one or both friends may decide that any strategies to bridge difference will be unsuccessful and therefore not worth the effort. Maggie's experience with her friend Nikki provides an example of what happens in an interracial friendship when the friends cannot bridge their differences due to a lack of mutual respect. In addition to their racial differences, Maggie and Nikki differed in regard to their regional origins and religious

beliefs: Maggie came from a predominately White town in Connecticut and a non-religious family while Nikki grew up in a religious family in the Southern U.S. Due to their backgrounds, race and religion were much more salient identities (S. R. Jones & McEwen, 2000) for Nikki than they were for Maggie, leading to moments of conflict in which they were unable to find a connection across their differences, such as this example:

*The majority of the time that we had disagreements, it was her “blowing up” at me. It always made me feel like I had to walk on eggshells around her and to really think before I spoke. I think this strained our relationship a lot. One example of her getting angry was when I said, “Oh my f***ing Lord” and she was livid. I totally understand her response now, but she should have [known] that I had [no] intentions of doing any harm. I wish she treated the situation differently, but I don’t blame her shock— it was a cultural difference between agnosticism and religion and also the North and the South, and I was just adjusting.*

Although Maggie feels like Nikki could have shown more respect for their differences in this moment, the converse is true as well, in that Maggie did not make an effort to understand Nikki’s perspective or why Nikki felt disrespected by Maggie’s cursing. If Maggie and Nikki had taken Inga and Natasha’s approach and had an open and respectful discussion about their differences in moments such as these, they may have been able to turn a moment of potentially disconnection-fostering conflict into an opportunity to demonstrate respect for their differences, which may have helped them to sustain their friendship.

Sharing mutual respect for differences may also manifest as a genuine interest in each other's lives, as suggested by one of Max's journal responses:

[Tara: Do you feel like your friendship with him is unique in terms of the amount of respect and acceptance you have for your differences, compared to your other close friends (current and past)?] Yes I definitely feel that it's unique in that way. Other close friends of mine would be more susceptible to arguing about our differences or trying to force their view point. ... I feel that my relationship with [Nelson] is also in that we are genuinely interested in each other's lives. I find a lot of times that other friends of mine will talk mostly about themselves. There wouldn't be any inquiry into my life and things that I say would be spun around to be about them. In this friendship, however, there is a mutual interest in each other's lives.

When Max and Nelson show authentic interest in each other's lives, they demonstrate their respect for each other as well as their commitment to each other and to their relationship, creating a relational context in which the disconnective threat posed by their differences is minimal, in contrast to Max's other friendships.

In addition to creating the necessary conditions in which friends maintain relational connection through bridging their differences, sharing mutual respect for differences plays an important role in the success of several strategies for Bridging Difference to Connect. I discuss those strategies later in this section.

Facilitating conditions. Bridging Difference to Connect is facilitated by two conditions, both of which enable the friends to approach their differences in a positive way

that fosters relational connection rather than fearing that their differences will divide them.

These two facilitating conditions are Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Exploratory Orientation.

Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. The process of Bridging Difference to Connect and the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference are mutually facilitating, complementary processes, as noted in the opening of this section; the latter process involves connecting through similarity, while the former involves connecting despite (or sometimes through) difference and enables the friends to honor (“never forget”) their differences. Together, these two processes foster the sustainment of interracial friendships among college students. However effective two friends are at embracing their similarities, differences will always be present between them, meaning that they will always need to use strategies to negotiate or work through those differences. In return, by effectively bridging their differences, the friends are better able to embrace their similarities to foster connection and deepen their friendship. I elaborate in more detail on the mutually facilitating relationship between these two processes, and provide illustrative examples from my data, in the section of this chapter on Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

Exploratory Orientation. Exploratory Orientation, or an openness to and affinity for diverse perspectives that challenge one’s own assumptions, facilitates the process of Bridging Difference to Connect as it enables the friends to approach their differences with an open mind and a desire to engage with each other to learn and explore together. When friends view

their differences as opportunities for exploration and learning, those differences that in other relational contexts may be divisive instead foster relational connection and sustain the friendship. The example from Max provided earlier in this section, in which he discussed finding common ground with his friend Nelson through conversations about their different religious beliefs, illustrates the way in which Exploratory Orientation—a quality Max possesses—enables him to approach their differences as a source of relational connection rather than disconnection. I further discuss Exploratory Orientation and the role it plays in facilitating Bridging Difference to Connect, along with additional examples, later in this chapter.

Strategies

Differences between two friends may or may not lead to disagreement, but difference is always present in the friendship as a *potential* source of disconnection, which is why Bridging Difference to Connect is an essential process of interracial friendship. Strategies for Bridging Difference to Connect focus on maintaining relational connection, or avoiding disconnection, when difference and disagreement arise within the friendship. By employing strategies for bridging their differences, two friends can manage the potential for disconnection by defusing or minimizing their differences (avoidance strategies) or by converting their differences into an opportunity for connection (approach strategies). Additionally, some strategies are effective at preventing conflict and disconnection before it arises (preventive strategies), whereas others help the friends to minimize disconnection and re-establish connection after a conflict or disagreement (reconciliatory). The variation along

these two dimensions (approach-avoidance and preventive-reconciliatory) produces a typology of strategies for Bridging Difference to Connect, as detailed in Table 8.

Table 8. A typology of strategies for Bridging Difference to Connect.

	Approach	Avoidance
Preventive	Exploring Other Cultures (can also be reconciliatory)	Choosing harmony over conflict Respecting separate spheres
Reconciliatory	Challenging each other to grow (positive challenge)	Defusing disagreements by moving on

Below I discuss five strategies for Bridging Difference to Connect and include illustrative examples from my data: (1) Exploring Other Cultures, (2) Challenging each other to grow (positive challenge), (3) Choosing harmony over conflict, (4) Defusing disagreements by moving on, and (5) Respecting separate spheres. The list of strategies I present here may not be exhaustive, but these are the primary strategies exhibited by the participants in my research, and they exemplify the four quadrants of the typology (i.e., approach x preventive, avoidance x preventive, approach x reconciliatory, and avoidance x reconciliatory).

Exploring Other Cultures. Exploring Other Cultures, which is a central process of interracial friendship and sustainment as I discuss elsewhere in this chapter, can also serve as a strategy for Bridging Difference to Connect. When it is used as a strategy, Exploring Other

Cultures allows the friends to externalize their differences (and any conflict that might arise from them) by attributing them to their different cultural backgrounds rather than to their relationship as individuals. As a result, they can then approach their differences from a stance of appreciative learning—“let’s use this opportunity to explore how we’re different and learn about each other”—rather than from an adversarial stance, which helps them to maintain relational connection and minimize any potential disconnection. In this way, Exploring Other Cultures is an approach strategy; friends who use it actively engage with their differences and seek to learn from them. It can be used as a strategy to prevent conflict, when the friends mutually approach any differences between them from an appreciative learning stance, or as a reconciliatory strategy to restore connection after a conflict or disagreement has occurred.

Caroline described an example of how she and her friend Lily used this strategy to contextualize their disagreements and prevent them from becoming arguments:

Whenever my friend and I differed, we always handled the situation quite calmly. We would discuss the cultural difference that we each have that shaped our opinions and attitudes toward certain topics, ideas, people, and so on. I feel that this was the best way to handle the situations in which we didn’t quite see eye to eye, and overall we never had any significant moment where we disagreed because every difference of opinion was discussed openly. Today, we understand each other’s culture on a level that we no longer have the discussions as often, and we have very few disagreements due to our understanding of each other.

Both Caroline and Lily are open to engaging with their differences as learners, as this strategy for bridging their differences helps them to sustain their friendship. Charles also described taking a learning-focused approach to Bridging Difference to Connect within his friendship with Alisha:

So like when we find things that clash with each other, it's just a new experience of either like accepting the other person for how they do things or like maybe trying something out differently and just the idea of new experiences.

Charles appreciates moments when he and Alisha “clash” because they provide him with “new experiences” that allow him to broaden his own perspective. The racial differences between himself and Alisha, as well as differences resulting from having grown up in different regions of the U.S. and having different levels of pre-college exposure to diversity, provide them with myriad opportunities for exploration to enhance their own understandings of the world through their friendship.

Challenging each other to grow (positive challenge). Another strategy for Bridging Difference to Connect that focuses on learning and growth is the notion of positive challenge, or when utilized as a strategy for bridging differences, “challenging each other to grow.” I initially discussed the concept of positive challenge in the section on Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” earlier in this chapter. In short, positive challenge refers to conflict that originates from a place of caring and respect in which one friend challenges the other about a behavior or decision that the challenging friend feels is incongruent with the other friend’s values, beliefs, or integrity. Unlike most other forms of conflict, positive

challenge deepens relational connection because it allows the friends to demonstrate a level of care and respect for each other that they can only receive from their closest friends. As Sloan aptly noted in describing how her friend Ashley shared her honest opinion about Sloan's boyfriend—which Sloan appreciated her sharing despite it being hard for her to hear—"sometimes it results in hurt feelings but we are grateful to hear it because chances are no one else will say it." Max expressed a similar sentiment about being able to engage in positive challenge with his friend Nelson; he shared how after he and Nelson had an intimate conversation about a problem Nelson was having in his relationship with his girlfriend, during which Max challenged Nelson to reflect upon his values, Nelson "was very, very thankful that I had that conversation with him because he felt like he couldn't have that conversation with anybody else." Both Max's and Sloan's examples illustrate how as a strategy, challenging each other to grow enables the friends to bridge their differences by engaging in conflict that enhances, rather than undermines, relational connection. Additional examples of positive challenge appear in the section of this chapter on Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract."

Positive challenge leads to two desirable effects, one intrapersonal and the other interpersonal: (1) growth on the part of the challenged friend, because the challenging friend brings problematic behavior to the challenged friend's attention, fostering reflection and hopefully leading to change, and (2) deepening closeness and trust between friends, because it's a vulnerable moment that requires trust, reciprocity, and mutual respect, and it gives the friends an opportunity to show they care for each other as whole, authentic, flawed people.

Walker (2004) refers to similar relational moments as “good conflict” because they can lead to growth:

When women wage good conflict, old relational images, thin abstractions of self and other, can be replaced by more fully textured images that are authenticated through action in relationship. ...They understood that conflict is an inevitable part of life, which creates potential for growth. Each woman approached the conflict with a sense of integrity and respect. From this standpoint, they were able to practice both self empathy and empathy for the other.” (Walker, 2004, pp. 100-101)

As a strategy, challenging each other to grow requires a relational context of trust, security, and respect, and therefore this strategy is especially dependent upon the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” as a required condition. Yet employing this strategy can also deepen trust, respect, and relational security, and in this way it is a particularly effective strategy for maintaining relational connection through bridging differences. Because challenging each other to grow requires the friends to actively confront and work through their differences in a moment of conflict, it represents an approach and reconciliation strategy.

Choosing harmony over conflict. A decision to avoid conflict, or to “choose harmony over conflict,” within the relational context of some friendships and at certain moments, can also be an effective strategy for Bridging Difference to Connect. When friends employ this strategy, they make an in-the-moment decision to avoid allowing a potential conflict to become an actual conflict, which allows them to avoid the possibility of relational

disconnection. Choosing harmony over conflict is therefore an avoidance and preventive strategy. In his journal responses, Rick described using this strategy after his friend Elise made comment that could have caused conflict between them:

A specific time this occurred is when Elise walked up to me and said, “What’s up, my nigger?” I’ve never really understood why people use the word anyways, but it does frustrate me when people call me that, especially when they are not Black. In my opinion it’s a very demeaning term that no one should use. She acted as if nothing happened but I just looked at her with a blank face. I never actually said anything so I’m not sure if she really understood what happened. Looking back I probably should have expressed my true feelings towards her along with other people calling me that. It was a comfortable response since I avoid conflict.

Rick chose not to confront Elise about what she said to him, even though it understandably upset him that she (a White woman) used this term to address him (an African American man). Yet for Rick, this situation didn’t seem to cause lasting disconnection from Elise, and he indicated later in his journal responses that he would probably handle the situation the same way if it happened again because he wants to avoid creating conflict within their friendship.

An external observer of their friendship may argue that Rick’s decision not to address this incident with Elise will ultimately damage their friendship by undermining trust and authenticity (see, e.g., Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004; Dace, 2012), and indeed I was troubled by this example and the fact that Rick felt he had to choose between maintaining connection

with Elise and confronting her about this racial microaggression and the pain it caused him. Sustaining an interracial friendship should not require one friend to have to withstand racism, or other forms of prejudice, from the other friend (I address this issue further in chapter five). However, it's also important, from a constructivist perspective, to acknowledge that Rick chose this strategy because in the moment of potential conflict, he felt it was the strategy most congruent with his desire to maintain relational connection with Elise, and from his perspective it was therefore an effective strategy for Bridging Difference to Connect. Yet it's also possible that if Rick continues to use this strategy with Elise, he may over time become resentful of feeling that he has to suppress his feelings in order to sustain his friendship with her, which might ultimately lead to relational disconnection between them.

Although Rick's friendship with Elise did not lead to any immediate relational disconnection due to Rick's desire not to confront her about her microaggression, Maggie's friendship with Nikki provides an example of how feeling unequipped to address issues of race and racism can damage friendship sustainment. Maggie discussed deciding not to tell Nikki how she felt after Nikki made a comment about wanting to spend more time with Black students on campus:

[Tara: You didn't say anything to her?] No. Yeah, and that's the thing I regret, is that I wish at least I had a conversation about it, but I felt really uncomfortable about having it, and I was like meek. Well, I understood it less then, I think, and so I was like, "I don't want to have this conversation and get her angry." It's really hard, I think, for anyone to talk about race, but especially when you're like uncomfortable

and trying to walk on eggshells sometimes, and you don't wanna – when you're just ignorant and you want to learn more instead of sounding like an oppressor and being ignorant on purpose.

When one or both friends fear that any conflict or difference between them will threaten their friendship—a fear that may result from a lack of multicultural competence or prior experience interacting with people from other cultural backgrounds—they may choose to avoid conflict rather than addressing it openly and honestly. Yet ironically, the desire to prevent disconnection by avoiding conflict often leads to disconnection anyway because by having to hide or minimize their feelings, they compromise the ability to be their whole, authentic selves within their friendships. They may also turn to others (as Kandace did) for understanding and support rather than cultivating it with the friend, losing a crucial opportunity to build trust and connection. Maggie's example particularly illuminates the challenges college students have in developing and sustaining interracial friendships when they lack (or feel they lack) multicultural competence. As I discuss in chapter five, one of the ways in which colleges and universities can support interracial friendships is to help students—especially those who come from pre-college environments in which their own racial group was predominant—to develop their skill and confidence in respectful intercultural interaction so that they can bridge their cultural differences without fear of disconnection.

In contrast, Michelle provides an example of employing the strategy of choosing harmony over conflict in more neutral situations:

The way we respond to disagreements has changed over time because we have come to understand each other a little better. I know that trying to convince Janelle my way is better is like arguing with a sign post so if she doesn't agree with me I just drop it instead of pursuing the matter like I would have when we first met.

Because the situations in which Michelle uses this strategy don't involve conflict rooted in their racial or cultural differences, her use of this strategy probably doesn't carry the long-term risk of disconnection due to a build-up of resentment as it may for Rick. It's possible, then, that the effectiveness of choosing harmony over disagreement for maintaining relational connection may depend upon the nature of the potential moment of conflict in which it's used; it may be a more effective strategy when the differences that arise between the friends are not related to their cultural identities or other central aspects of their identities. The example from Amina that appears earlier in this section on Bridging Difference to Connect illustrates the importance of context in deciding whether choosing harmony over conflict will be an effective strategy; as she noted,

People are shaped by their environments and their parents, so it isn't shocking to hear that each of us have a different interpretation of various situations, and [so] it's better to differentiate when it's a good time to have a steady debate and when to let it pass.

Defusing disagreements by moving on. In some moments friends may prefer to choose harmony over conflict in order to avoid conflict and potential disconnection; at other times they may instead decide to use a strategy to minimize relational disconnection after a

conflict has occurred. Brynn recounted a how she and her friend Brittany handle their disagreements after they occur:

When we on occasion become annoyed with each other we give each other space and move on. We don't feel the need to apologize or revisit the subject; we just move on and chalk it up to a bad [day]. For our friendship I think this type of resolution method is appropriate since none of our disagreements would be what I consider significant. If this is to change I can see us both being initially hard headed, give each other space/avoid one another, then eventually both apologize for our part of the disagreement and move on. I really cannot imagine what would ever cause us to have a serious fight, but if it does happen I do not think it would ever be something that would destroy our friendship.

Their strategy involves defusing a disagreement by apologizing and moving on rather than dwelling on the source of the disagreement, thereby minimizing its potential to result in disconnection. In this sense their strategy, “defusing disagreements by moving on,” represents an avoidance strategy as well as a reconciliation strategy; its goal is to reduce the disconnective potential of their disagreements.

Respecting separate spheres. Like Brynn, Rachel also discussed using an avoidance strategy; her strategy, however, is focused on maintaining relational connection by preventing disagreement and conflict. On her questionnaire Rachel provided an illustration and a metaphor to summarize how she and her friend Anya bridge their differences through giving each other space to be themselves:

7. Please provide a metaphor or simile to describe your friendship: "Our friendship is (was) _____." If you prefer, you can draw a picture of your friendship in the space below. *like 2 peaceful kittens... but we still like our space*

Figure 12. Rachel's metaphor for and illustration of her interracial friendship.

I termed the strategy Rachel described "respecting separate spheres." As Rachel illustrates, some participants have found that an effective way to bridge their differences is by recognizing that they have different interests and values and respecting each other's right to have and pursue those interests and values that they do not share. In this sense, "respecting separate spheres" contrasts with, but also complements, the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. Friends who utilize this strategy understand that while embracing what they share is an important part of sustaining their friendship, it's also important for them to respect what they do not share and to not allow the things unshared to become sources of division or disconnection. Although this strategy involves acknowledging and respecting the differences between oneself and one's friend, it represents an avoidance, rather than an approach, strategy because it allows the friends to avoid engaging directly with their differences. It is also a preventive strategy as friends who utilize it seek to prevent

conflict over their differences by demonstrating a sort of “hands off” respect for what they do not share.

In her interview, Rachel elaborated on her illustration and metaphor and how the strategy of “respecting separate spheres” functions in her friendship with Anya:

Well, I chose the cats because I know that she likes them so much, but when I think of cats, you can see them be all cute and playing with one another, just playful. But at the same time, cats are also known for wanting their own space, or just having their own personality. I think that's kind of like our relationship because we can both get really excited about things together and do things together, but at the same time, we're very independent because I have my own things that I'm involved with or she'll keep to herself or things like that. As close as we are, at the same time, I've always felt like she has more things that she just keeps to herself, and I think that may be partially because of personality. But it's a good balance, because we're not all over each other. And I mean, even as roommates that's really important to have, because it feels like we can play with one another if we want to and then we can be in the same room together and be doing our own thing and not speaking for hours.

Thus, while both Rachel's strategy of “respecting separate spheres” and Brynn's strategy of “defusing disagreements by moving on” involve the friends being willing to give each other space in the interest of minimizing relational disconnection, their strategies differ along the dimension of preventive (Rachel's) versus reconciliatory (Brynn's). Rachel's strategy is also more dependent upon the presence of mutual respect within the friendship

(i.e., the required condition of sharing mutual respect for differences). As Rachel described in the previous example, she and Anya have much in common, but they also recognize that they are two very distinct individuals with different interests, personalities, beliefs, and values. They respect their differences and avoid conflict over them by giving each other the space to be themselves without trying to change each other. When their desire to spend time together or do something together coincide, they do, but they do not feel their friendship is threatened by wanting to spend time alone or with other people. Respecting each other “as is” enables them to maintain relational connection despite their differences, helping to sustain their friendship.

In their pair interview, Charles and Alisha also described how respecting each other as individuals with separate interests and values helps them to maintain relational connection:

Charles: I think the only thing is when one of us is really interested in something and the other one of us is just not connecting to it, the compromise that we understand that there's just no way we're gonna do this together, so we just can't. This is something we can't do together, or something we can't both show interest in. And we just understand that that sets us apart and that's –

Alisha: Yeah.

Charles: So it's like trial and error to see what we both really like to do and what one of us is more interested in.

Alisha: Yeah, and I mean if we're both not into something, we're just like, “Okay, well, talk to you later,” and just, I mean, it's cool. We're just understanding with it,

I guess. Because not everyone's gonna be into the same thing and wanna do the same thing all the time, so. It's that level of understanding.

Charles and Alisha's example illustrates required condition of trust for the success of this strategy; the fact that they have cultivated trust in their relationship helps them to not perceive time spent apart with other friends or on other interests as divisive or threatening, but rather to appreciate the fact that being two different people with different lives enriches their friendship. The required condition of mutual respect is also evident in Charles and Alisha's use of this strategy, as using it allows them to mutually demonstrate support for each other's right to *not* enjoy or be interested in certain activities:

Charles: But then there's certain things that maybe I wasn't interested in, but I try it anyway, because – I'm gonna say the hip hop concert, just it was definitely a new experience. I don't know if it was new for you.

Alisha: That the artists there were, but yeah. I see what you mean, though.

Charles: But just it's definitely an opportunity to try new things and if we're both up for it. But there's still things we just – I'm pretty sure I'm the one that more often than not will not want to participate in something, so I just and I like that Alisha understands that and she just –

Alisha: Yeah, and it's not like I'll pressure him into doing it or something. If he doesn't wanna do it, then that's him and it's just, he'll find something else to do we'll see each other the next day, I guess.

The examples from Charles and Alisha's and Rachel's friendships illustrate another way in which the process of Bridging Difference to Connect helps to sustain friendship. Friends that have developed the level of trust and mutual respect that allows them to live their own lives and pursue their own interests outside of the friendship have minimized the power of their differences to cause relational disconnection, thereby enhancing their ability to find relational connection in the moments they spend together.

Summary

One of the four central processes of interracial friendship, Bridging Difference to Connect enables the friends to connect despite, or sometimes through, their differences; it is therefore, an important process in sustaining interracial friendships. Within any given relational context, Bridging Difference to Connect may vary along two dimensions. The first dimension concerns whether the friends engage in the bridging process in order to prevent conflict that may lead to relational disconnection or, alternatively, to minimize disconnection and re-establish connection after disagreement or conflict occurs. The second dimension concerns whether Bridging Difference to Connect is an approach process, in which the friends engage with their differences, or an avoidance process, in which the friends seek to minimize their differences; in either case, maintaining relational connection remains the goal of the process. Trust and mutual respect create a relational context in which Bridging Difference to Connect can be successful (i.e., it achieves the desired goal of relational connection); therefore, sharing mutual respect for differences and the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" are required conditions for Bridging Difference to

Connect. Two additional conditions facilitate the process: the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Exploratory Orientation.

To engage in the bridging process, the friends employ strategies to minimize relational disconnection and maintain connection when differences between them arise. These strategies include (1) Exploring Other Cultures, (2) Challenging each other to grow (positive challenge), (3) Choosing harmony over conflict, (4) Defusing disagreements by moving on, and (5) Respecting separate spheres. These five strategies vary along the dimensions of approach-avoidance and prevention-reconciliation. Which strategies are chosen, and whether they are effective in fostering connection, depends upon the relational context of the friendship and the individual preferences of the friends; chosen strategies may also vary based upon the specifics of a moment in which differences become salient or disagreement arises. When the process of Bridging Difference to Connect is successful, relational connection results, which deepens and sustains the friendship. However, when the process is unsuccessful, or if the friends are reluctant to engage in the process, disconnection may instead result, eventually threatening friendship sustainment.

Exploring Other Cultures

I definitely feel that our friendship has helped me to better understand my friend's cultural group. I never had an interracial friendship before this one, but I don't think that this friendship made me feel more comfortable around African Americans more. It just helped me to understand the culture better and to have a deeper interest into it.

My friend's life plays a big part in my own life, and so I feel that his cultural group also plays a big role in my life.

– Max (who identifies as White)

To a greater or lesser extent, the racial and cultural groups represented by the two members of an interracial friendship “play a role in their lives,” in Max’s words, and in their friendships. Exploring each other’s cultures allows the friends to connect across their differences, discovering new things they may share while also coming to understand each other better. While cultural exploration requires the friends to have established some degree of trust, it also deepens the level of trust they have for each other as it requires them to step outside of their comfort zones with the confidence that their friend will be there to support and guide them. Exploring Other Cultures, therefore, plays a critical role in the other central processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment: Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Bridging Difference to Connect.

When I originally developed this category I was thinking of friendship as a means of travel to a cultural “foreign land,” but as I analyzed additional participants’ experiences for examples of this process, I realized it can also include visiting one’s own cultural land. In this sense, the cultural exploration involved in an interracial friendship resembles a comment made by many large-city dwellers, that they’ve never really explored their home city until a friend or family member comes to visit, and in giving them a tour they learn to see their city with new eyes and a new appreciation (or possibly new criticisms).

The process of Exploring Other Cultures is characterized by two properties. First, the process involves learning through exploring each other's cultures. Second, the process requires the friends to take action to engage with and explore each other's cultures; it is through this active exploration that the learning occurs. Exploring Other Cultures varies along five dimensions: (1) whether cultural differences are foregrounded or backgrounded in the friendship; (2) the "visa-sherpa" dynamic, in which one friend guides the other friend in exploring his/her culture; (3) if one friend helps the other to acculturate; (4) whether cultural exploration and learning are bidirectional or unidirectional; and (5) the two friends' pre-college exposure to diversity. Three conditions pertain to Exploring Other Cultures. Two of these are also central processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment: Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" (which is a required condition) and Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference (which is a facilitating condition). One additional condition facilitates the process of Exploring Other Cultures: Exploratory Orientation, which is an openness to or affinity for new perspectives and experiences. Finally, the process of Exploring Other Cultures can lead to two consequences: (1) composing the friendship story and (2) converging of interests. In the sections that follow, I elaborate upon each of these properties, dimensions, conditions, and consequences. Figure 13 details the relationships between Exploring Other Cultures and its required and facilitating conditions and consequences.

Figure 13. A model of the process of Exploring Other Cultures.

Properties

The process of Exploring Other Cultures is defined by two properties. The first property represents the learning that occurs as a result of the friends' exploration of each other cultures. The second property concerns the action the friends take in order to engage in cultural exploration with each other.

Learning through cultural exploration. Interracial friendships allow the friends to learn about each other's cultures; in some cases, they may also allow the friends to learn more about their *own* cultures. This cultural exploration represents the first defining feature, or property, of the process of Exploring Other Cultures. Exploring each other's cultures leads to learning that helps the two friends to better understand each other as individuals as well as

members of their respective cultural groups. This sort of learning is similar to what Eboo Patel (2012) call “appreciative knowledge”—knowledge about another culture that helps one feel more connected to and appreciative of that other culture. Developing knowledge about other cultural groups through relationship can also challenge stereotypes and prejudice (Levin et al., 2003; J. N. Martin et al., 2010; McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Spanierman et al., 2008) and reduce social distance—the perception that one does not have things in common with members of other cultural groups (Allport, 1954/1988; Fischer, 2008, 2011; Odell et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000).

Anastasia’s emphatic response to journal prompt #3 (asking whether she feels she’s learned more about her friend’s culture and feels more comfortable with other members of her friend’s cultural group) illustrates the first property of Exploring Other Cultures:

YES! Americans especially have a strong prejudice against Mexicans. Whether it comes from the media, personal experience, or family views that are passed along the generations, George has showed me that these stereotypes are wrong. I now can see how hard it is for Mexicans to come here and the barriers they have to break in uni[versity] and the work force just because of their accents. George is a perfect example of a Mexican who works hard and is honestly working his way to the top by nothing but sweat and hard work. After learning some Spanish, how to salsa and going dancing with him, I feel as if I am a part of the Latin community especially at [Southeastern University]. George has given me the courage to try out for a Latin dance group and to adopt an identity not because I was born with it, but because it is

beautiful. I feel that George has learned just as much about Indian/American culture from me as well.

Through her friendship with George, Anastasia has had her own prejudices about Mexicans, drawn from the “smog” we all breathe” (Tatum, 1997) challenged, and she has learned to see Mexicans as individuals and not just “Mexicans” collectively (indicating a reduction in social distance to and the development of appreciative knowledge about this cultural group).

Through her friendship with George, she has become more multiculturally competent (at least toward Mexicans) congruent with Allport’s (1954/1988) contact hypothesis.

Taking action to explore other cultures. Of course, in order to explore each other’s cultures, the friends must engage in actions that allow them to do so; this action component of Exploring Other Cultures represents the second property of this category. Anastasia’s journal excerpt above also illustrates this second property. Her friend George has encouraged her to participate in some of his culture’s activities and traditions, and he has helped her to develop the comfort to do so (in this way he has served as a cultural “sherpa” for Anastasia, a dimension of Exploring Other Cultures that I describe below). Caroline’s friendship with Lily, an exchange student from Taiwan, provides another example of the action property of Exploring Other Cultures. Caroline learned much about Taiwanese culture through Lily through spending one-on-one time together in their suite. Yet Caroline was also motivated to step outside her comfort zone to explore Lily’s culture first-hand (or as first-hand as possible without leaving the U.S.):

I think people could definitely just step out of their boundaries. Because I think a lot of people do have an interest for people who are different than them, and are from different ethnicities and backgrounds. And I know that it can seem really intimidating when those people are usually hanging out with people of their own ethnicity or background. But for example, when I went to [an] event with my Taiwanese friend [Lily] and her friends from Taiwan, it was a little bit intimidating because they would speak in Chinese to each other. But I still felt very welcomed because one of the girls actually gave me a gift as well, because it's a cultural thing to give people gifts. And it was a Taiwanese pineapple cake. And it was really delicious. And so I didn't feel like I was out of the group or anything. And it was a really fun event. I feel that I bonded with some of the people; even though we aren't really friends and I don't talk to them, I feel like for that one moment that we were all friends.

Based upon my participants' experiences, it seems that these two properties of Exploring Other Cultures (the learning property and the action property) are cyclical and additive: Some amount of learning generates interest or curiosity that galvanizes a desire to engage in the action (e.g., for Anastasia, learning Spanish and trying out for a Latin dance group). However, actively exploring each other's cultures provides additional learning opportunities, and it also enhances the friends' desire to engage in future action to explore each other's cultures together. Together, the two properties of Exploring Other Cultures facilitate interpersonal connection between the friends, as developing appreciative knowledge about each other's cultures and engaging in shared experiences to explore each other's

cultures provides the friends with multiple opportunities helps them develop mutual respect and connect through shared experiences.

Dimensions

The process of Exploring Other Cultures varies along five dimensions: (1) whether cultural differences are foregrounded or backgrounded in the friendship; (2) the “visa-sherpa” dynamic, in which one friend guides the other friend in exploring his/her culture; (3) if one friend helps the other to acculturate; (4) whether cultural exploration and learning are bidirectional or unidirectional; and (5) the two friends’ pre-college exposure to diversity.

Foregrounding versus backgrounding cultural differences. One dimension of Exploring Other Cultures that shapes the exploring process as well as its relative importance within the friendship is whether or not cultural differences (and by extension, cultural exploration) are a salient feature within friendship. Specifically, there seem to be two types of interracial friendships: (1) those in which race, ethnicity, and culture more broadly are acknowledged and discussed by the friends, and are a central element of the friendship (i.e., cultural differences are foregrounded, as exemplified by Max’s quote at the opening of this section), and (2) those in which race, ethnicity, and culture are not directly acknowledged or discussed; they’re backgrounded. Alternatively, this dimension may represent a continuum rather than a typology, with “foregrounding” and “backgrounding” representing the two poles of the continuum. It may also be possible that the salience of cultural difference and cultural exploration to a specific interracial friendship is not a static dimension of that friendship, but rather may evolve over time (in either direction) or even change from moment

to moment within the friendship, just as different aspects of identity become more or less salient for an individual depending upon the specific context she occupies in any given moment (S. R. Jones & McEwen, 2000). In addition, just as the central friendship process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference requires the two friends to find a mutually acceptable balance between “forgetting” and “not forgetting” their cultural differences, friendship sustainment may require both friends to find an acceptable balance between foregrounding or backgrounding their cultural differences for exploration within their relationship. Indeed, Kandance’s unsustained friendship with Jill and Maggie’s with Nikki provide examples of conflict that arose when differences were foregrounded for one friend but not the other.

Participants whose friendships showed evidence of foregrounding cultural difference include Anastasia, Brynn, Caroline, Charles (at least initially), Maggie, Max, and Natasha. By contrast, Bryan’s and Michelle’s friendships exhibited characteristics suggesting that racial and cultural differences were backgrounded, or less salient, in their relationships. The quote from Max that opened this section exemplifies a friendship in which cultural exploration is foregrounded; many of the examples from other participants named above that I include throughout this section also illustrate the way in which cultural exploration in foregrounded in their friendship. Michelle, however, demonstrates the backgrounding dimension in both of her interracial friendships (with Trey and Janelle). As she discussed in her journal responses:

I don't feel like being around Trey or Janelle specifically has made me feel any closer to understanding their racial or cultural groups. I've never discussed race or anything of the sort around either of them. I feel like my understanding of their races and cultures has mainly come from living in a [living-learning community] where the different ethnicities are extremely prevalent. However, I would say that probably a combination of my village, Trey, and Janelle have made me more comfortable to the idea of spending time with other members of their racial and cultural groups. Again, I wouldn't say that Trey or Janelle have learned more about my own racial group because I have never discussed anything like that with them for as long as I've known them.

Although cultural exploration and learning are not foregrounded in Michelle's friendships, she nonetheless acknowledges that through her relationships with them, she has likely gained appreciative knowledge about their cultures despite the fact that they have not engaged in active cultural exploration.

The “visa-sherpa” dynamic. Another dimension of Exploring Other Cultures is the “visa-sherpa” dynamic. This dynamic is only one possible way in which cultural exploration can proceed within an interracial friendship, but it served as an important component of the cultural exploration process for those participants for whom it did appear. For these participants, interracial friendship is a sort of cultural travel experience. Being close friends with someone of another race means occupying a culturally liminal space: each friend becomes a provisional and temporary member of the friend's cultural group, but only in the

presence of the friend who belongs to that cultural group, who can vouch for them, serve as a cultural “translator” when necessary, and escort them to ensure a smooth visit. In this way, the interracial friendship provides each friend with a “visa” of sorts—they’re not full citizens of the other’s culture, but they have an endorsement and tacit permission (granted by the friend who is a member of that group, the “sherpa”³) to move around within that culture, with some limitations. The length of the “visa” is the length of the friendship; when the friendship expires, the visa expires too and the traveling friend must depart, unless of course s/he has made new friends (new “sherpas”) within that culture or has been accepted as an honorary member of the cultural group (similar to being granted residency status in another country).

Charles’s experience with his friend Alisha exemplifies the visa-sherpa dynamic:

But at the same time, I guess we really like to break stereotypical differences. Like I know there’s many – I’ll just go into details. There’s many things that stereotypically African Americans do, whether it be certain types of dances or certain types of food or just even like the movies we watch. They’re directed towards different groups of people and just the idea of me jumping into those experiences or taking part in those is, it’s a way of me feeling out of place, but at the same time celebrating that I’m out of place and that I’m experiencing these new things that I would never have a chance

³ The term Sherpa (with a capital “S”) refers to a Nepalese person who helps guide explorers in climbing Mt. Everest (Dictionary.com). Tenzing Norgay, who guided Sir Edmund Hillary, the first non-Nepalese person to successfully climb Mt. Everest, is perhaps the most well known Sherpa. I have adapted the term “sherpa” (and am using it with a lowercase “s”) to refer to the conceptual idea of a college student who guides and supports a friend from a different cultural group in exploring his or her culture.

to I guess because I'm with Alisha and because she's like my gateway into those situations and those activities.

As Charles's example illustrates, a traveler with a "visa" may feel more or less comfortable in the new cultural "country," but native residents of that country may identify him as an outsider. Some of them may welcome him and others may question his motivation for being there (similar to the experience of many travelers who visit other countries). Depending on the culture traveled to, the traveling friend may be able to "pass" as a native resident or s/he may clearly stand out as an outsider based on his or her appearance and behaviors. The traveler may also exercise agency in choosing whether or not to blend in or remain clearly differentiated as a cultural outsider.

The visa-sherpa dynamic is evident in Anastasia's relationship with George, as I note in the example provided to illustrate the first property of Exploring Other Cultures. It is also present to some extent in Caroline's friendship with Lily and Rick's friendship with Alex, although in both of their cases, the "traveled to" culture was American university culture, representing an acculturation process, as I describe next. It's possible that the visa-sherpa dynamic has a time dimension: it may only be relevant in the earlier stages of the friendship, and only for those friendships where one (or both) friends know nothing about the other's culture. It is not a required dynamic for all friendships where cultural exploration is foregrounded; for example, Max's friendship with Nelson features much cultural discussion (not just race, but religion too), but the visa-sherpa dynamic is not present in their friendship.

Acculturating through interracial friendship. A third dimension of Exploring Other Cultures, which is related to the visa-sherpa dynamic, occurs when Exploring Other Cultures manifests as an acculturation process. When this dimension appears, the interracial friendship aids students who grew up abroad in acculturating to the cultures of the U.S. and of an American university. In this sense, one friend serves as an American cultural sherpa, helping to explain or model what it is to be an American college student, or specifically in the case of my participants, a southern American college student, as well as helping the participant transition into this new cultural context. Among my participants, Dan and Rick indicated feeling that their friends helped them to acculturate.

In Dan's case, Exploring Other Cultures as an acculturative process overlaps with Embracing Similarity in that Dan was attracted to his friend Sammy (who is African American) because he felt they shared an experience of being outsiders to mainstream Southern university culture:

I kinda feel bad for saying, but like this whole notion of like, the preppy boy, the frat boy, and the stuff like that. That does not exist where I grew up [outside of the U.S.]. I would never think of stuff like that. And you know, the kind of more wealthy Southern families and stuff like that, I never kind of thought about that stuff. And [Sammy], being African American and stuff. And his parents moved here in the past, I don't know how many years. He wasn't part of that kind of social background [either]. And when I was hanging out with [the White, Southern students] ... they would talk about hunting and guns and trucks and stuff like that. And I don't care for that stuff at all.

So when I would hang out with them and they'd be talking about all this stuff, and I had no idea what's going on. And it wouldn't be fun for me. But [with Sammy], we would talk about like music and stuff like that that we liked, and sports, and we talked about girls. ... So it was more what I was used to and I felt comfortable, so we just kind of hung out because of that.

Sammy served as an acculturative sherpa for Dan because he had grown up in the U.S. and therefore had a better understanding than Dan of American university culture, yet as a first-generation American as well as a member of a marginalized racial group, Sammy also understood what it was like to feel like a cultural outsider. Perhaps the best sherpas are those that “live outside the village,” like Sammy; they occupy a culturally liminal space with one foot inside and one foot outside of the culture, facilitating their ability to make connections to others both within and outside of that culture. Rick provides an example that seems to support this idea:

Since I grew up in Indonesia, coming back here [to the U.S.] wasn't too difficult; since I'm the youngest of five, I've seen all my siblings come back. But it's just an adjustment period. It took a little bit to get used to the U.S., the way of life here. And I think [Alex] served as one of those people who helped me feel at home here. I don't know if that had to do with – since he grew up in the Romanian community, [which] from what I understand is very tight-knit. But at the same time he's had the American experience. So I guess I could kind of relate to that. My school [in Indonesia] is predominately American, but I guess there are differences between the Americans

who were there and Americans here in the U.S., like cultural differences and things like that. Since [Alex] had that kind of same sort of thing, where it's like a tight-knit Romanian community but still here in the U.S., he could see kind of both sides.

Caroline's friendship with Lily also provides an example of the acculturative dimension of Exploring Other Cultures. Caroline helped her friend Lily, an exchange student from Taiwan, adjust to attending an American university by helping Lily enhance her fluency with English:

Especially when I first met [Lily], her English really wasn't as good as it is now. Her English has actually improved quite a bit since I've known her. But when I first met her, I really had to make sure that I spoke slowly and clearly. She would ask me what words meant. Which I didn't mind doing any of these things, because I understood. I studied two other languages, so I understand that speaking slowly and clearly is one of the best things you can do.

For Caroline and Lily, however, the acculturative dimension of Exploring Other Cultures was not a prominent feature of their friendship; in fact, as I discuss below, Caroline learned as much if not more about Lily's culture than Lily learned from Caroline about American culture.

Bidirectional versus unidirectional cultural exploration. Exploring Other Cultures can be either a bidirectional process or a unidirectional process. In other words, the process may be characterized by both friends exploring each other's cultures, or the exploration may predominately flow in a single direction, with one friend serving as the primary explorer and

receiving most of the associated learning. Interestingly, it did not seem that this dimension differentially affects friendship development or sustainment; within my sample of participants, there were examples of unidirectional and bidirectional exploration among those who had sustained their friendships as well as those whose friendships had ended.

For participants with international students as friends, the cultural exploration was often unidirectional, with the American students learning about their friend's cultural traditions (especially food, music, and dance). Erica, who resided on campus in a living-learning community that paired international students with American roommates, discussed the dimension of Exploring Other Cultures:

It's just nice to have so many friends because you can learn about different cultures without necessarily having to go there. ... So it's nice to be able to partake in culture without actually having to spend the money to go there. Because most people don't have the ability to travel. So it's nice to have the different cultures come to you kind of.

Anastasia's friendship with George, which I discussed earlier in this section as an example of the properties of Exploring Other Cultures, provides another example of unidirectional cultural exploration in a friendship between an American student and an international student. However, Caroline's experience with her friend Lily was bidirectional. As I note above, Caroline helped Lily improve her English, and in return Caroline was

... introduced to new people, new foods, new music, and a new language thanks to [Lily]. I feel that if I was to travel to her country, that I would not only have a friend

to visit, but that I would be less afraid of culture shock because I would already know a little bit of what to expect.

Just as unidirectional cultural exploration frequently (but not exclusively) characterized friendships between American students and international students in my study, it was also a common feature of friendships in which one member identified racially as White. In these friendships, the tendency was for the friend who identified as White to explore the friend's culture, but rarely did the friend of Color explore the White friend's culture. The quote from Max that opened this section illustrates how for some participants, an interracial friendship involves bringing both friends' cultures into the friendship. But he also expresses uncertainty about whether his friend Nelson, who is African American, has learned much about Max's (White) culture from their friendship. Brynn, who also identifies as White, expressed a similar sentiment in her journal responses, sharing that she's learned more about her friend Brittany's African American culture through their friendship but that Brittany probably hasn't learned much from her:

... my friend has grown up in predominantly white, upper class surroundings so [because] she has been exposed to white culture her whole life, our friendship hasn't been contributed significantly to her understanding of my race.

Charles shared similar feelings about his friend Alisha, who is African American, in his journal responses as well:

From her point of view, I think she holds many friendly relationships with people of my racial group [White], and hasn't really learned much from me about my group.

(Unfortunately, because Alisha didn't respond to this journal prompt, I can't compare her response to Charles's.) Max, Brynn, and Charles are all White; Brynn and Charles both discussed growing up in homogeneous, majority-White communities and attending majority White schools. And although Max attended relatively diverse K-12 schools and lived in a heterogeneous community before coming to college, he never had an African American friend prior to his friendship with Nelson. Their friends, in contrast, are all students of Color who have had extensive prior exposure to White individuals.

A possible explanation for this pattern of unidirectional cultural exploration when one friend is White may be due to the fact that in the U.S. as well as at Southeastern University, Whites are the majority racial group, and as McIntosh (1992) and Tatum (2013) discuss, one privilege that accrues to members of the majority racial group is the freedom to not have to learn about cultures other than one's own. Therefore, many of the White students—especially those who came from homogeneous pre-college environments, but also those who had greater pre-college exposure to diversity—lacked much knowledge about the racial groups to which their friends of Color belonged, and as a result they had much more to learn through their friendships. In contrast, most of the students of Color who were friends with White students already had extensive exposure to and knowledge about White culture, because of the cultural prominence of Whiteness in American society. As Tatum (2013) notes, members of subordinate cultures “are very well informed” about the dominant culture... [because] the dominant worldview has saturated the culture for all to learn. ... However, dominant access

to information about the subordinates is often limited to stereotypical depictions of ‘the other’” (p. 8).

An excerpt from Bryan’s interview exemplifies the unidirectional exploration common in friendships between a White student and a student of Color, as well as the way in which White students may draw upon friendships with students of Color as opportunities to explore and question the prevalent stereotypes about the friends’ racial groups. In this excerpt, Bryan discussed asking his friend Erik about a common stereotype White people (Bryan’s racial group) have about African Americans (Erik’s racial group):

[Tara: So you said something a moment ago I want to go back to—you said something like, “He offers that perspective or I can talk to him about those sorts of things.” Can you give me an example?] Well, for a while he was dating a White girl and we were kind of joking about the whole stereotype that Black men date White women. And we were talking about like what the attitude is for that within the Black community as opposed to the White community. And I think he said he’s never really had a problem with it. I think that was basically just what he said. [Tara: So perspectives on the Black community and those sorts of things you may have not been exposed to.] Yeah. [Tara: Does he ask you the same the questions about your experiences as a member of the white community?] Not really. I really get the benefit from that because I grew up in a mostly White town and he grew up in [a major metropolitan area], which is pretty diverse.

Among my participants, there were two exceptions to the pattern of unidirectional cultural exploration for interracial friendships in which one friend was White. The first exception was Dan's friendship with Sammy. Although Dan identified as White, he grew up outside the U.S., which may account for why he and Sammy seemed to engage in bidirectional cultural exploration. The second exception was Kandace's friendship with Jill; because Kandace had grown up in predominately African American environment (her cultural group), coming to Southeastern University was her first experience of a predominately White environment, and as a result she sought to learn about Jill's experiences as a White person. Overall, however, it seems that most students of Color (excepting those who grew up in cultural enclave communities, such as Kandace, and those who grew up abroad, such as Rick) have been learning about White people all their lives and as a result may have much less to learn through an interracial friendship with a White person. However, as I discuss next, whether or not the friend who identifies as White has had prior friends from another racial group may also affect the direction and amount of cultural exploration and leaning.

Pre-college exposure to diversity. A final source of variation in the process of Exploring Other Cultures resulted from participants' pre-college exposure to diversity, especially whether they had had interracial friends prior to college. For example, Bryan expressed in his journal responses that he doesn't feel that he or his friend have learned much about each other's cultures through their friendship, but only because they both had prior interracial friendships:

I do not especially feel that my friendship has helped me understand the African-American community more than I did before we met. I have never felt uncomfortable spending time with African-Americans. I also don't feel that my friend has learned a lot about white people as a result of being friends with me. We both have had friendships with people of one another's race prior to meeting each other.

Bryan's experience suggests that previously having a friend from a specific racial group may mean there's less to be learned from a subsequent friendship with a member of that cultural group; as a result, cultural exploration was backgrounded in his friendship with Erik. Sloan expressed similar beliefs about cultural learning in her friendship with Ashley. Even though Ashley identifies as White and Sloan identifies as multiracial and African American, she feels that Ashley hasn't learned much about Sloan's racial group because Ashley has had previous friendships with African Americans:

I feel like [Ashley] has learned a little more about me because she feels comfortable asking questions she is curious about, but overall I don't think that there is a huge difference in the comfort level or knowledge level for either one of us. We both hung out with mixed friend groups before hand and were pretty comfortable around anyone.

Alternatively, if the interracial friendship is novel to the friends (i.e., "I've never had a friend of this race before"), the friends may engage in more cultural exploration, and more learning results, because there is simply more to learn. In addition, students who have not previously had a friend of another race may have more curiosity about the friend's culture,

and therefore greater motivation to engage in cultural exploration, because the friend's culture is novel to them. In these friendships, then, cultural exploration will likely be foregrounded. Brynn, who had not had an African American friend prior to becoming friends with Brittany, demonstrates this sort of curiosity when she asks Brittany about how she takes care of her hair, in an example below:

I think it's just like the weird little differences that come up sometimes. It's not even awkward anymore, but I know when we were first friends, just one thing that comes up that's so random, but her hair, African American people's hair versus my hair. Like me and one of my other good friends, she's White, too, and we're always just like, what? Like we're always so confused how she has to wrap her hair at night and get her hair permed. I'm just like, I don't understand. And when I spent the night with her, just like weird little family things that are just different from my home, but I know that could just be – it's not necessarily race either. But I think there are just subtle differences. It's not bad; it's more just like a learning experience. I know that can be awkward for people that they just don't want to address any kind of differences, so I just will ask. I'm not scared. [Tara: ... So when you ask about something like this, so maybe if you're kind of asking about how she takes care of her hair, how does she respond?] Usually she'll laugh and she'll just be like, "You're weird. Why don't you know?" But then she'll just tell me. She's never offended. She'll just explain it and I'm just like, "That's interesting. Okay." I would never know.

In addition to affecting whether cultural exploration is backgrounded or foregrounded within an interracial friendship, pre-college diversity exposure may also differentially shape the means of Exploring Other Cultures in which the friends engage. For example, my participants' experiences suggest that the visa-sherpa dynamic is more common in which one friend has had less pre-college exposure to diversity than the other. Charles and Alisha's friendship exemplifies this situation; Charles grew up having little interaction with people outside of his own cultural group, while Alisha attended diverse K-12 schools and had friends from other cultural groups prior to college. As a result, Alisha served as a sherpa for Charles in bringing him to events associated with her culture. In the same way, pre-college diversity exposure may also influence whether the cultural exploration is bidirectional or unidirectional; if one friend has limited exposure to the other's cultural group, exploration will likely be unidirectional. Charles and Alisha's friendship is an example of this effect, as is Natasha and Inga's friendship, in which cultural exploration was primarily characterized by Natasha learning more about Inga's Christian faith.

Figure 14 summarizes the properties and dimensions of Exploring Other Cultures.

Figure 14. Properties and dimensions of Exploring Other Cultures.

Conditions

Three conditions are associated with the process of Exploring Other Cultures. One of these is a required condition: Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” which is another of the four central processes involved in developing and sustaining interracial friendship between college students. The other two represent conditions that facilitate Exploring Other Cultures: (1) Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference (which is also a central process of interracial friendship) and (2) the concept of Exploratory Orientation.

Required conditions. The process of Exploring Other Cultures only has one required condition: the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.”

Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.” Feeling able to be authentic with, and having mutual respect for, one’s friend, both of which occur as a result of the central friendship process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” are required conditions for Exploring Other Cultures. Without authenticity, respect, and trust, cultural exploration can only take place at a superficial level, if it takes place at all. To be able to fully explore each other’s cultures at the level that facilitates relational connection and friendship sustainment, the friends must feel they can bring their whole, authentic selves to the exploration process—questions, hesitations, assumptions, and all—and to be met with respect in return. For example, in her pair interview with Natasha, Inga discussed how the two of them have created space within their friendship to allow for authentic curiosity about their cultural differences (specifically their religious differences), facilitated by honest and respectful conversation:

...respect of knowledge especially, like if there’s something I do and she doesn’t understand or that she does and I don’t understand there’s definitely space to ask and question it because not every religion you’re going to know specific things about, so it’s refreshing to ask and see what something really means as opposed to something you’ve heard from hearsay or you’ve seen from personal experience. Look just through other people’s eyes. And another aspect of respect is just looking past it in regards that it’s not just the whole person. That’s just a part of their lives. That’s just a part of who they are, not all encompassing who they are.

In the context of a close interracial friendship, sufficient trust has developed that allows the friends to discuss the differences between them without fear of offending each other or seeming ignorant or disrespectful for asking.

The above example from Brynn, in which she described asking Brittany about how she takes care of her hair, also illustrates how growing closer to Brittany allowed her to ask about things that she (as a White person) had never understood about African Americans (the racial group with which Brittany identifies). Because of the trust and respect that has developed between them as a result of their friendship, Brynn feels free to ask Brittany questions that she would not feel comfortable asking someone with whom she did not have a close relationship, for fear of causing offense.

Conversely, Exploring Other Cultures can also facilitate the cultivation of trust. As I discuss earlier in this chapter in the section on the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” the experience of stepping outside one’s comfort zone to explore another’s culture often requires vulnerability on the part of the exploring friend; s/he may not be sure how s/he will be received by other members of her friend’s cultural group, or s/he may fear causing offense or doing something wrong. However, receiving support and respect from his/her the friend during the exploration process can reinforce the trust between them and establish the relational security that “seals” their silent contract.

Facilitating conditions. Two conditions facilitate the process of Exploring Other Cultures. The first of these is the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. The second facilitating condition is when one or both friends possess(es)

Exploratory Orientation. I next discuss how each of these conditions facilitates the process of Exploring Other Cultures.

Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. The process of Exploring Other Cultures both facilitates and is facilitated by the central friendship process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. In my discussion of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference earlier in this chapter, I provide extensive examples of how connecting through a shared interest in music is an especially common and powerful strategy for embracing similarity. Connecting through music can also be a meaningful way to explore each other's cultures because a shared interest in music (or in other forms of expression, such as art, dance, or film) enables friends to both embrace similarity (their shared interest) while also exploring their cultural differences. In his interview, Max discussed his beliefs about cultural exploration—specifically stepping outside of one's own interests to be open to and embrace others' cultural expressions—and its role in facilitating interracial friendships:

I think art and especially music, because music is the most popular form of art, I think is a key in just getting people to understand each other better. I really think it is. Because everybody listens to music. Everybody likes some kind of music and everybody has a reason why they like some kind of music, or how it relates to them, or how it impacts them, you know. And I think that we need to also be just understanding of why that happens and why people relate or identify with a certain type of music and what that means for them. Rather than just focusing on our own

interests or connecting with people who have the same interests as us, you know. ... There's so much out there to understand and know, and I just think that through art and music and expression, that's like a fundamental way on how we connect with each other and I see that. I see people all the time talking about music and how they connect with or how they liked this song.

The ability for music to facilitate cultural exploration in the way Max described relates to Patel's (2012) concept of appreciative knowledge. Although his concept is grounded in faith, and specifically the way in which honoring the shared experience of identifying with a faith tradition can facilitate respectful and appreciative explorations of faith traditions other than one's own, I see a parallel to the way in which music (and other forms of cultural expression) can facilitate the process of Exploring Other Cultures through honoring a shared appreciation of music as a form of expression.

In addition to music, my participants also recounted exploring each other's cultures through discussing faith, values, and goals. For example, Sloan related how she and her friend Ashley, who is Christian, have discussions about spirituality and faith; while they come from different faith backgrounds, they share an interest in exploring such topics and support each other's spiritual growth:

I didn't grow up in church, and so while I've been in college, I've been trying to find my faith, and I got baptized a few months ago, and [Ashley] was there for that. But she did, and she's a religious person, and I find it very – it's so cool to be able to just call up, or we'll have these two-, three-hour long conversations about faith and God.

And what it means to do this, and should we be drinking four glasses of wine tonight, and it's just really cool. ... So I think that that's one of the huge benefits is having somebody who we can have those conversations, and we can question things like, oh, well, why is this, why does murder exist, if – you know, these things. And we question those things. We went and talked to the pastor together a few times. We probably brought up some topics we shouldn't have with the pastor. [Laughter] And we just throw it out there. We were like, "Can we do this?" And he was like, "Whoa." But it's just nice to be able to talk about that with people because I think for people our age, like 20-year-olds don't really have those conversations. You don't hear people, other than the [quad] preacher who's screaming at people, like really having in-depth theoretical and theological conversations. So that's nice that we can do that.

Overall, developing appreciative knowledge through exploring and sharing their cultures with each other helps friends discover what they have in common—the underlying values or beliefs that their cultures, or they themselves as individuals, share—and in this way Exploring Other Cultures and Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference are mutually facilitating processes within an interracial friendship.

Exploratory Orientation. Exploratory Orientation, or an openness to new experiences and perspectives, is another condition facilitating the process of Exploring Other Cultures. Although I discuss Exploratory Orientation in more detail later in this chapter, I highlight here the primary ways in which Exploratory Orientation facilitates Exploring Other Cultures. Students who possess Exploratory Orientation are more inclined to seek out and engage in

new experiences that challenge their assumptions (the action property of Exploring Other Cultures), and they are also more open to the learning that results from those experiences (the learning property). Students demonstrating Exploratory Orientation also more willing and able to step outside of their comfort zones in order to pursue their affinity for novelty and challenge.

Anastasia provides one example of the facilitating effect of Exploratory Orientation on cultural exploration in the context of her friendship with George. Anastasia took a year off before starting college to live in Ukraine; as a result, she clearly shows evidence of having Exploratory Orientation at the time she began her freshman year at Southeastern University. Yet even though Anastasia exhibits a greater predisposition than most of her peers to step out of her comfort zone to explore other cultures, she still credited George with “giv[ing] me the courage to try out for a Latin dance group,” an experience through which she learned more about George’s culture. Dan also described his openness to and appreciation of the new cultural experiences to which his friend Sammy exposes him:

[Sammy] exposes me to a lot of like different culture. He’s like part African, his parents came from Africa. And, so when I go over to his house we eat all this African food. ... And also a lot of times, there’s certain like values he has that he kind of has to abide by just because of tradition and stuff, and you know, that’s interesting to see and I respect them obviously. I just get more aware of what’s around me. I don’t like being stuck to one kind of way of thinking, one kind of way of seeing the broader kind of aspect of things. And he’s introduced me to a lot of cool people too. So I’ve met a

lot of people from different backgrounds as well. And new topics like soccer and stuff I didn't know much about, he would like teach me and inform me about.

Dan's Exploratory Orientation facilitates his and Sammy's ability to Explore Other Cultures within their friendship, and this exploration, in turn, enhances their relational connection and helps to sustain their friendship.

Consequences

When friends engage in the process of Exploring Other Cultures—a central process involved in developing and sustaining their interracial friendships—two consequences may result: composing the friendship story and converging of interests. I describe each of these consequences next and provide illustrative examples from my data.

Composing the friendship story. One possible, positive relational consequence of Exploring Other Cultures is a concept I've termed "composing the friendship story." One of the hallmarks of having a close friend—in my own experience as well as a phenomenon I identified in my data—is the mutual construction of a narrative or story about the friendship. It's not just having shared experiences that develops and sustains the friendship, but the process of creating a memory from each shared experience, which involves constructing a story about it and re-telling that story to each other and to others. The story is dynamic; it is written and re-written over time as the friendship evolves and new experiences and memories are added. Shared experiences, such as those that occur through the process of Exploring Other Cultures, provide the raw material with which to build the friendship story. Many of the actions in which participants engaged to explore their cultures together led to deeper

connection and became shared memories and, ultimately, part of their friendship story. As the friendship deepens its story grows, helping to sustain the friendship.

Caroline provides an example of how exploring her friend Lily's culture led them to share an experience by which she will always remember their friendship:

We both really like things like tea. That's kind of also weird, but I have oolong tea in my room and it's from Taiwan, and she was looking at it and telling me about it. And I have this mug that has Chinese on it, and she was reading it and telling me about what the colors meant and everything. So we just really connected through that as well. Because she'll always tell me that my things are so Chinese. ... we have a lot of tea parties, if you haven't guessed by now. I think that the really memorable moment for me was actually the first one that we had, because she cooked for us, and she cooked – it was just like noodles and a whole bunch of vegetables in there and rice. And I made the tea. And it was just like a good, like, getting to know each other because we weren't as close then. So we just kind of sat down and we had dinner and we talked. And it was really nice.

Inga also discussed a moment of relational connection through cultural exploration, which led to a deepening of her friendship with Natasha:

And just this [past] Sunday I had a gospel choir concert. I'm in [Southeastern University's Black Gospel Choir] and about two weeks before the concert, I had to sell tickets and Natasha and another girl who was an atheist was one of the first two people that asked for a ticket. And at first I was kind of caught off guard because I

didn't know if they would be comfortable with that. But they insisted and they said, "We'll support you," and even though they don't know this, I was really touched by that because I didn't know how they would react. And I didn't think that – not that they wouldn't want to support me or hear me sing, but just [because it] encompass[ed] religion of mine that they would [not] want to go. I was really happy when they told me they wanted to go.

In their pair interview, Natasha and Inga elaborated on this moment, which is clearly one of their most treasured friendship stories:

Inga: ... I still had a little bit of apprehension, like should I really sell them tickets [to the concert]? You don't understand how happy I was when – they were the first ones to buy.

Natasha: Well, we wanted to support you rather than – [the other friend] and I are both – I'd rightly say that we're both atheists, but we wanted to support Inga as a person, not like the whole establishment, I guess.

Inga: That was fine too. I was just happy with the support that you gave and it was like, they're there for me.

Shared experiences and the memories that develop from them do not exclusively occur through the process of Exploring Other Cultures; they also occur in other moments of a friendship. However, some of the most meaningful memories my participants recounted—the ones that represented significant chapters in their friendship stories—were those that

occurred through exploring each other's cultures, demonstrating the importance of Exploring Other Cultures in sustaining interracial friendships among college students.

Converging of interests. Another possible relational consequence of Exploring Other Cultures is a concept I call "converging of interests," in which the friends come to develop, through cultural exploration and being exposed to new ideas and experiences, shared interests that they previously may not have had. While interest convergence is not always a consequence of Exploring Other Cultures, it's a possible consequence. When it does occur, it facilitates the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, leading to deeper relational connection. Charles provides an example of how Alisha has introduced him to elements of her culture that he has now come to embrace:

Oh, and there's definitely some things that we've done together that I wouldn't have done, and this might bring up the race thing or whatever, but she took me to a hip hop show at the [University] Cinema. I mean, I was somewhat interested in it but I would've never found out about it or been self-initiated enough to go to it or whatever. And there was the [Pan-African Center] puts on so many events, some of them even I've been interested in that I brought her to, like the [Black History Month celebration] in February. ... I thought it was really interesting and I invited her to come with me. And so there's definitely like, I hate to say stereotype, but things that are associated with certain groups of people that we both kind of like connected with through our friendship, I would say. ... I've definitely been more open to all opportunities. So like, I don't think I would've been interested in that [Black History

Month event] if it wasn't for being friends with Alisha or being involved in the opportunities. Like some of the activities I do, I do service, I'm in service organizations for rural communities, and Read to Lead is all about reading with under-educated children. So I've been open, I've been exposed to a lot of opportunities, and that's somewhat attributed to Alisha and the things she's interested in that kind of just gave me the sense of curiosity, I guess, to go out and explore things.

While Alisha has served as a sherpa to introduce Charles to things associated with African American culture (her culture), Charles's interests have also grown as a result of their friendship; he's become interested in things such as the Black History Month event that he wouldn't have considered going to prior to becoming friends with Alisha, and he's even brought her to some events sponsored by Southeastern University's Pan-African Center. In other words, Charles's interests have converged to some degree with Alisha's as a result of exploring her culture. In this way, interest convergence through cultural exploration may facilitate the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, as the friend come to develop and embrace new shared interests. It may also facilitate achievement of the outcome Valuing Interculturalism, as the cultural exploration process leads the friends to not only learn about, but also to value and seek, intercultural experiences and learning opportunities.

Researcher Reflection

My early analytic conceptualizations of this category focused on the visa-sherpa dynamic. In my conceptual memo on this category, I reflected upon how my own experiences may have influenced the development of this concept:

This idea of the “cultural visa” connects with my own positionality in two ways. First, I obviously just returned [in May 2015] from a trip abroad (to southern Africa), where I often find myself feeling foreign or standing out, so there are elements of my own experiences and feelings with international travel reflected here. Second, I think back to my first year of college when I was granted “honorary Brown person” status due to having a number of Indian American close friends, and invited to come to the Indian Students Association meetings, which I always refused because I thought people there would impugn my motives (and assume I was artificially trying to be one of them or was intruding on their private cultural space). Unlike Charles, I was willing to transcend cultural boundaries in my interpersonal relationships but less willing to do so when it involved traveling to another cultural land (space), mostly because I was afraid of how those who rightfully occupied that space (“native residents” of that space) would perceive me. But some of the participants in my study (including Charles, Anastasia, and others) don’t seem to have these concerns. I wonder why, or what leads them to feel more comfortable as a “foreigner” than I was.

I continued to think about the ideas I raised in this reflection as I developed and saturated this category, and eventually I determined that while the visa-sherpa relationship was a dimension of the process of Exploring Other Cultures, it was only way one in which participants engaged in this process and it did not broadly reflect their experiences. Reflecting upon my own experiences helped me to recognize where they might be inappropriately influencing my analytic interpretations (in this case, by focusing too much upon the visa-sherpa dynamic in conceptualizing this category), and through theoretical sampling I was able to adjust my interpretations to better reflect my participants' experiences.

Summary

Exploring Other Cultures is a central process of interracial friendship development and sustainment as it fosters relational connection between the friends. Through exploring each other's cultures, the friends develop appreciative knowledge about each other, both as individuals and as members of their cultural groups; they may also come to abandon any stereotypes or prejudices they previously held about each other's cultures (the learning property of the process). Engaging in cultural exploration together (the action property of this process) also allows them to share experiences that foster relational connection to develop and sustain their friendships. As a process, Exploring Other Cultures, is affected by, or may vary along, five dimensions: (1) whether cultural differences are foregrounded or backgrounded in the friendship; (2) the "visa-sherpa" dynamic, in which one friend guides the other friend in exploring his/her culture; (3) if one friend helps the other to acculturate;

(4) whether cultural exploration and learning are bidirectional or unidirectional; and (5) the two friends' pre-college exposure to diversity. One of the other central processes of interracial friendship, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a "Silent Contract" is a required condition for Exploring Other Cultures, while the central process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is a facilitating condition. Exploratory Orientation is a second facilitating condition, as students who have an affinity for new experiences and perspectives are more inclined to engage in Exploring Other Cultures. Finally, two consequences can result from Exploring Other Cultures: (1) composing the friendship story and (2) converging of interests. Both of these consequences help to sustain the friendship.

Facilitating Condition: Exploratory Orientation

And I made this goal for myself ... go to all these club meetings. Go to festivals downtown, go to festivals mainly at [Southeastern University], though, anything. But even if it's a club that you don't seem interested in, it might be the people you might get along the best with. Because for example, I now go every week to the LGBTQA, and although it's people I can relate with, kind of, and I understand – I want to learn more about it, it's like the people in the group are not people I get along with the best. But maybe, if I went to some engineering education club that I wouldn't think initially that I'd be interested in, it's like people I really bond with, and I'd become interested in something else.

– Maggie

While I have discussed other facilitating conditions within the sections on the categories they facilitate, one facilitating condition is worthy of a separate discussion because is a category grounded within my data. As I defined the term earlier in this chapter, a *category* is a conceptual ideas central to the process or phenomenon explained by a substantive theory, and it is composed of multiple concepts that define it and the theoretical idea it represents. In this way, Exploratory Orientation is the only facilitating condition within my substantive theory that rose to a sufficient level of theoretical significance and conceptual abstraction to make it a category; other facilitating conditions, such as living together or developing memories through shared experiences represented only single concepts within my data (i.e., they have only a one defining property, which is the concept itself) and therefore do not qualify as categories worthy of discussion outside of the process they facilitate.

Exploratory Orientation represents a learning disposition or orientation and is a condition that facilitates (but is not required for) college students' development and sustainment of interracial friendships. Exploratory Orientation represents an affinity for experiences, people, and ideas that are novel, exciting, or challenging—in other words, that create some level of disequilibrium for the individual. Students who demonstrate Exploratory Orientation value and seek difference—although not necessarily racial or cultural difference—for the challenge and learning opportunities it provides them. Exploratory Orientation does not necessitate that a student has had prior exposure to diversity or has developed a minimal level of multicultural competence; indeed, in some cases a *lack* of pre-

college exposure to diversity can lead a student to have Exploratory Orientation. In addition, some participants showed evidence of having come to college with Exploratory Orientation, while others seemed to have developed it through their interracial friendships; this suggests that Exploratory Orientation can be an outcome as well as a facilitating condition of interracial friendship. Generally speaking, students who have Exploratory Orientation develop interracial friendships through seeking diversity in their interpersonal relationships, whether they're seeking cultural diversity specifically or diversity of perspectives generally. Exploratory Orientation also facilitates the sustainment of interracial friendship because of the value students with Exploratory Orientation place on the learning and growth that results from a relationship that challenges their assumptions and perspectives.

In the sections that follow, I elaborate upon the properties and dimensions of Exploratory Orientation and provide examples from my data. I also discuss how Exploratory Orientation facilitates the development and sustainment of interracial friendships and how in some cases it may be also be an outcome of interracial friendship. I conclude with a short statement of my positionality relative to the category of Exploratory Orientation, to aid my readers in understanding how my experiences and values may have shaped my development of this category. Figure 15 illustrates the facilitating relationship between Exploratory Orientation and three of the four central processes of interracial development and sustainment.

Figure 15. A model of the facilitating condition Exploratory Orientation.

Properties

There are two properties of Exploratory Orientation. The first is a disposition for curiosity and learning about the world around you, or an “outward orientation” (personality component). This curiosity may manifest as an openness to or desire for having one’s own perspective or assumptions challenged. The second is a willingness to take risks and step outside of your comfort zone to explore the world around you, whether it’s “just asking” and not being held back by the worry of offending someone, or going to hip-hop concerts, or teaching someone about your own culture while learning about theirs (behavioral component).

Brynn exemplifies the two properties of Exploratory Orientation in the following excerpt from her interview in which she discussed her goals in coming to college:

... my brother is a freshman this year in college, and I just told him, literally join everything. Talk to every single person you meet. You never know who you're gonna be friends with. You can't judge a book by a cover, as cliché as that is. I know that really was my goal freshman year, because I was so nervous about talking to people and I was crying my first night to my sister on the phone. I'm like, "I don't have friends." She's like, "Brynn, you've been there 12 hours. Stop." And I was just like, "But I just want friends." Because no one from my high school came here, so I was all by myself. So that's really what I had to do for myself. I just had to talk to people on my hall. Had to talk to people in class. Join random clubs that I never would have considered. I didn't even know there was such a thing as service fraternities. I joined that my freshman year because I'd done service in high school and really enjoyed it, and then made a friend who told me about it, and that's been great because that's another way. It's such a diverse group of people in that. I think it's really just putting yourself out there.

Brynn realized quickly that she would need to step outside of her comfort zone in order to make friends in college, and as a result she intentionally sought out new experiences that she “never would have considered” in order to find “a diverse group of people.”

Maggie also provided an example of believing in the value of reaching out to others different from herself, even in—or perhaps especially in—situations where she's not surrounded by people she already knows:

I think it's just people's openness to talking with people in classes. I mean, classes as an example, but at events or in the dining hall, you're sharing a physical space. You might as well use it to meet people. So if I'm being paired up in a group, I always think, oh, you know what? I'll choose people who look very different than me, or the people closest to me, or whatever, because they'll have different perspectives, or just randomly. I'm not gonna choose the people I know in the room, necessarily, and then you begin to network. And then because – the reason my group [a feminist student organization] combined with the ISA [Islamic Students Association] for one event is because I knew one of the people in charge of ISA. And the same with the International Studies group. I know the woman in charge of it, so I'm like, okay, we'll just mix together the groups, and I think it's really important.

For Maggie, it seems as though talking to people different from herself whom she doesn't yet know may not, in fact, require her to step outside of her comfort zone or take risks from her own perspective; it seems as though this behavior is normal and comfortable for her.

Arguably, then, the second property of Exploratory Orientation—taking risks or stepping outside one's comfort zone to explore—may represent what would involve some risk or create some discomfort for a “typical” college student, but not necessarily for a student who has Exploratory Orientation. Indeed, the relatively low rates of interracial interaction and friendship on most college campuses suggest that most college students are unlikely to “choose people who look very different than me ... because they'll have different

perspectives,” as Maggie does, because of the potential discomfort and risk they perceive to be involved in interacting with culturally different peers.

Dimensions

There are three dimensions along which students who demonstrate Exploratory Orientation may vary. The first two dimensions are spectrums: (1) actively seeking versus being receptive to alternate perspectives and (2) belief about the role of difference in relational connection. The third dimension concerns the effect of varying levels of pre-college exposure to diversity on Exploratory Orientation.

Two spectrums: Seeking alternate perspectives and belief about the role of difference in relational connection. These two defining properties of Exploratory Orientation, as discussed above, work together to lead students who have Exploratory Orientation to actively seek opportunities to engage across different perspectives, or, in weaker cases, to be more receptive to or to prefer perspectives that are different from (versus similar to) one’s own. This spectrum represents the first dimension of Exploratory Orientation along which participants who exhibit it may vary: actively seeking versus being receptive to alternate perspectives. In addition, students with Exploratory Orientation do not fear that relational disconnection will result from their differences; in stronger cases, they may feel that engaging across differences actually facilitates relational connection. These two beliefs about the role of differences in relational connection represent the second dimension of Exploratory Orientation: belief about the role of difference in relational connection.

Anastasia provides an excellent illustration of these first two dimensions of

Exploratory Orientation:

We always talk about how we can change the world to make it better. [George] has this really Darwinist theory that like the bad or the not strong like – how do I want to say this – every time he describes it, it sounds horrible so I don't want to say it like he says it. Basically, the weak will die out and that we should just let that happen instead of like keeping people alive for longer or whatever. And we should let the academically strong rise up and stuff. So I am on the other side, so I debate him and I say, "Well, by your standards I would be one that would fall." And so he's like, "That's not true because you've been given money and by having money you have essentially power." And so this debate goes on and on because we're just both opposites. [Tara: So when you're having this sort of conversation when you're both on opposite sides, how do these conversations make you feel?] Well, it makes you think. It makes you defend what you believe or what you think you believe. And maybe it makes you think about the other side a little bit. What he's saying, maybe that's true. So, I don't know. It just makes you think about what you've been taught. And that's something college has taught me as well. Just question everything that you've been taught up to now because it was kind of like force fed down your throat and you didn't really think about it.

She demonstrates an openness to having her own perspective challenged, and she actively seeks opportunities to discuss and debate their different perspectives with her friend George.

She's not offended by the fact that she and George have different perspectives, not does she consider conflict over these different perspectives a threat to their friendship (i.e., a potential source of disconnection). Rather, she embraces the opportunity to engage with her friend across their different perspectives, knowing that by both defending her own perspective and considering George's, she learns and grows in her understanding of the world, questioning "everything [she's] been taught up to now."

While Anastasia engages in debate with her friend George—and actively seeks and welcomes opportunities to do so—Natasha, by contrast exhibits the other side of this dimension; she is receptive to the different perspective, especially about religion, that her friend Inga provides:

[Inga] brings a different perspective to things. Like I'm an Atheist and she's a – I don't know what branch of Christianity she partakes in, but she's Christian, so it brings me a good perspective about Christians. Not that I have a bad perception of Christianity, but sometimes people you see like in the [quad] preaching, like today I saw another dude spouting some ignorant stuff that wasn't related to Christianity. ... she's made me a lot more tolerant of Christianity, which sounds terrible to say, but she's made me more wise about the different aspects of Christianity and conservatism and stuff like that. [Tara: Is that something that you guys talk about a lot?] I don't think it comes up a lot, but it definitely does come up sometimes, like Christianity, non-Christianity, like religion in general I guess. I think it really helps with like

broadening my perspective and making me less ignorant, I guess, of other people. So I'm grateful for that.

Natasha appreciates that her discussions about religion with Inga challenge her assumptions about Christianity and she is receptive to Inga's perspective. However, having someone to challenge her assumptions and provide a new perspective about religion was not a reason she developed a friendship with Inga, nor do debate or discussion about their different perspectives feature prominently in their relationship, as they do for Anastasia and George.

Caroline also provides an example of the second, relational, dimension of Exploratory Orientation; like Anastasia, she feels that having a friend from a cultural background other than her own adds value to their relationship:

My close friends are often of different ethnicities and they have been since probably early high school. I wanted to continue that because they teach me a lot. And I really like seeing their perspective. And those are the ones who I really treasure their friendship the most.

Her belief about the value of intercultural friendships contributed to her desire to develop a friendship with Lily, an exchange student from Taiwan, even though she knew they would only have two semesters together before Lily would return home. Similarly, Charles provides more detail about why he values a friendship with someone who doesn't share his own perspectives:

It's just like a whole different world in terms of like the high school [Alisha] comes from and the place she comes from down in South Carolina just – she's come from a

totally different social situation than I have and we kind of – I think we almost celebrate those differences, and like it's interesting to both of us to kind of figure out what was different about how we had the first 18 years of whatever, whether it be life or family or education. ... Having someone that comes from a completely different background as me kind of allows me to reflect a lot more. So I guess when, if I try to have a conversation about what, how I deal with something or what I'm dealing with, with someone who is just like me, they would have the same solutions as what I would have. So they would have the same, they would just be, it'd be like talking to a mirror almost. But to talk to someone who's completely different with me, they have new perceptions about it or they have new ways of tackling the problem. So I think that's been a huge benefit, that it's just a way to get a new idea of advice and a new way of thinking. That's probably been why I've been so attracted to this friendship, like just I know how I would handle something, but how would Alisha handle something? What would Alisha do, I guess? So it's a whole new idea of going out and getting advice or getting information about something.

For Charles, the differences between his own background and Alisha's—which includes their different racial backgrounds as well as the different areas of the U.S. in which they each grew up—are not things to be negotiated or worked around but rather are sources of enrichment and learning. The different perspective Alisha provides gives Charles an opportunity to reflect on his own assumptions and ways of thinking, as he discussed in the excerpt above, leading to growth. Charles's friendship with Alisha has also led him to become more active

in seeking alternate perspectives and learning opportunities (evidencing the first dimension of Exploratory Orientation), as I discuss in more detail in the section on the outcome Valuing Interculturalism that appears later in this chapter.

Pre-college exposure to diversity. The third dimension shaping participants' Exploratory Orientation is variation among them in their pre-college exposure to cultural diversity and interactions or friendships with diverse peers. Pre-college exposure is not a requirement for having Exploratory Orientation; indeed, Charles and Brynn are two examples of participants who came from homogeneous pre-college environments in which their own race (White) was the dominant racial group. Yet they both clearly demonstrated Exploratory Orientation in seeking friends upon coming to college and as a condition facilitating their interracial friendship formation. In contrast to Charles and Brynn, some participants demonstrated that they came to college with an appreciation for diversity and pluralism because they came from culturally heterogeneous pre-college environments and/or had pre-college interracial friendships, such as Alisha:

One of my close friends in high school was Hindu ... I do talk to her from time to time, and it's just like, "Hey, did you go to Holi and stuff? We just had Holi at [Southeastern University]." "How was it?" and stuff. It's just stuff like that, because she enlightened me in a lot of things in high school, because I was like bat-blind. I didn't know anything. And she just opened my eyes to another culture, so now I'm just like – I don't know. I feel like it just bettered me, I guess. And I just – not

everyone has the opportunity because their high schools or their hometowns just aren't culturally diverse.

The relationship between pre-college diversity exposure may in fact be an inverse bell curve—that is, students with the *most* or the *least* pre-college exposure are more likely to come to college with Exploratory Orientation, because those with the most exposure have developed an appreciation for new perspectives and experiences through that exposure, while those with the least exposure have developed a curiosity for new perspectives and experiences due to a *lack* of such opportunities for learning and growth. However, I can only posit this idea as a hypothesis, as I do not have sufficient data to support it. This is a promising area for future research, as I discuss in chapter five.

Another way in which pre-college exposure to diversity may shape Exploratory Orientation is that for some students, interacting with peers from other cultural backgrounds may actually be more comfortable, or less risky, than interacting with same-race peers. This may be especially true for students who grew up in very diverse neighborhoods or attended structurally diverse K-12 schools, or for students who may not have had many same-peers to interact with prior to college and are therefore more comfortable with those from other racial groups. As a result, we cannot assume that these students are exhibiting Exploratory Orientation in developing interracial peer relationships, as such relationships may be more comfortable for them. However, we also cannot assume that these students are *not* demonstrating Exploratory Orientation, because it is possible that through their pre-college interactions with peers from other cultural groups, they may have come to value the alternate

perspectives that those peers provide. For example, Natasha discussed how she made an intentional decision upon coming to college to not spend time with members of her own racial group, even though prior to college her friendship group had been primarily composed of same-race peers:

When I came to college, I kind of decided that I don't like the competition that comes with hanging out with a lot of Asian Americans. It's a very stressful – not that it's a bad thing. But I mean, there's a lot of competition, like very high achieving – very motivated people. Not everyone, of course, because everyone is different. But like in high school, most of my friends of the Asian American group and they were highly competitive, even with each other. And I was like, I'm gonna find something different from that. So I guess I did kind of inadvertently did seek out different groups of people. But yeah, so I haven't actually had too much contact with people of my own culture here.

While Natasha's decision to seek potential friends in college among peers from racial backgrounds other than her own was driven more by an aversion to similar perspectives than an affinity for alternate perspectives, she nonetheless demonstrates the two defining properties of Exploratory orientation: a desire to explore other ideas and perspectives and a willingness to step outside of her comfort zone to do so. In other words, even though Natasha's motivation differs from some of my other participants, she is still motivated to step outside of what she's familiar with to "find something different" and explore, and therefore she demonstrates Exploratory Orientation.

Figure 16 summarizes the properties and dimensions of Exploratory Orientation.

Figure 16. Properties and dimensions of Exploratory Orientation.

How Exploratory Orientation Facilitates Interracial Friendship Development and Sustainment

For participants who demonstrated evidence of having Exploratory Orientation at the start of their college experience (a group that included Alisha, Anastasia, Brynn, Caroline, Charles, and Isabella), it functioned as a condition facilitating the development of their close interracial friendships because they were motivated to seek relationships with peers who would expose them to alternate perspectives and new experiences (whether or not they intentionally sought peers from other cultural groups). Other participants (including Dan,

Max, Natasha, Rick, and to some extent Rachel) didn't specifically discuss intentionally seeking diverse perspectives as a force driving their friendship development, but they nonetheless spoke extensively about how much they value having close friends who challenge their assumptions and perspectives and with whom they can experience new things they may not have experienced if they'd only had same-race close friends. For these participants, as well as for those in the previous group, Exploratory Orientation facilitated the sustainment of their friendships because the value they place on the friendship as a source of challenge, learning, and growth leads them to see these relationships as especially valuable and as "more than just a regular friendship" (a quote from Dan's interview).

While Exploratory Orientation is a facilitating condition for three of the four central processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment (Bridging Difference to Connect, Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures, as I discuss in the sections on those categories), it is not a required condition. It is possible for interracial friendships to develop and be sustained even when one or both friends lack Exploratory Orientation; Bryan's and Michelle's friendships seem to be good examples of this, although I can't conclusively state that they *don't* have Exploratory Orientation as my study was not designed to examine this concept specifically. It is also possible, such as in Maggie's case, for an interracial friendship to not be sustained even when at least one of the friends possesses Exploratory Orientation. Therefore, while Exploratory Orientation is a facilitating condition, it is not required for interracial friendship development or sustainment;

furthermore, while its presence does not ensure friendship sustainment, its absence does not jeopardize friendship sustainment.

However, students with Exploratory Orientation differ somewhat from students who lack it in terms of how they develop their friendships, as the latter group of students seems to need extra support and opportunities in order to be able to step outside of their comfort zones and interact across difference to discover potential friends. In contrast, students who possess Exploratory Orientation are better able to, or need less support to, engage in the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. Furthermore, although participants who demonstrated evidence of Exploratory Orientation as well as those who did not developed their friendships through living together or other forms of propinquity (e.g., working together), it seems that propinquity is especially important for students who do not demonstrate Exploratory Orientation because it provides them with repeated opportunities to interact across differences in the context of an environment in which they feel safe or at home; this is especially true for living together, although it can also be true for working together depending on the nature of the work environment and tasks. Allport's (1954/1988) four conditions for optimal intergroup contact also seem to play an especially influential role in the friendship development of students who lack Exploratory Orientation, as having sustained contact with a shared goal or purpose and institutional support (three of Allport's conditions) provide the extra support and structure needed to help these students step outside of their comfort zones to develop interpersonal relationships across cultural differences. I

further discuss these implications for educational practice to support students in developing and sustaining interracial friendships in chapter five.

As noted above, Exploratory Orientation concerns an openness to and desire to explore perspectives other than one's own and engage in new experiences; these alternate perspectives and new experiences may be those of other cultural groups, but they do not necessarily have to be. When a cultural exploration dimension is involved, however, Exploratory Orientation is a powerful facilitating condition for both the central friendship process of Exploring Other Cultures. Charles (who is White) provided an example of how his Exploratory Orientation facilitated his ability to engage with his friend Alisha's African American culture:

There's definitely some things that we've done together that I wouldn't have done, and this might bring up the race thing or whatever, but [Alisha] took me to a hip hop show at the [University] Cinema – I mean, I was somewhat interested in it but I would've never found out about it or been self-initiated enough to go to it [on my own] or whatever. And there was the African American [student organization] puts on so many events, some of them even like I've been interested in that I brought her to ... I thought it was really interesting and I invited her to come with me and there's definitely like—I hate to say stereotype—but things that are associated with certain groups of people that we both kind of like connected with through our friendship, I would say. ... There's many things that stereotypically African Americans are, do, whether it be certain types of dances or certain types of food or just even like the

movies we watch. They're directed towards different groups of people and just the idea of me jumping into those experiences or taking part in those is, it's a way of me feeling out of place, but at the same time celebrating that I'm out of place and that I'm experiencing these new things that I would never have a chance to I guess because I'm with Alisha and because she's like my gateway into that sort of, those situations and those activities.

In this excerpt, Charles discussed how taking part in events and activities associated with Alisha's culture positions him as an outsider, which requires him to step outside of his cultural zone ("feeling out of place"), but that he welcomes and celebrates these "excursions" into her culture so that he can "experience[e] these new things that I would never have a chance to" otherwise. This excerpt from Charles's interview also illustrates the visa-sherpa dimension of the process of Exploring Other Cultures (as I discuss in that section of this chapter); he indicates that if Alisha did not serve as a "gateway," or sherpa, for him, he may not have had the motivation to participate in African American cultural events on campus, but with her support he has learned to value such experiences and now seeks out such opportunities on his own (suggesting that he has achieved the outcome Valuing Interculturalism, which I discuss later in this chapter). Yet Charles's experience demonstrates that even students who have Exploratory Orientation may need additional support or encouragement from peers they trust to initially step outside of their comfort zones to explore other cultures.

Exploratory Orientation also facilitates the central process of Bridging Difference to Connect; students with Exploratory Orientation appreciate alternate ways of thinking about and being in the world and are also open to having their own perspectives and assumptions challenged, which therefore helps them to perceive conflicts over their differences as constructive growth opportunities that foster relational connection rather than as painful moments that lead to relational disconnection and threaten the friendship. The conflicts Kandace, Maggie, and Marcelo discussed experiencing in their friendships, which ultimately caused or contributed to their friendships ending, instead may have been moments of positive challenge that strengthened their friendships had both friends been open to understanding and exploring the different ways they think about and experience the world and receptive to having their own perspectives challenged (i.e., if they and/or their friends had possessed Exploratory Orientation).

Exploratory Orientation as a Possible Outcome of Interracial Friendship

In some cases, Exploratory Orientation may be an outcome of interracial friendship rather than a facilitating condition, especially for students who may not have possessed Exploratory orientation prior to the development of their friendships. Michelle provides an example of developing Exploratory Orientation through her friendship with Trey:

[This friendship has] helped me meet so many other people. Because if you're able to just walk up to a random stranger and start a conversation with them, that leads into this wonderful lifelong college friendship. I mean, that's priceless. And so that gave me confidence that hey, I'm a freshman but I can still go and meet people that are going to

be the friends for life, you know. And that was really beneficial for me, just to have that confidence that I can make friends and find commonalities among all these random places that I never would have thought of. ... So, being friends with Trey I don't think has really changed anything drastically. But just to show me that like, you know, I can obviously meet people at college that are not in places that I would have originally looked for. So like being involved in ballroom dance obviously, oh, I can make friends here, but you know just going to a random athletic event, I didn't foresee that I would become friends with somebody through that.

Although Michelle develops Exploratory Orientation in the sense of seeking new experiences and new relationships generally rather than specifically seeking cultural difference, having developed it could easily lead her to seek and develop additional interracial friendships because she's now more willing to take a risk and step outside of her comfort zone to meet new people.

Having or developing Exploratory Orientation may make it more likely that the friendship may lead to or facilitate achievement of the outcome Valuing Interculturalism, which is characterized by embracing interculturalism as a personal value and goal for one's life. My data can only suggest this relationship between Exploratory Orientation and Valuing Interculturalism as my study was not designed to explain or predict the outcomes of interracial friendship. However, given the similarity between these two categories of my substantive theory (especially in terms of the openness to and affinity for diversity in perspectives and experiences that is a core component of them both), it seems likely that

having Exploratory Orientation, or developing it through an interracial friendship, establishes a foundation for achieving Valuing Interculturalism, and that foundation is then built upon in the relational context of a close interracial friendship. I discuss this idea more in my section on Valuing Interculturalism later in this chapter.

Researcher Reflection

The concept of Exploratory Orientation grew out of the initial codes “seeking alternate perspectives” and “accessing alternate perspectives” that I generated relatively early in my analysis; while related, the first code refers to a behavior while the second to a benefit or outcome some participants perceived resulting from their friendships. In integrating these codes with others to form the category of Exploratory Orientation, I became aware of the value I place on having my own assumptions challenged and my own behavioral tendency to seek information and ideas that challenge my assumptions. Indeed, this is one of the reasons I chose to conduct this research using the grounded theory method of inquiry; I wanted to generate new understandings rather than validating ideas that others have already proposed. My values in this regard also surfaced as I was writing cover letters for faculty positions; I branded myself as an “interdisciplinary thinker and researcher” because I believe considering diverse perspectives—whether in research or in the classroom—improves thinking and performance (in addition to being the right thing to do in the interest of social justice). Indeed, I intentionally chose interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate programs; single-discipline thinking doesn’t work for me.

Yet despite my own values, I believe I have sufficient evidence to justify Exploratory Orientation as a category within my theory. Furthermore, the connections between this category and the external concept of pluralistic orientation—a critically important societal outcome of interracial peer interaction—suggest that my identification of the value that some participants placed on accessing and seeking alternate perspectives through relational connection with peers different from themselves is not merely an artifact of my own values, but is in fact a phenomenon present within some, if not all, interracial friendships among college students.

Summary

Exploratory Orientation is a condition that facilitates the development and sustainment of interracial friendships among college students. It is defined by two properties, one dispositional and one behavioral: (1) an orientation toward curiosity and learning, often characterized by an openness to or desire for having one's own perspective or assumptions challenged and (2) a willingness to take risks and step outside of one's comfort zone to encounter and explore alternate perspectives and new experiences through interactions and relationships with others. A student who possesses Exploratory Orientation may specifically seek intercultural interaction and multicultural learning opportunities as a means by which to access these new experiences and perspectives; alternatively, intercultural friendship and multicultural learning opportunities may not be intentionally sought but rather are a consequence of the desire to step outside of one's comfort zone to explore the unfamiliar. Students who demonstrate Exploratory Orientation may vary along three dimensions. The

first two dimensions are spectrums: (1) intentionally seeking versus being receptive to alternate perspectives and new experiences and (2) belief about the role of difference in relational connection. Pertaining to the first dimension, some students with Exploratory Orientation may intentionally seek out friends who can provide access to new perspectives and experiences, whereas other students may merely be receptive to or welcoming of peers who provide such experiences without actively seeking them out. Regarding the second dimension, all students with Exploratory Orientation see difference between themselves and their friends as an asset that adds value to their relationships (rather than as a potential source of conflict and disconnection), but some students with Exploratory Orientation go further to see difference as something that fosters relational connection and friendship sustainment. The third dimension of Exploratory Orientation concerns students' varying pre-college exposure to diversity; extensive pre-college exposure to diversity and friendships with peers from other racial groups—as well as a lack of such exposure—may lead students to come to college with Exploratory Orientation, facilitating their ability to develop interracial friendships.

Although Exploratory Orientation is not a required condition for interracial friendship development and sustainment, it plays an important role in facilitating three of the four central processes of interracial friendship: Bridging Difference to Connect, Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures. College students who have Exploratory Orientation are more willing and able to develop interracial friendships because they value encountering difference, and that value also helps them to sustain their interracial friendship as a source of challenge that leads to learning and growth.

Furthermore, Exploratory Orientation can be an outcome of interracial friendship, as students who did not previously demonstrate it come to value the alternate perspectives and new experiences that their interracial friendships provide to them.

Outcomes of Interracial Friendship

The theory I have presented in this chapter primarily focuses on the process that are central to the development and sustainment of close interracial friendships among college students: Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contact,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures. It is important to note that I designed my study to focus on elucidating these processes, not to examine causes, predictors, or outcomes of these friendships (which are more appropriately studied through quantitative research designs). However, the open and inductive nature of grounded theory data generation and analysis enables the researcher to discover a range of phenomena and processes within the data, and in analyzing my data I discovered evidence of two outcomes of interracial friendships: Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism.

In the sections that follow I discuss these two outcomes as processes that result from, and are facilitated by, the central processes and conditions of close interracial friendship. An important caveat, however, is that while I do have evidence for these outcomes for *some* of my participants, my evidence is not sufficient to assert that these outcomes occur for *all* college students who develop close interracial friendships, or that they are inevitable results of such friendships. Additionally, because my data generation and theoretical sampling were

not oriented toward saturating the concepts that these outcomes represent, I acknowledge that they do not rise to same level of saturation as the categories that comprise the central processes of my theory. However, these two outcomes are clearly desirable and powerful learning and development outcomes, and therefore I have chosen to present them here despite these limitations. In the next chapter, I connect these two outcomes to the outcomes of interracial interaction and friendship that have been documented in prior empirical research, and I discuss the implications of these two outcomes for future research and educational practice. Figure 17 illustrates the two outcomes of interracial friendship that I identified through this research.

Figure 17. A model of the two outcomes of interracial friendship.

Outcome: Integrating the Self

I've really felt like I've just discovered more of who I am, or been able to at least express it more.

– Sloan

Integrating the Self is a possible (but not guaranteed) outcome of close interracial friendships in which trust is especially strong. Integrating the Self involves becoming more whole or authentic as a person, facilitated through a close, trusting, and supportive friendship. The individual does not have to fear or worry about the friend judging him or her for certain aspects of who s/he is; the whole self can emerge and all the aspects of the self that may have previously been separated or hidden in other relationships become reintegrated. Integrating the Self is, therefore, a process of intrapersonal and interpersonal growth.

Walker and Miller (2004) briefly discuss the concept of “relational images”: “Out of her/his history of interchanges, each person constructs a complex set of relational images that constitute her/his picture of what happens in the world. Based on these relational images, each person then creates beliefs about her/himself and her/his characteristics.” (p. 130). In other words, through relationships with others, we develop a better understanding of ourselves. The relational process that Walker and Miller describe provides the foundation for Integrating the Self.

A critical part of achieving integration—being made whole—is having the security, mutual respect, and a sufficient level of trust within the friendship to be able to be one’s

authentic, whole self with the friend. Therefore, required conditions for Integrating the Self are security, sharing mutual respect, and trust, all of which are embedded within the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”.

Properties

The learning and growth that results from Integrating the Self occurs at two levels: intrapersonal and interpersonal. Intrapersonally, the individual student becomes more whole and authentic and develops a more realistic self-image. Interpersonally, the student’s ability to form meaningful and authentic connections with others across cultural boundaries is enhanced (facilitated by the intrapersonal development). These two levels of learning and growth represent the defining properties of Integrating the Self; when a student demonstrates evidence of these benefits, the outcome has been achieved.

The following excerpt from Sloan’s interviews provided the initial inspiration for this outcome. Sloan illustrates how her friendship with Ashley supported her in being her whole, authentic self, which in turn allowed her to “discover more of who I am”:

I found that being friends with Ashley and being able to just like – like how we talk so much about so many different things, and I’m able to express some of the ideas that I’ve had or some of the concerns or issues just that I’ve normally kept to myself, or maybe I’ll blog about because I don’t really feel comfortable talking about them with anyone. It’s made me more comfortable with who I am. And that’s really helped, and also stuff like, like I said, just something simple as us catching a ride to work together or a ride home, and I being able to listen to the music I wanna listen to at that time of

day. So it's really made me more in tune with who I am. Same thing with discovering faith or religion, and it's like I felt like I've discovered more of who I am just in this past year because I've had someone to share that with, versus always pushing something to the side or feeling I only have my boyfriend to go to, which I was like, that might not be the healthiest thing. You need girlfriends in your life. And although I had those people, they just didn't always have the same interests I had, so I've really felt like I've just discovered more of who I am, or been able to at least express it more, yeah.

In this excerpt, Sloan refers to how her friendship with Ashley has facilitated her growth in several ways: becoming “more comfortable with who I am,” “discover[ing] more of who I am,” and being better able to “express some of the ideas that I’ve had” as well as who she is. Overall, she demonstrates evidence of growing intrapersonally and interpersonally as a result of her friendship with Ashley.

Dimensions

The process of Integrating the Self involves learning about oneself and growing as a person through the friendship. The participants in my study who provided evidence of Integrating the Self demonstrated growth along four dimensions: (1) reflecting on the self in relationship, (2) gaining interpersonal confidence, (3) developing a sense of belonging, and (4) discovering one’s boundaries. Next, I illustrate each of these dimensions of personal growth with examples from my participants.

Reflecting on the self in relationship. One of the ways in which interracial friendship can lead to growth is by providing a relational context in which friends can reflect upon themselves in relation to another; Walker and Miller (2004) suggest that interracial friendship is more powerful in this regard than same-race friendship. Amina provides an example of growth through reflection, discussing how her friendship with Nawal has led her to reflect upon who she is and who she wants to be:

I used to be a very – I guess not angry, but frustrated, and I hung onto that frustration and that stress for a very long time in college, and then when I started meeting with Nawal and seeing all these other people and seeing their actions, and looking at my friends, really, and observing their comments and their day-to-day lives, I really started analyzing myself and seeing my flaws, because I wanted to be more like Nawal. I wanted to be more patient and humble and a better person, and I definitely learned a lot of things about myself that I hadn't ever considered in the past. ... And things like that, that I wouldn't have really thought about, she's really made me consider. So I would say she's made me reflect a lot and really think about what's happening with me, with the world, my interactions with people, and their interactions with me.

Amina indicates in this example that not only has her friendship with Nawal prompted her to reflect upon things she “hadn’t even considered in the past,” both intrapersonally and interpersonally.

Like Amina, other participants discussed desiring to emulate their friends in some way, or to use their friends' values or character as a standard for their own behavior. For example, Anastasia admiration for her friend George regarding how he lives his values:

[Tara: Is there anything that you feel like, maybe after you graduate or a few years down the road, you'll look back and always remember?] Probably just [George's] character. And I hope that we'll still be friends and stuff. Or remember— he has a girlfriend, too, and he's really, really good to her. I'll obviously remember that. That became a model for the people on our floor, so he's being a leader even to his peers just by his actions, and I think that's awesome. ... Values, his values are really strong. And he applies them across all of his life. I think often times we have values when we're asked about them but then when it comes down to using them, often times we just don't. With the girlfriend thing, it was really cool to see how his values were like to treat her well and nice and stuff.

Implicit in Anastasia's excerpt is the idea that she considers George to be a role model to help her learn how to live her values. Max also provided an example of how reflecting upon his friend Nelson's attitude toward the world around him helped Max to identify a change he wanted to make within his life in order to be more of the person he wants to be:

[Nelson] was very positive and was very optimistic, very positive, and kind of helped me to develop myself into being more of a very positive and optimistic person because I saw the value in that and I saw how that impacted his life. ... He's always just really positive, always happy to see me. ... I connect a lot with positive people, especially

now, and I try to surround myself a lot with those kind of people. And that's what I've really decided for myself, that I just want to cut out as much pessimism from my life as possible and so with him, I definitely feel like when he was [away from college for a semester on a co-op assignment] that was like a big part that was missing from my life.

Additionally, positive challenge, which is a strategy for Bridging Difference to Connect and a consequence of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” as I discuss in those earlier sections of this chapter, can play in role in helping friends achieve the outcome of Integrating the Self. Because positive challenge (or challenging each other to grow, when used as a strategy) involves one friend highlighting incongruence between the values and behavior or decisions of the other friend—what one participant termed “telling me what I need to hear”—it stimulates the self-reflective process that can lead to personal growth.

Gaining interpersonal confidence. Interracial friendship can also facilitate personal growth along the dimension of having more confidence in interpersonal relationships. Rick provides an example of this:

Something I learned from [Alex]. I don't know if I mentioned to you last time, having more confidence, the importance of just being yourself when you meet new people. And not caring what others think. [Tara: Are there other areas of life that you feel like you've built your confidence as a result of being friends with Alex?] I think just confidence overall, meeting new people, and I guess in the social setting, like talking

to girls. Because I was always really shy. Even though I had three older sisters, I've always been like really shy. And he just showed me like, you just have to go out there and — I mean the worst that could happen is no, so.

Within a close, trusting friendship, one friend can provide the encouragement, support, and validation the other friend may need in order to become more comfortable in interpersonal relationships.

Developing a sense of belonging. Developing a sense of belonging can also be a significant area of growth that results from the process of Integrating the Self. Brown's (2012) definition of belonging describes how authenticity in interpersonal relationships facilitates belonging and growth:

Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance. (pp. 145-146)

Rick provides an example of how, through his friendship with Alex, he came to better understand his place in American culture and find a sense of belonging in an American university:

[Tara: When you were in Indonesia, did you consider yourself to be American?]

That's a good question. [Laughter] Yes, but I don't think I could identify very well,

since the longest I'd lived here before moving back was a year and I was homeschooled, so I didn't really get to experience a lot. So I would say, I said I was American, but at times I wouldn't want to associate myself with Americans. So I was kind of just floating in between. ... [Tara: So being here at Southeastern University then, you've come to identify with being American in a way that you previously didn't, or were kind of on the fence about?] Yeah. [Tara: And are your friendships with Alex and Elise, or maybe somebody else, a part of that?] I think so. Yeah, that's probably the biggest thing. I never really had a connection with somebody who lived here. Because most of my friends, they may have lived here for a couple years, lived there, so I never had a deep-rooted connection with anybody living here in the U.S. besides like family when they moved back, my older siblings. So I think that's really helped is just finding that connection wherever you live, and that played a big part.

For Rick, making friends who are American helped him to feel, for the first time, like an American, an identity he had never previously embraced. Amina also discusses how she developed a sense of belonging through her friendship with Nawal:

I'm not sure if you've ever felt this, but if you've ever gone out to lunch one day and you just sat there, and without anyone, just sat there, ate by yourself, and you looked at everyone, and you have just have this intense emotional feeling in your heart, and you just want to cry, because you're like, "Look at all these people with friends and have somebody to talk to and spend time with, and you're here all by yourself, and wow, what a loser you must look like to everyone else." That's how I always feel. I

still feel like that every once in a while as well, but with Nawal, it definitely went down quite a bit. It started to diminish.

Becoming friends with Nawal helped to alleviate some of the pain and isolation Amina had previously felt due to a lack of close friends she felt she could trust at Southeastern University. The sense of belonging Amina gained through her friendship was social, whereas Rick developed a sense of belonging related to his national identity through his friendship with Alex.

Discovering one's boundaries. Another dimension of this outcome is the notion of discovering boundaries regarding what one is willing or unwilling to compromise on; this represents another important area of growth. In her journal responses, Inga provided an example of a moment when she learned that she may want to relax the boundaries around her religious beliefs with her friend Natasha:

There was one occurrence when I was signing up for a dating website that Natasha told me about. For about an hour, I was answering these trite questions for online match making purposes. There was one question that came up that asked about my views of homosexuality. I wrote that homosexuality was immoral due to my religion. Two people of the same sex loving each other in a passionate and lustful way is a sin. Ironically, Natasha is bisexual and I have other friends that are homosexuals. With this in mind, she asked me why I thought this way. I explained to her that it was something that is tied to my religion which I strongly believe in. I also told her that I loved her, including all of my friends that aren't heterosexual, despite the sin. When I

befriend someone, I see them as a whole person instead of just one truth about them. I am intrigued by personality, common interests, and attitude. Looking back now, I wish that I would have emphasized more on the separation of sin and person.

The process of Bridging Difference to Connect is evident in this example as well; in this moment Inga worked to find common ground with Natasha despite the fact that Inga's religious beliefs lead her to view Natasha's sexual orientation preference as a sin. Their ensuing discussion led Inga to reflect upon whether expressing her beliefs as she did may have caused some disconnection between her and Natasha and to consider how she would might address that situation in future moments (i.e., by "emphasiz[ing] the separation of sin and person"). She has come to understand that in some moments, and with some cherished friends, she may want to prioritize connection over sharing her beliefs. Rachel came to a similar realization about the boundaries of her beliefs, as illustrated in an example provided in the section of this chapter on Bridging Difference to Connect. As she noted in that example, "I think this friendship has shown me that sometimes when it comes to someone you care about, you should respect them by allowing them to think differently and not necessarily converting them to think exactly as you do." For Rachel, her friendship with Anya has helped her to develop an awareness of when she can and should allow some flexibility in her beliefs and values in order to demonstrate respect for her friend.

Figure 18 summarizes the properties and dimensions of Integrating the Self.

Figure 18. Properties and dimensions of Integrating the Self.

Summary

For those participants who shared evidence of this outcome, Integrating the Self meant that the friendship provided them with space in which they could discover and share their whole selves and, by doing so in the context of relational connection, grow as a person. Growth occurred at both the intrapersonal level, in terms of coming to a better understanding of who one is and who one aspires to be, as well as at the interpersonal level, in terms of being better able to understand and relate to others (aided by a deeper understanding of oneself). Participants demonstrated evidence of growth along four dimensions: (1) reflecting

on the self in relationship, (2) gaining interpersonal confidence, (3) developing a sense of belonging, and (4) discovering one's boundaries. Although these are the only area of growth that my participants evidenced, it is possible that interracial friendship leads to intrapersonal and interpersonal growth in other areas as well.

Outcome: Valuing Interculturalism

But if you don't seek out similar people and you seek out people who have different experiences and beliefs you become more open-minded and you experience the world differently because you get to see more of it.

– Natasha

In analyzing my data, I noticed that many of my participants discussed learning and growing in significant and meaningful ways through their close interracial friendships. Some of this learning and growth was intrapersonal, which I discuss in my previous section on Integrating the Self. However, much of the learning and growth they described indicated coming to value cultural diversity in their interpersonal relationships because of the new perspectives and experiences they gained through these relationships. Initially I wondered if what these participants were saying pointed toward developing multicultural competence or pluralistic orientation, but in further engaging with them and with my data, I felt that what they were describing was richer and deeper than either of these two concepts. And of course, as a grounded theorist, I wanted to avoid lapsing into deduction and verification by categorizing their experiences as representative of these two external concepts (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I continued to memo on what I was seeing, noting that while there

seemed to be some connections to outcomes of interracial interaction and friendship identified in previous empirical literature, what I was seeing was conceptually different. The phenomenon I was observing in my data suggested that participants had not just “learned something,” but rather that they had developed a *value* and then were taking *action* through engagement with their peers in order to incorporate that value into their lives—to “live” that value.

In naming this outcome, I decided upon the term “interculturalism” for several reasons. First, I wanted to capture the active relational processes involved in this outcome, similar to how the term “interfaith” does not just connote a group of people representing multiple faiths, but also suggests that those people from multiple faiths are actively *connecting and working together* (Patel, 2012). Second, I was inspired by Greg Tanaka’s (2003) clarification of the difference in meaning between the terms “multicultural” and “intercultural”: “Intercultural” signifies “an approach to learning and sharing across cultures where no cultures dominates” (p. 16) and in which members of different cultures are engaged in interaction and exchange. In contrast, “multicultural” merely refers to recognition of the presence of multiple cultures in a particular context without any attempt to challenge the hierarchy of cultural dominance or promote interaction and exchange across cultures. In other words, “intercultural” is an active process of intentional engagement, whereas “multicultural” is more passive and descriptive. Therefore, “intercultural” was a better fit with the evidence I observed suggesting an outcome of interracial friendship. Furthermore, because I came across the extant concept of “interculturalism” during my second literature

review, after I had completed most of my analysis and was moving into the theoretical integration phase, I feel confident that I did not deductively seek evidence of interculturalism within my data (which would violate the inductive principle of grounded theory analysis). Rather, I identified and applied this concept after I had determined what was “going on” within my data, and in that sense, it “earned” its place in my theory (Charmaz, 2005, 2006; Kelle, 2007).

Some of my participants did exhibit evidence that their friendships had led them to reduce their reliance on stereotypes, challenged their prejudices, or reduced their perceived social distance to peers from other racial groups, in accordance with Allport’s (1954/1988) contact hypothesis. Some of them seemed to demonstrate having developed a pluralistic orientation as well. (I elaborate further on the connections between these concepts and my outcome in chapter five). But these were only components, or dimensions, of a broader and more significant outcome, one that involved developing an affinity for cultural diversity and exchange because of the enrichment it brought to their lives, and then acting upon that affinity to incorporate cultural diversity and exchange into their interpersonal relationships in order to continue their own growth and development. What my participants demonstrated more closely aligned with Eck’s definition of pluralism as “active seeking of understanding” and “energetic engagement with diversity” (2006, p. 1) in a “relationship of ongoing debate and discussion” (2013, p. 2). Participants who displayed evidence of this outcome were demonstrating that through their interracial friendships—and through the process of

Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference in which they engaged—they had come to *embrace interculturalism as a personal value and goal for their lives*.

In this section I present the properties and dimensions of this conceptually unique outcome I identified, which I chose to name Valuing Interculturalism. Valuing Interculturalism has three defining properties. These defining properties are indicators that the outcome has been achieved; in other words, students who show evidence of these three properties have achieved the outcome. The first property of Valuing Interculturalism is an appreciation and affinity for cultural diversity and an openness to and curiosity for the perspectives of culturally diverse others. The second property involves understanding that cultural difference does not impede relational connection but rather can facilitate more meaningful and authentic relational connection. Finally, students who value cultural difference within a relational context demonstrate the third property of Valuing Interculturalism. The two dimensions associated with Valuing Interculturalism are an improved ability to relate to culturally different peers and the desire to take action to live the value of interculturalism.

Properties

Three properties characterize the outcome of Valuing Interculturalism: (1) appreciating and seeking cultural diversity, (2) valuing difference as well as similarity in relational connection, and (3) appreciating and seeking cultural diversity in interpersonal relationships. I describe these three properties next and provide examples from my participants' experiences.

Appreciating and seeking cultural diversity. The first property of Valuing Interculturalism is an appreciation of difference and diversity and an openness to and curiosity for the perspectives of culturally diverse others. This property of Valuing Interculturalism aligns with the concept of pluralistic orientation, which Engberg (2007) defines as “the ability to see multiple perspectives; the ability to work cooperatively with diverse people; the ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues; openness to having one’s views challenged; and tolerance of others with different beliefs” (p. 285). The openness to and affinity for diverse perspectives that reflects this property of Valuing Interculturalism may also result in a rejection of previously held cultural stereotypes or prejudices, as students gain new, appreciative understanding of other cultural groups; this represents a possible dimension of Valuing Interculturalism, which I discuss further below.

Charles provides a good example of appreciating having a friend who provides an alternate perspective:

Just the idea that we’re so different and we’re so diversified in our experiences that we clash to some extent with our different perspectives and just how we handle a situation. So when I have a problem or when I wanna talk about something, I can go to Alisha and just hear a whole different perspective on how maybe she handled something like that, or how she thinks about things like that. I don’t wanna go to someone who’s so similar to me that they just repeat what I’m thinking or just offer the empty words, I guess that. So I just know it’s real and I know that there’s more than one perspective, and no wrong answer, I guess. ... Having someone that comes

from a completely different background as me kind of allows me to reflect a lot more. So I guess when, if I try to have a conversation about how I deal with something or what I'm dealing with, with someone who is just like me, they would have the same solutions as what I would have. So they would have the same — it'd be like talking to a mirror almost. But to talk to someone who's completely different [from] me, they have new perceptions about it or they have new ways of tackling the problem. So I think that's been a huge benefit, that it's just a way to get a new idea of advice and a new way of thinking. That's probably been why I've been so attracted to this friendship, like I know how I would handle something, but how would Alisha handle something? What would Alisha do, I guess?

What Charles describes here illustrates that he has come to value the cultural differences between himself and his friends, specifically because having friends from other cultural backgrounds gives him access to new ideas and new ways of thinking. Implicitly, Charles suggests that by reflecting upon these new ideas and comparing them to his own perspectives and assumptions, he broadens his understanding of the world.

An additional example of the first property of Valuing Interculturalism involves developing not just an *appreciation* for diverse experiences and perspectives, but also a desire to *actively seek* these experiences and perspectives. In the section on the central friendship process Exploring Other Cultures earlier in this chapter, I include an example from Charles's interview in which he discussed how Alisha, in introducing Charles to experiences related to her African American culture, helped him develop his own desire to and

confidence in seeking out these experiences on his own. Today, in fact, he even invites Alisha to come to these events with him.

Erica provides an additional example of the first property:

It's made me a little more outgoing, because I'm from West Virginia so it's 98 percent White and my hometown is 99 point something percent White. And before I went on a trip to Europe my junior year I hadn't really met many people from anywhere else but the United States. And now that I'm surrounded by people that are from other countries, it's nice. I actually added a major because of it, I added International Studies.

Erica had little exposure to people from other cultural groups prior to college, but by developing close friendships with a number of international students (through her international living-learning community) she has come to appreciate them. Furthermore, these relationships have helped her to develop a broader interest in cultural diversity, leading her to discover an academic interest she might never have previously considered.

Valuing difference as well as similarity in relational connection. The second property of Valuing Interculturalism refers to recognizing that difference—not just similarity—can facilitate authentic and meaningful relational connection. It involves the ability to “embrace similarity while honoring difference” (Patel, 2014) in interpersonal relationships, which may be demonstrated through seeking “appreciative knowledge” (Patel, 2012) about each other’s cultures and backgrounds. The process of developing and sustaining an interracial friendship requires students to be able to seek similarity and honor difference

within a single interpersonal relationship, but achieving the outcome of Valuing Interculturalism necessitates transferring this abilities to *all* interpersonal relationships with culturally diverse others.

Alisha provides another example of the first property. She discussed how learning more about Charles's pre-college background (and specifically, how homogeneous it was) helped her understand Charles better:

It's made me open my eyes to like not – because, I mean, everyone has a bad problem with just like looking at someone and just judging them – so I'm trying a lot harder not to just look at someone and judge them, because I don't know their name, don't know where they're from, don't know what their high school was like, or what it was like growing up. Because I – like looking at Charles, I would've never pictured that he was like from Ohio or whatever, and his high school was not diverse at all. And now it has made me more understanding for why he kinda is the way he is. The other night, we all went through each other's senior yearbooks, and I was going through [his] and I'm like, "Charles, wow, your high school's very diverse," just being very sarcastic, and it wasn't at all [diverse]. And he was going through mine, and there was like all kinds of people there, and it was just like his was just mostly white people. And I was like, oh my gosh. It just has made me more understanding of why he's kinda had like a culture shock [in coming to college]. ... If I were to talk to somebody, just listen to their story, because everyone has a different story. [Tara: Is there anything you feel like you've learned from being friends with him?] Just to be

more understanding, I guess. To not jump to conclusions and to really just – just sit down and just listen, because I guess you really don't know a lot about anybody until you're on the verge of feeling asleep and you're having a deep conversation, and just anything that comes to your mind just comes out, and just take the time to get to know somebody. That's what I've learned.

Alisha's discussion implies that in this moment she also came to realize how important it is to understand others' backgrounds—to develop appreciative knowledge about them—before making assumptions or judgments. Hopefully, she will carry this lesson with her to her future intercultural relationships.

This property—of being able to honor similarity as well as difference as a basis for relational connection—can also involve developing sufficient comfort or confidence to not be afraid to broach differences with culturally different peers, but instead to “just ask” in order to gain appreciative knowledge. This property may be more likely to be present among students who have Exploratory Orientation, as these students will be more open to new perspectives and experiences and less fearful of the risks involved in seeking them; however, Exploratory Orientation is not a requirement. In her pair interview with Inga, Natasha provided an example of feeling comfortable and secure within her friendship with Inga, because of the mutual respect they've established, to “ask and question”:

[Respect means] respect of knowledge especially, like if there's something I do and she doesn't understand or that she does and I don't understand there's definitely space to ask and question it because not every religion you're going to know specific

things about so it's refreshing to ask and see what something really means as opposed to something you've heard from hearsay or you've seen from personal experience. Look just through other people's eyes.

Inga elaborated upon Natasha's comment:

And another aspect of respect [for each other] is just looking past [differences] in regards that it's not just the whole person. That's just a part of their lives. That's just a part of who they are, not all encompassing who they are.

Through their friendship, Natasha and Inga have learned how to embrace and honor both their similarities and their differences, and they appreciate how what they share—as well as what they don't—enriches their friendship and sustains their relational connection.

Appreciating and seeking cultural diversity in interpersonal relationships. The third and final property builds upon the first two properties as students develop a desire to seek cultural diversity in their interpersonal relationships. Their desire to seek diversity in their relationships is founded in an appreciation for the richness cultural diversity brings to the relationship and for the learning and growth opportunities that such relationships provide. Charles illustrated this third property when he discussed his desire to seek cultural diversity in his future relationships:

I hope to maintain this friendship [with Alisha] and utilize each other as much as we can to further grow the idea of cultural awareness and just being open. Facilitating the idea of being yourself but with a new group of people and a new mixture of people. ... The influence she's had on me in terms of like being more open and being

more interested in being so culturally diverse, that will stay with me no matter where I go and that will help me make those new support systems and make those new networks and friends or whatever, networks of people I meet wherever I go.

Maggie provides an example of the third property as well, although the “seeking” aspect is perhaps weaker than in Charles’s example. She focuses on having developed more comfort with broaching differences in her future relationships, with the implication that she expects to develop future interracial relationships in which she can apply this skill:

But regarding race, I guess it made me more comfortable, I guess, talking about race, because I realized, to her, how important it was, even if to me – I mean, maybe that’s white privilege, pretending that race doesn’t exist or not letting it affect your decisions. But for her, it was so important, and it kind of let me into her world and to value that and like facilitate conversations, and finally – and I think it took me a really long time to realize that, because I’m like, “This is uncomfortable. I don’t want to talk about this. Why does she keep bringing this up?” But I think in the end, especially in my class, like my Multicultural Social Work class, we talked about how important it is. If you have a question, you don’t understand something, just ask. And maybe somebody will be turned off by it, but at least you’re trying to understand a perspective that’s not your own.

Maggie has grown a lot since her friendship with Nikki ended, as she alluded to in this example, but what she learned from that friendship as well as from her more successful

interracial friendship with Viviana has led her to value relationships with culturally diverse others.

Dimensions

Students who have achieved the outcome of Valuing Interculturalism may vary along two dimensions. The first dimension concerns an improved ability to relate to culturally diverse peers. The second dimension involves developing a motivation to act upon their newly developed value of interculturalism. I describe each of these dimensions next and provide examples from my data.

Improving one's ability to relate to culturally diverse peers. The first dimension of Valuing Interculturalism involves developing improved skill in relating to peers from other racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, which includes learning to relate to others as individuals rather than as representatives of cultural groups. This skill enhancement may result from abandoning previously held stereotypes and assumptions about cultural groups other than one's own. It also reflects a decrease in social distance between a student and members of other cultural groups. Isabella provided a good example of this dimension:

I think one of the main things you have to do is be really open and not assume anything. Because I know – like sometimes I ask my friends really stupid questions about their cultures because I just don't know and I'm sort of curious. And now that I'm friends with them I can say that. It's not something you should ask someone right away. And I know another pet peeve of people is when people are like, "Where are you from?" and they're like, "California." Like it's a pet peeve of people if you're

trying to figure out what type of Asian they are or stuff like that. They don't like that. ... So it's like, just treat them as an individual, outside of their race, and I'm sure eventually they'll mention it. [Chuckle] I know my friends are like, "Oh, White people just want to guess what I am." I'm like, yeah, I know I've done that before, and if they hadn't told me, I probably wouldn't have realized what I was doing.

Through her interracial friendships, Isabella has learned what is and is not appropriate in relating to peers from other cultural groups.

Charles discussed how his friendship with Alisha as well as with other culturally diverse peers on campus has facilitated his ability to see beyond stereotypes to the individual underneath:

[Previously] I relied much more heavily on stereotypes and just like how the definitions of groups of people or types of people or who a person is based on stereotypes, like judging someone based off a group definition, I guess. And coming [to Southeastern University] I've been able to develop those individual relationships, like getting to know a single person as in getting to know a group of people and I think that's really redefined my idea of how to define someone.

Natasha shared Charles's sentiment:

But here [at Southeastern University] it's a lot more diverse [than my high school]. So you could obviously find more people of different cultural backgrounds. So I hadn't had that many interactions outside of my own cultural background, and then I came here and I was like – So basically it's like not many stereotypes that you hear

about African Americans can be applied to many people. So it's like just breaking down stereotypes and racial tensions and stuff like that. It's like, to see the person underneath that, I guess? So more awareness of what other people are like.

Rachel also discussed learning to look beyond stereotypes to see culturally diverse peers as individuals, not stereotypes, through her experience in an interracial friendship:

It's definitely taught me not to judge based off of all these assumptions, because when I was first coming in, I was like, "Oh, [Any's] Russian. She's gonna be very strict or very structured." I was like, "She's an engineer. I'm gonna be so crazy with all my Design and she's just gonna be very organized or maybe it'll be weird having, I don't know, all these Russian things. Or, I don't know, with family or maybe I'll feel out of place." Even with her major, I was already thinking, "I'm going to an all-engineer school." But it's funny though, because despite all those differences, she's the person that I get along with the most. And she's not like any of those things. She knows how to have fun. She laughs a lot. So, it's just taught me not to, I guess, assume stereotypes and things like that, which I was definitely guilty of.

A statement made by Inga, which I included earlier in this section as an example of the first property of Valuing Interculturalism, also illustrates this dimension: "[Differences are] just a part of who they are, not all encompassing who they are." Overall, Charles, Natasha, Rachel, and Inga all felt that their interracial friendships had helped them to abandon their reliance upon stereotypes and assumptions and enhanced their skill and comfort in seeing their peers from all cultural backgrounds as worthy of relational connection.

This dimension of Valuing Interculturalism relates to the outcome of reduction in perceived social distance between the racial/ethnic groups represented by the two friendship members. Social distance is a measure of “the degree to which members of groups desire to interact with members of other groups”; it may also reflect “levels of prejudice among groups in U.S. society” (Odell et al., 2005, p. 292).

The excerpt from Alisha’s interview that I used above to illustrate the first property of Valuing Interculturalism also suggests a reduction in social distance. In that example, she discussed learning to appreciate every person as an individual with a unique background and “story,” and recognizing that any differences she may have with that person are individual differences, not group differences. Put another way, Alisha has learned that we’re all similar in that we all have unique backgrounds and individual stories, and connecting across our individual stories is a powerful way of reducing the social distance we feel. In his journal responses, Charles provides a congruent example that also suggests a reduction in perceived social distance to culturally different others:

I hate to go cliché and say everyone’s unique or whatever, but it’s true that beyond what they look on the outside or what religion they practice or what culture they come from there are still huge similarities between what I believe in and what they believe in or what they like to do or like. I’m learning, I’m slowly realizing that we’re all college students facing the same basic struggle of getting an education and dealing with the society that is this college.

In short, his friendship with Alisha has helped Charles see that culturally different peers around him are perhaps not as different as he once thought; indeed, he's developed confidence in his ability to find common ground and Embrace Similarity with anyone.

Furthering interculturalism through action. Valuing Interculturalism may also lead to a desire to take action to further interculturalism in one's own life and in the broader campus and local communities. In particular, some participants discussed developing a desire to confront or challenge racial and cultural stereotypes. It may be that through the interracial friendship, the friends have their own stereotypes challenged and also become interested in learning about or exploring each other's cultures, which leads them into the process of Exploring Other Cultures. As a result of exploring each other's cultures and developing appreciative knowledge, they develop a desire to challenge stereotypes and prejudice more broadly outside the microcosm of their friendship (i.e., in the larger society). While this desire may or may not lead students to take intentional action to challenge stereotypes and prejudice, at a minimum it leads to a heightened awareness of the ways in which the messages they've been fed by society—the “smog” of prejudice (Tatum, 1997)—are incongruent with their newly developed value of interculturalism. This heightened awareness, in turn, may lead them to make changes in their own lives and possibly establish a foundation for future action.

Some participants demonstrate direct evidence of this dimension while others made statements suggesting it. For example, Michelle discussed challenging a racial comment her

grandmother made, something she may not have felt motivated to do prior to her friendship with him:

It was actually one of my family members, and they—I'll tell you, Facebook is a terrible thing, but it can be a great thing. So people can be very judgmental, because you post a picture of somebody and then they just start thinking all these things. And so they just brought it to the fact, "Well, what were you doing hanging out with that Black guy?" And I said, "Well, he's one of my friends, you know. We've been friends since my freshman year when I met him." And it was my grandmother. And so she just grew up in a different time where Black people and White people just didn't, you know, coexist together. And so I wouldn't say she's a racist, but she's just not as understanding as people are today.

Similarly, Rick provides an example of how he believes that developing friendships with peers outside his own racial group has helped him challenge his friends' stereotypes:

[Tara: Do you feel like through the course of your relationship that you've changed Elise's perspective on anything?] I think so. Because I mean I don't fit the typical stereotype of a Black male, I don't think, the view that a lot of people see. Because when people meet me they're like, "Oh, you're different." And I don't really see myself as different, but I guess it's understandable since I grew up in a different culture [in Indonesia] and everything. So I think people, when they – me and my other friend he's from Trinidad, we don't fit the typical stereotype [of Black men]. So I guess it shows that you can't group people together in the same category all the

time. And I think that's something a lot of—in our group of friends people have realized.

In contrast, Natasha noted, “[Inga and I] have both become more sensitive/intolerant to racist jokes targeting each other’s ethnicities.” Although her statement doesn’t directly indicate that she and Inga take action to challenge racist humor, it suggests that at the least they are on the path toward developing a motivation to take action to further interculturalism within their social circle.

Marcelo provides an example in which his and his friends’ attempts to disarm racial stereotypes with humor—to use humor to challenge their validity—was not well received by his friend Jasmyn, who became offended. This example shows that although the desire to challenge racial stereotypes can be a positive, action-focused outcome of an interracial friendship, it can also lead to conflict within the relationship if the two friends have not addressed their background differences and their past experiences with racism and prejudice. His experience reinforces the importance of Bridging Difference to Connect in order to establish a relational context in which challenging stereotypes can occur in a way that leads to positive and connection-fostering, rather than negative and disconnection-fostering, conflict:

My friends and I, we would watch – have you heard of a show called “The Boondocks”? Obviously, we laugh at their jokes, but we do recognize that they’re a criticism of society, that it’s exaggerating these things in – it makes it over the top, very racist, but it is a valid criticism. When we would repeat those jokes – she didn’t

watch the show. We tried to show her an episode once, but she didn't really care for it, and she just wasn't okay with that. So sometimes we would make the joke, we would all laugh about it, we saw, "Oh, that's ridiculous." I think I remember which episode we showed her. I think a Black man was crossing the street. He bumped into another Black man, and they immediately start going off at each other and shooting and all that. Then it shows the same situation, a White man bumps into the Black man, and the Black man starts yelling at him the same way, and the White man says, "Wait a minute. I'm White." And he just smiles and walks away like he didn't have to deal with it; he was automatically superior. And we laugh at that because that's absurd, and we laugh at how ridiculous that is, but she just thought we were being racist ... That's just one example, but any joke like that, she didn't care for.

Students who achieve the outcome of Valuing Interculturalism may also develop a motivation to act upon that value, such as by challenging stereotypes and prejudice they encounter among friends, family members, peers, and even in society at large. Taking action aligned with the value of interculturalism they've developed is a significant step in preparing them to participate in our pluralistic society after graduation, and therefore it represents an important potential outcome of close interracial friendship.

Figure 19 summarizes the properties and dimensions of Valuing Interculturalism.

Figure 19. Properties and dimensions of Valuing Interculturalism.

Summary

Although Valuing Interculturalism may not be a guaranteed or inevitable outcome of close interracial friendship, it nonetheless has positive and significant effects on the students who do show evidence of having achieved it. These students have come to value interculturalism—as an active process of engaging with culturally different others—for the learning and growth it provides, and they are motivated to take action to integrate this value into their lives through their interpersonal relationships. Although students who achieve Valuing Interculturalism may demonstrate diversity-related outcomes identified by previous research, such as pluralistic orientation and multicultural competence, Valuing Interculturalism is broader than any of these because it also includes a personal commitment to actively seeking and enacting interculturalism in one's life. In the next chapter, I discuss

the connections between Valuing Interculturalism and other diversity-related learning and development outcomes as well as some implications for educational practice suggested by findings about Valuing Interculturalism.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I presented my substantive theory explaining the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships, Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference. I provided an overall model of this process and described the four central processes, or categories, that comprise my theory (Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, Bridging Difference to Connect, and Exploring Other Cultures) with illustrative evidence drawn from my participants’ experiences and beliefs. I also discussed two possible outcomes of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference: Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism. Although these may not be inevitable outcomes of interracial friendship for college students, they nonetheless represent two significant forms of learning and development (one primarily intrapersonal, the other interpersonal) that *can* result from interracial friendship, suggesting the transformative power these relationships can have for college students.

I will close with a short passage from Eboo Patel’s (2012) book *Sacred Ground*. Although this passage, and the book from which it is drawn, focuses on relationships across faith traditions, I believe his words also hold true for intercultural relationships more broadly, including interracial friendships:

Forming a relationship with someone of a different tradition is an art. Reflecting on that relationship in a way that expands the way you understand your own path is an art. Telling the story of that friendship so it changes others, that is an art as well.

Creating spaces where people can form their own interfaith relationships—art. (pp. 101-102)

I hope that my substantive theory has helped to illuminate the processes behind the “art” of interracial friendships among college students. In the next chapter I address how we can apply this theory in educational practice to create spaces that encourage and support students’ engagement in this art.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I discuss, broadly, how my substantive theory enhances our existing theoretical understandings about interracial interaction and friendship, and reflect on applications to specific theories and concepts I discussed in chapter two. I then explore how my substantive theory of college students' interracial friendship development and sustainment provides insight into educational practice and policy, focusing on identifying effective student affairs programming and practices to support these relationships as well as how institutional leaders can create campus environments that promote student learning and development through interracial friendship. In my discussion, I connect with and build upon findings from prior empirical research on college students' interracial interactions and friendships as well as the broader diversity rationale literature. Next, I discuss implications for expanding the rigorous use of the grounded theory method in the higher education and student affairs fields. Finally, I make recommendations for future research to address new questions my research has raised, as well as questions that remain unanswered, about the development and sustainment of college students' interracial friendships and how colleges and universities can support these relationships to ensure students achieve the critical learning and development outcomes they facilitate. I begin with a brief summary of my substantive theory to remind my readers of its key components.

Summary of the Substantive Theory

The process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships is a process of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference; this represents the core category of my

theory. Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference is composed of four sub-processes, which are the central processes in which college students engage in developing and sustaining their interracial friendships. These four central processes are (1) Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” (2) Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, (3) Exploring Other Cultures, and (4) Bridging Difference to Connect. Below I briefly summarize the properties of each of these four processes as well as the conditions that are required for and facilitate each of them and, where relevant, the strategies friends can employ to facilitate them.

The process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” refers to the cultivation of trust and an implicit, mutual assurance of security (i.e., the “silent contract”) within the friendship. When these two things are present within the friendship, both friends are able to bring their whole, authentic selves to the relationship and feel comfortable being who they are with each other, without fear of judgment or violation of confidence. When trust has developed and the silent contract has been established, the friends have a solid and secure foundation upon which to deepen and sustain their friendship. The properties, or defining features, of the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” are authenticity, emotional intimacy, and relational security. The dimensions along which this process varies are the presence of a pivotal moment in developing trust and the ways in which the friends feel they can rely upon each other. Sharing mutual respect for differences is a required condition for the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.” Three facilitating conditions enable the process. The first of these is the process of

Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. The second facilitating condition is developing memories through shared experiences, which also relates to the process of Exploring Other Cultures. The third facilitating condition is propinquity, especially in the form of living together. An additional condition that can be employed as a strategy to facilitate Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” is emotional arousal and vulnerability.

Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is characterized by two properties: “forgetting” and “never forgetting” difference. By “forgetting,” or looking beyond, the racial and cultural differences between them, two friends are able to focus upon what they share at a deep level (e.g., interests, values, beliefs, goals) and embrace that similarity to initially develop their friendship as well as to sustain it over time. Paradoxically, however, an interracial friendship also necessitates that the two friends “never forget” their differences. When the differences between them become salient at specific moments within their relationship, they must show respect for and be willing to engage with them. In other words, similarity is more relevant to the quotidian moments of an interracial friendship, and is the primary way by which they develop and sustain their relational connection, but their cultural differences are also an important—and often positive—influence within their friendship as well. The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference may vary along four dimensions: (1) discovering similarity through difference, (2) balancing “forgetting” and “not forgetting,” (3) the two friends’ levels of pre-college exposure to diversity, and (4) feeling more similar to different-race peers than to same-race peers.

Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference facilitates, and is facilitated by, the other processes central to sustaining an interracial friendship (Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Exploring Other Cultures, and Bridging Difference to Connect); these processes could not occur, or would not be as effective in sustaining the friendship. Two other conditions also facilitate Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference: propinquity and Exploratory Orientation, which is a learning disposition characterized by openness to and affinity for new experiences and perspectives. In addition, connecting through shared interests and developing memories through shared experiences are two strategies friends can employ to facilitate their ability to Embrace Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

In an interracial friendship, the racial differences between two friends, as well as other forms of difference at the levels of cultural and deep diversity, can lead to disagreement or conflict at times, and sustaining their friendship requires the friends to find ways to maintain their relational connection and minimize the potential disconnection posed by their differences. To accomplish this goal, the friends engage in the process of Bridging Difference to Connect, which is defined by a single property: the goal of maintaining relational connection. Bridging Difference to Connect can be a process of preventing conflict from arising (i.e., a preventive process); alternatively it can represent a process of minimizing disconnection and re-reestablishing connection after conflict has occurred (i.e., a reconciliatory process). In addition, Bridging Difference to Connect can involve approaching, or actively engaging with, differences or avoiding/minimizing differences.

These two spectrums (prevention versus reconciliation and approach versus avoidance) represent the two dimensions along which the process can vary. The specific strategies friends can use to Bridge Difference to Connect include (1) Exploring Other Cultures, (2) challenging each other to grow (positive challenge), (3) choosing harmony over conflict, (4) defusing disagreements by moving on, and (5) respecting separate spheres. Two conditions are required in order for the process of Bridging Difference to Connect to take place successfully. The first of these is the central friendship process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” and the second is sharing mutual respect for differences; together, these conditions enable the process of Bridging Difference to Connect to achieve its purpose of maintaining relational connection. The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference facilitates Bridging Difference to Connect, as does Exploratory Orientation on the part of one or both friends.

As part of “never forgetting,” or respecting and honoring, their cultural differences, interracial friends also engage in the process of Exploring Other Cultures. Exploring each other’s cultures allows the friends to connect across their differences, discovering new things they may share while also coming to understand each other better. Through cultural exploration they develop “appreciative knowledge” (Patel, 2012) about each other’s cultures, including their racial/ethnic backgrounds as well as other aspects of cultural difference such as religion or nationality. Two properties characterize Exploring Other Cultures: (1) learning through exploring each other’s cultures and (2) taking action to engage with and explore each other’s cultures. In addition, the process of Exploring Other Cultures can vary along five

dimensions: (1) foregrounding or backgrounding of cultural differences, (2) the “visa-sherpa” dynamic, (3) exploration as acculturation, (4) bidirectional or unidirectional exploration and learning, and (5) the two friends’ levels of pre-college exposure to diversity. Three conditions pertain to Exploring Other Cultures. Two of these are also central processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment: Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract” (which is a required condition) and Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference (which is a facilitating condition). Exploratory Orientation is an additional condition that facilitates Exploring Other Cultures.

Two potential outcomes may result from interracial friendship: Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism. Integrating the Self is the result of intrapersonal and interpersonal growth that involves becoming more whole or authentic as a person, facilitated through a close, trusting, and supportive friendship. Valuing Interculturalism involves coming to value engaging with culturally different others for the learning and growth it provides, leading students who achieve this outcome to take action to integrate this value into their lives through their interpersonal relationships.

Significance and Implications for Theory

Broad Implications for Theory

Previous research (primarily quantitative) on college students’ interracial friendships, as well as explanatory frameworks derived from that research (e.g., Wimmer & Lewis, 2010), have focused on factors that predict college students’ interracial friendships. However, until now we’ve lacked an understanding of *how* these friendships develop, which has

critically hampered efforts to support these friendships through institutional policies and programming. Broadly speaking, my research and the substantive theory I've generated illuminate the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships. By examining college students' experiences in interracial friendships using qualitative methods—specifically the method of grounded theory, which focuses on process and answers the “how” question—I've provided new insight into this frequently studied and educationally significant topic. In addition, my theory builds upon the existing literature by examining the process of friendship sustainment, which has largely been unaddressed by the predominant quantitative studies that operationalize interracial friendship as a dichotomous variable. Thus, by focusing on process as well as sustainment, my research and the substantive theory that has resulted from it add a substantial contribution to the literature on college students' interracial friendships.

In addition to the broad theoretical significance of my substantive theory for our understanding of how college students develop and sustain interracial friendships, my theory also provides new insight into specific theoretical and conceptual ideas pertaining to college students' interracial friendships. Below I discuss implications for four of these theories and concepts: similarity-attraction, propinquity, the contact hypothesis, and emotional connection/vulnerability.

Implications for Specific Theories and Concepts

Similarity-attraction. Broadly speaking, my theory is congruent with the theory of similarity-attraction, which simply put is the idea that we are interpersonally attracted to

others who are—or who we perceive to be—similar to us (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1978; Montoya et al., 2008; Newcomb, 1961, 1962). In developing their interracial friendships, the participants in my study were able to Embrace Similarity at a deep level, looking beyond their demographic differences to find shared values, beliefs, or interests, and what they shared became the foundation upon which they sustained their friendships. Newcomb (1961, 1962), who developed the theory of similarity-attraction through his research on college campuses in the 1950s, emphasized the powerful role that deep similarity, especially regarding attitudes or interests, plays in interpersonal attraction. However, he conducted his research at elite institutions at a time when nearly all students at these schools were White and from affluent families; as a result, demographic similarity (or difference) was likely an insignificant factor in peer attraction and friendship formation in the contexts he studied. However, others studying similarity and attraction in more heterogeneous contexts have found that when surface-level differences are present, we often use these cues (such as skin color) as a proxy to make judgments about deep similarity; in other words, we assume that someone of another race does not share our values, attitudes, or interests (Jehn et al., 1999). These assumptions, as Allport (1954/1988) argues, are the root of prejudice.

My theory illuminates how the theory of similarity-attraction, or perhaps our interpretation of it, is accurate for college students, yet also too simplistic. As educators, we hope that creating structurally diverse campuses will lead students to interact and develop friendships across racial and cultural lines, yet we also know that structural diversity alone is insufficient (Bowman & Park, 2014; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al.,

2006; Gurin et al., 2004; Halualani et al., 2004; Milem et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006). Similarity-attraction theory explains why structural diversity is insufficient: absent any institutional interventions or personal beliefs leading them to do otherwise, most college students will, intentionally or unintentionally, look for similarity in their friends using surface-level cues as a proxy for deep similarity, leading them to have culturally homogeneous friendship groups (Bahns et al., 2011; Stearns et al., 2009).

Yet attraction on the basis of similarity is also the solution to this dilemma: if we can create institutional environments that encourage students to look beyond demographic difference to discover and Embrace Similarity with culturally different peers, we can support students in developing intercultural relationships. As other researchers of interpersonal attraction have noted, getting to know someone allows us to look beyond surface differences to discover deep similarity (Halualani et al., 2004; Harrison et al, 2002; Jackson et al., 2003; Jehn et al., 1999; Larkey, 1996). Indeed, this is what all of my participants experienced in developing their own friendships: spending time together, whether in a residence hall, at work, studying together, or in a friendship group, facilitated their discovery of similar interests, values, and beliefs, which in turn created the spark of attraction on which their friendships were built. In their pair interview, Charles and Alisha insightfully discussed the particular promise of the college environment (compared to high school) for facilitating students' ability to get to know peers as whole individuals with unique interests, goals, and perspectives, leading to the discovery of deep similarity and the development of friendships. And although relying upon surface-level similarity may be college students' "default"

setting, Wimmer and Lewis (2010) encouragingly found deep similarity to be a much more powerful factor in friendship development than racial/ethnic similarity. My theory complements their findings, and together our research suggests that similarity-attraction does not have to result in homogeneous peer interactions and friendships; rather, it can be leveraged through intentional policies and programming to promote intercultural interactions and friendships. In my section on Significance and Implications for Educational Practice and Policy below, I discuss some promising ways in which student affairs educators and institutional leaders can create environments that facilitate the discovery of similarity and support intercultural friendship development.

In terms of friendship sustainment, my theory is also congruent with Newcomb's (1962) assertion that while similarity based on shared interests may serve as an initial basis of attraction, sustainment of a friendship requires a deeper level of connection. He notes that initial attraction

... is likely to be based upon shared interests ... like preferred sports, hobbies, or tastes in music ... Closeness of interpersonal relationships after four months of acquaintance was in many (though not all) cases determined more by sharing of general values (religious, perhaps, or aesthetic) than by more specific interests held in common. (pp. 476-477)

Overall, my participants displayed a pattern that reflects what Newcomb describes; many of them attributed their friendship development to discovering shared interests (often facilitated by propinquity in the form of living or working together), although a few, such as Amina,

experienced an initial attraction on the basis of shared values, suggesting that shared interests are not the only possible basis for initial attraction. This initial attraction, usually rooted in shared interests, provided participants with a purpose and a desire to want to spend more time together engaged in their shared interests. Spending more time together, in turn, gave them an opportunity to get know each other better and discover things they shared at a deeper level, such as values, beliefs, and goals; the deeper similarity they discovered, in turn, facilitated other processes central to friendship sustainment such as Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Exploring Other Cultures, and Bridging Difference to Connect. Indeed, my participants’ experiences of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference reflected the findings of Montoya et al. (2008), that while similarity is important in friendship formation, differences become an integral and valuable part of the relationship over time.

Propinquity. Previous research on college students’ interracial friendships has found propinquity to be a predictive factor for friendship development (antonio, 2004; Foster, 2005; Newcomb, 1961; Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Congruent with these findings, propinquity, especially in the form of living or working together, was a facilitating condition for two of the central processes of my substantive theory (Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”), suggesting that it is indeed an important factor in the development and sustainment of college students’ interracial friendships. A critical limitation of previous studies, however, is that they have not been able to elucidate *how* propinquity influences

interracial friendships; my theory provides such insight. Propinquity, especially (although not exclusively) in the form of living together, facilitates interracial friendship development by creating an environment in which peers can engage in repeated, sustained interaction in a comfortable space. As a result, they get to know each other at a deeper level, allowing them to discover deep similarity and to engage in relational moments that lead to the cultivation of trust. Propinquity supports interracial friendship sustainment in similar ways, as the ongoing opportunities for interaction it provides enable the friends to grow their friendship by pursuing their similarities and deepening trust. Interestingly, however, I found that propinquity can also work against friendship sustainment by amplifying weaknesses in the “silent contract.” In addition, propinquity played an important role in friendship development for participants who otherwise may not have been inclined to step outside their comfort zones to connect with peers from other racial or ethnic groups (i.e., those who did not exhibit Exploratory Orientation). However, my theory suggests that while propinquity can facilitate the central processes involved in interracial friendships, it is not a required condition for friendship development or sustainment, nor is it sufficient in and of itself as a factor enabling students to develop and sustain their friendships. In other words, my theory shows that propinquity contributes to—but does not explain or cause—interracial friendship development, something that previous research has not been able to uncover. By identifying how propinquity facilitates the central processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment, my theory provides new insight into how we as educators can leverage

propinquity to support these friendships (which I discuss in the section on Significance and Implications for Educational Practice and Policy below).

Furthermore, my substantive theory sheds additional light upon the relationship between propinquity and the theory of similarity-attraction. Specifically, my theory suggests that that propinquity interacts with context to potentially create the conditions under which students can discover deep similarity with peers from other cultural backgrounds. The sustained interaction that propinquity guarantees is insufficient, on its own, for friendship development; for a friendship to develop, two potential friends must be able to engage in the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, something that can only occur in certain contexts. Indeed, Charles's and Alisha's insightful example illustrates this interaction between propinquity and context. In their pair interview they discussed feeling that they never would have become friends in high school, even if they'd had all their classes together (i.e., propinquity), because the environment of high school is not conducive to discovering deep similarity. In college, however, they became close friends despite living on opposite sides of campus and not having any classes together (i.e., lacking propinquity) because they were able to spend time together in ways that allowed them to connect as whole individuals and to get to know each other at a deep level.

Natasha also provided insight into the relationship between propinquity and similarity-attraction during her pair interview with Inga, in which she discussed how living together can promote heterogeneity or homogeneity in friendships. She noted that depending on whether you live in a diverse residence hall, at one extreme, or a fraternity or sorority

house at the other extreme, your friendship group may be very diverse or very homogeneous (an observation congruent with Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). One possible interpretation of her comment is that propinquity is a more powerful attractive force than similarity, in that we're inclined to become friends with those nearest us, which is what Wimmer and Lewis (2010) suggest. However, my theory offers a different interpretation, congruent with others' findings (e.g., Halualani et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2002; Jackson et al., 2003; Jehn et al., 1999; Larkey, 1996): propinquity may mediate our perceptions of similarity so that the role of similarity in attraction continues to operate as theorized ("because you're near me and I interact with you a lot, you must be similar to me"). Diagrammatically,

Propinquity → Perceived similarity → Attraction → Friendship development

Taking the relationship between propinquity and similarity-attraction a step further, my theory suggests additional steps in this relationship:

*Propinquity + Context facilitating shared interest-based interactions →
Perceived similarity → Initial attraction → Increased time investment and interaction depth
→ Discovery of deep similarity and cultivating trust → Friendship development*

Building upon Natasha's insight, if the environment in which the student is situated allows for propinquity to diverse peers ("diverse propinquity") and facilitates connection around shared interests, interracial friendships are likely to develop. However, if the environment is racially homogeneous and/or it does not facilitate the discovery of shared interests and interactions based on those interests, then interracial friendships will be less likely to develop. This hypothesized relationship between propinquity and similarity-

attraction is a fertile area for future research. Park (2014) has taken some steps in this direction in her study of the relationship between participation in student organizations and interracial friendship development. In that study, she found that participation in some types of organizations (e.g., Greek, religious, and ethnic organizations) lowers the probability of having a close friend of another race, but she did not identify any organization types associated with an *increased* likelihood of interracial friendship. She suggests this may be because most student organizations don't allow for sustained interpersonal contact at a deep level, and I agree with her conclusion based upon my own findings. My substantive theory provides some guidance for identifying the types of environments that may lead to interracial friendship development, but we need additional research to explore which specific environments, or features of those environments, are most effective at supporting interracial friendship development.

Contact hypothesis. Many of my participants expressed a belief that they were the exception on Southeastern University's campus in terms of having close friends from other cultural backgrounds. Sloan made a particularly astute observation in this regard. She described noticing that, as a broad rule, heterogeneous interactions on campus tend to be driven by a purpose (e.g., academic project groups, studying, student organization planning), whereas social interactions (e.g., eating in dining halls, hanging out) tend to be homogeneous. In other words, given the choice, peers prefer to hang out with those like themselves (homophily). The latter, social, interactions lead to friendships, whereas the former, purposeful, interactions are less likely to lead to friendship because of their task-

focused and time-limited nature—once the task is complete, there's no need for the interactions to continue. There's also a choice dimension as well: students are presumably choosing whom to socialize with, whereas task-focused interactants may not have chosen to spend time together but rather are doing so out of necessity or obligation. As Sloan described:

I see interracial people interacting with each other at certain events. Like if [Multicultural Student Support Services] throws on an event, or maybe [the Design School], when I venture over there sometimes, you see people working together more so. But I don't have the knowledge to know if those people are actually friends or if they're just classmates or if they just met up that social event and happen to be talking. So for the most part, I think it's uncommon to see people eating together in the ... dining halls, because that's probably not class-related or not event-related, that probably was an intentional thing. So I think it is much less common in the context of where you see different groups of people interacting, that you could guess that they're probably good friends. ... Because even in the library, I mean, other than in study rooms where it's very likely that people are working on a project together, you could draw circles around people who all look same.

What Sloan, and other participants, observed would seem to contradict two of Allport's (1954/1988) optimal conditions for positive intercultural contact: cooperation and working toward a common purpose or goal. Of course, Allport's conditions pertain to the optimal conditions for contact that leads to prejudice reduction; these conditions do not

necessarily lead to friendship. It's possible that these task-focused interactions may yield positive outcomes for the interactants even if they do not lead to friendship development. However, given that intercultural friendship has been shown to be a particularly "substantial and meaningful" (Hurtado, 2007, p. 190) form of intercultural interaction in terms of its potential for helping students realize the critical societal outcomes that result from diversity (such as prejudice reduction), it seems counter-intuitive, then, that the optimal conditions for positive intercultural contact and the optimal conditions for intercultural friendship development may be different.

Many studies to date have recommended that institutions wishing to encourage intercultural interaction and friendship on campus create contexts that honor Allport's four conditions, especially those that focus on cooperation and shared goals (e.g., N. D. Martin et al., 2014). And yet, ironically, my theory suggests that the campus environments that best facilitate friendship development may be those where working cooperatively toward a shared goal is at most a secondary aim; environments that encourage relaxation and socialization, such as in residence halls (e.g., N. D. Martin et al., 2014), seem to be much more effective for friendship development because they reduce the risk and discomfort of intercultural interaction and facilitate the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. Such environments also allow students to choose with whom they interact and the terms of those interactions, which may account for another reason why friendship has a more powerful effect on prejudice reduction than other forms of contact that are circumstantial or

not fully voluntary (McClelland & Linnander, 2006; although see Bowman & Park [2015] for conflicting evidence).

What my theory suggests, then, is that we as student affairs educators and researchers may be making an erroneous assumption that the conditions that facilitate interracial interaction also facilitate interracial friendship and vice versa. A recent study by Bowman and Park (2014) is possibly the first to question the assumption that interaction and friendship are predicted by the same factors. Although they did not examine Allport's (1954/1988) conditions specifically, their results suggest that interracial interaction and friendship are not qualitatively the same. They found that "almost half of the relationships between independent variables and interracial contact differed significantly between the two outcomes [cross-racial interaction and interracial friendship]" (p. 680) and that three variables that positively predicted interaction negatively predicted friendship. Because the potential of intercultural friendships for students' learning and development is greater than that of intercultural interactions generally (Hurtado, 2007; Milem et al., 2005; Park, 2014; although see Bowman & Park [2015] for conflicting evidence), it may be a better investment of resources for institutions to focus on creating environments that facilitate intercultural friendship development and sustainment, which may not be the same as those that facilitate intercultural interaction. Indeed, as Bowman and Park's (2014) results as well as my own findings suggest, the continued focus on creating spaces and opportunities for intercultural *interaction* might be detracting from the very educational outcomes we hope to achieve by funneling resources away from environments that support intercultural *friendship*. However, other

explanations may also be possible; for example, perhaps purposeful heterogeneous interactions among college students might not immediately lead to heterogeneous friendships, but by slowly chipping away at students' prejudices, they make students more likely to develop heterogeneous friendships later on in life (i.e., a latent effect). Clearly this is an important area for future research, so that colleges and universities can best support students' achievement of diversity-related learning outcomes.

Emotional connection and vulnerability. Emotional connection and vulnerability, both of which are important in a close friendship (Davies et al., 2011; Hays, 1985; Turner et al., 2007), play a supportive role in my substantive theory as a facilitating condition for the process of Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract.” Specifically, vulnerability and the open sharing of emotions facilitated friendship development as well as the transition from casual to close friendship. My findings in this regard are consistent with those of Davies et al. (2011), who conducted a meta-analysis of 135 studies of intergroup friendships, as well as with those of Hays (1985), who examined close friendship development among college students. Although Davies et al.'s meta-analysis included but was not limited to college students or to interracial friendships, their findings support some of the central processes within my theory. For example, they note that “the more actual interactions that take place between cross-group friends over the course of the relationship, the more opportunities exist for friends both to be reminded of their differing group memberships as well as to learn that they are each unique individuals who may share some meaningful commonalities” (p. 341), which reflects the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference within my

theory. I consulted the Davies et al. article during my second literature review, after I had begun developing the categories comprising my theory, so the parallels between their findings and my theory are not a result of preconception on my part but rather provide support for some of the concepts within my substantive theory.

My substantive theory as well as the findings of Davies et al. (2011), Hays (1985), and Bowman and Denson (2012) emphasize the role that emotion plays in facilitating the relational connection that is essential to the development and sustainment of close friendship. And yet most of the quantitative research predominant within the body of scholarship on college students' interracial friendships ignores emotional and affective factors entirely, limiting our holistic understanding of these relationships and how we as educators can support them. A few studies (e.g., Bowman, 2012a; Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012; Bowman & Denson, 2011; Hurtado, 2005, 2007; Pettigrew, 1998a) have drawn attention to the need to consider affective factors and interaction quality, as these may influence outcomes of interracial interaction. However, we should also be attending to qualitative and affective factors in our examination of intercultural friendships, as affective processes and emotional investment may be the critical mechanisms through which intercultural friendship leads to prejudice reduction (Bowman & Denson, 2011; Davies et al., 2011; Paolini et al., 2007; Pettigrew, 1998a). As Bowman and Denson (2011) conclude,

... interracial emotional bonds are likely responsible for the effects of [positive] interracial interactions that have been observed in previous research. In other words, socializing, dining, and studying with diverse students does not automatically yield

educational benefits, but these benefits instead come from sharing feelings and problems and from the concomitant interpersonal relationships that may result from those interactions. (p. 228)

Therefore, future research should incorporate affective measures (e.g., emotional investment, perceived interaction quality, trust, empathy, and positive emotional arousal) as mediating, moderating, and dependent variables (for quantitative research) and as factors shaping the experiences within and outcomes of interracial friendship (for qualitative research).

Significance and Implications for Educational Practice and Policy

Student affairs educators and institutional leaders cannot assume that race is no longer relevant to our students; race is still relevant for them (as I discuss in chapter four) and it will continue to be relevant for them after they graduate into our diverse U.S. society (Apollon, 2011; Johnston, 2014; Johnston et al., 2014; Vega, 2014). Therefore, we need to prepare our graduates to function productively in that society, which involves developing the skills to interact and form relationships with members of other cultural groups (American Council on Education, 2012; Association of American Colleges and Universities & Hart Research Associates, 2013; Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013; E. L. Dey, 2010; Garces, 2014; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005, 2007). In this section I discuss the implications of my substantive theory of how college students develop and sustain interracial friendships for educational practice and policy. I begin by discussing how my theory informs student affairs practices to support students in developing and sustaining intercultural friendship. I next discuss how institutional leaders and student affairs educators can create

campus environments that promote student learning and development through intercultural friendships. I conclude with a discussion of the two outcomes included in my theory, Valuing Interculturalism and Integrating the Self, connecting these concepts to existing literature to illuminate their significance for practice.

Throughout this section I use the term “intercultural” when discussing the broader potential of my substantive theory and its implications, as I believe that the processes and outcomes of interracial friendship may hold true for intercultural friendship broadly. I use “interracial” to refer specifically to my participants’ experiences and the components of my theory, as interracial friendship was the focus of my research.

Supporting Students in Developing and Sustaining Intercultural Friendships

Leveraging the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference.

The process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference is the critical point of entry for interracial friendship development, as I discussed in chapter four. Although the three other processes are essential to interracial friendship—especially for friendship sustainment—interracial friendships cannot develop if students are unable to find and embrace similarity with culturally different peers. Therefore, in my discussion of implications for educational practice and policy I focus primarily on how colleges and universities can leverage the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference to support students in developing intercultural friendships and, through these friendships, ensure students achieve the diversity-related learning outcomes that result.

Previous research has suggested that structural diversity (i.e., availability), coupled with institutional interventions that seek to ensure contact between students from different racial/ethnic groups (i.e., propinquity), such as intentionally interracial roommate assignments, together have a positive effect on interracial interaction and friendship (antonio, 2004; Bowman & Park, 2014; Camargo et al., 2010; Foster, 2005; Martin et al., 2014; Newcomb, 1961; Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005; Stearns et al., 2009; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). My substantive theory provides support for this idea and reaffirms the need for institutions to continue to find innovative ways to ensure structural diversity despite challenges to affirmative action. Although not a required condition for Embracing Similarity, propinquity is a strong facilitating condition, especially in the form of living or working together on campus, because it helps potential friends discover shared interests and values through repeated opportunities for interaction. However, my theory also suggests that propinquity alone is insufficient; rather, the most effective interventions to support intercultural friendship development are those that combine propinquity with contexts that facilitate students' ability to discover shared interests, values, and perspectives (i.e., deep similarity) and allow them to spend time together in a comfortable, low-stakes environment. As Davies et al. (2001) note,

The more actual interactions that take place between cross-group friends over the course of the relationship, the more opportunities exist for friends both to be reminded of their differing group memberships as well as to learn that they are each unique individuals who may share some meaningful commonalities. (p. 341)

As I discuss in my section on Significance and Implications for Theory above, I hypothesize that the specific path by which propinquity and shared interests lead to friendship development may resemble the following (this relationship assumes sufficient availability of diverse peers—i.e., structural diversity):

*Propinquity + Context facilitating shared interest-based interactions →
Perceived similarity → Initial attraction → Increased time investment and interaction depth
→ Discovery of deep similarity and cultivating trust → Friendship development*

Allport (1954/1988) suggests that what matters most in prejudice reduction in a neighborhood context is communication and working together “in community enterprises”; my substantive theory suggests that this is true within the residential environment of a college campus as well: “We must not assume that integrated housing [or intentionally intercultural roommate assignment policies] automatically solves the problem of prejudice. At most we can say that it creates a condition where friendly contacts and accurate social perceptions can occur” (p. 272). In addition, McClelland and Linnander (2006) found voluntary contact (e.g., friendships) to have a greater effect on prejudice reduction than involuntary contact (e.g., roommate assignments). Together, their insights underscore my own finding that propinquity is not enough; it needs to be combined with environmental conditions and programming that give students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds “the opportunity to achieve similarity” (Bahns et al., 2011, p. 127) through frequent and meaningful interaction rooted in what they share. Large universities need to be especially conscious of creating environments and programming that facilitate Embracing Similarity

because they have to overcome the problem of having a greater pool of available same-race peers with whom students to form friendships; yet they also have the advantage of providing a greater number of students who are similar at a deep level for friendship development—as long as they can aid students in discovering deep similarity with culturally diverse peers (Bahns et al., 2011).

So how can colleges and universities help their students Embrace Similarity with peers from other cultural backgrounds in practice? Living-learning communities, as I've previously discussed, seem to be a promising intervention for supporting intercultural friendships; these campus environments are both social- and purpose-focused, giving residents opportunities to engage in structured activities with a goal or shared purpose as well as space in which to hang out and relax together. In such an environment, surface demographic differences quickly become irrelevant because students are able to discover deeper sources of similarity for connection. Living-learning communities that are intentionally designed to address availability (i.e., ensuring a culturally diverse pool of residents), propinquity (i.e., through intentionally intercultural roommate and hall/suite assignments), and shared interests (i.e., focused on a specific purpose or theme, such as music, a shared faith, or a shared commitment to service), as well as to provide an environment that facilitates sustained, low-stakes interaction (e.g., providing comfortable lounge space and hosting social programming or off-campus excursions) offer an ideal environment for the development (and sustainment) of interracial friendship and meaningful interracial interaction. Congruent with my suggestion for practice, Longerbeam's (2010)

study of living-learning communities found that they have an especially strong effect, compared to other campus environments, on increasing students' openness to diversity.

Furthermore, my substantive theory provides support for Inkelas and Weisman's (2003) finding that social environments and activities, rather than classroom environments or academic activities, "are most influential in shaping a preference for new sociocultural perspectives" (p. 358). In designing interventions to support intercultural interaction, student affairs educators and institutional leaders may be overly focused on meeting Allport's (1954/1988) four conditions for intergroup contact that leads to prejudice reduction, incorrectly assuming that efforts to encourage interracial interaction in purely social contexts will either be ineffective (perhaps assuming that in the absence of an overarching purpose, students will not be motivated to interact across surface cultural differences) or that socializing in and of itself will not lead to the desired outcome of prejudice reduction because it lacks purposeful educational structure. Yet my substantive theory suggests that social contexts may be *more* effective in helping students develop intercultural friendships because in the course of getting to know each other in a relaxed, social environment, students are able to discover interests and values they have in common, thereby forging relational connection around deep similarity and facilitating friendship development.

Living together is only one way in which institutions can help students connect in a relaxed, social environment; as Charles suggested in his interview, shared-interest events or organizations might also be powerful ways of achieving this goal. Such events or organizations need not have a greater purpose than merely providing an opportunity for

students to come together and have fun doing things in which they share a mutual interest; indeed, attempting to structure these events around formal learning goals may undermine friendship development. Providing social environments where students can hang out or engage in leisure activities together, such as on-campus coffee shops or video game rooms, may also be effective. As student affairs educators we often talk about “educationally purposeful” activities and spaces (e.g., Kuh, 1996; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006), yet creating on-campus environments and opportunities in which students can relax free from the constraints of purpose may help facilitate some of the most critical outcomes of a college education by supporting intercultural friendship development and sustainment. Indeed, perhaps we need to question our longstanding assumptions about what qualities make a campus environment or program educationally purposeful. In creating these environments, however, we also need to provide more-structured guidance and support to ensure students’ interactions across cultural differences are respectful and constructive, as I discuss later in this chapter.

Although living-learning communities are especially promising for supporting interracial friendships, traditional residence halls can also facilitate interracial friendship development. However, propinquity alone (e.g., though interracial roommate assignments) only guarantees interracial *interaction*; it does not guarantee that students will develop interracial *friendships*. Therefore, student affairs educators working in residence life also need to provide opportunities and programming that foster the discovery of and relational connection through deep similarity, to help students Embrace Similarity. During his

interview, Charles provided an illustrative example of the sort of programming that might achieve this purpose, discussing a “throwback game night” hosted by of the campus organizations he’s involved with:

... the idea of nostalgia and the ideal of reminiscing about your childhood in terms of shared experiences, like if everyone’s played Monopoly when they were younger or something. When you go into that activity with the passion or desire to reminisce or something and you’re not there to like, I’ll just use the other extreme as like a food fair where you have X, Y, and Z countries and all their foods and the different groups of things. So when you’re going into the game night, your goal or your mindset is to reminisce or just have fun. And then when you go into a food night or something, you might go in it for the food or you might go there to be educated about what makes groups different. I don’t think you’re going there to find similarities between Chinese and Italian food. You’re just saying oh, this is what this food tastes like, this is what this food tastes like. And that’s because there’s these groups and this is what makes them different. So you almost have the mindset of segregation and like the mindset of differences ... you’re celebrating the differences of food and you’re celebrating, I guess, nationalism and how each of these countries values food and whatever else they might be doing differently, apart from each other. But then when you go to a game night or you go to just a fun activity, you’re celebrating that everyone’s there for the same experience and everyone’s there for the same reason. And when you begin to find other people no matter the race or ethnicity or whatever, that when you

understand that they're also here for this experience, all of a sudden you're sharing an experience and you're starting a friendship or whatever. You're starting to find other people who are interested in the same things you are.

Charles feels that a childhood game night is a great way to connect people across cultures because many students share a nostalgia for childhood games; hosting a cultural food night, by contrast, doesn't allow students to connect through what they share. His contrasting examples also offer insight into another feature of programming that effectively supports intercultural relational connection: positive emotional arousal. Issues of similarity and difference aside, playing childhood games evokes shared feelings of nostalgia (positive emotional arousal), whereas tasting food from different cultures likely offers little emotional arousal (positive or negative).

Building upon Charles's examples, a semester-long cooking class focused on different world cuisines (bringing together people who share in interest in cooking) would have limited effectiveness in facilitating intercultural connection because it lacks the emotional arousal component, but if the same cooking class also involved opportunities for participants to share stories about why they love cooking and their memories of cooking with family members, and perhaps also gave each participant a chance to teach the class a favorite dish while sharing why it's so special to them, could be an effective means of facilitating intercultural relationships.

In addition, my participants' experiences illustrate how developing memories through shared experiences also facilitates the development and deepening of interracial friendship,

likely due to the emotional arousal involved. For college students who live on campus and may not have the transportation or financial means to seek shared experiences off campus, providing these opportunities to develop memories together on campus (or through campus-organized trips) is especially critical. It seems, therefore, that there are four conditions for programming and activities to be effective in facilitating the process of Embracing Similarity that allows interracial friendships to develop: (1) creating environments of diverse propinquity, (2) allowing for socializing, having fun, and spending low-stakes time with these diverse peers, (3) fostering discovery of and connection around shared interests, and (4) facilitating positive emotional arousal and the development of memories. An intervention—or combination of interventions—that meets three or four of these conditions promises to be more effective at supporting interracial friendship than interventions that only meet one or two conditions.

Interestingly, it would seem that fraternities and sororities might also be ideal places to facilitate intercultural friendship development given that they meet the latter three favorable conditions. Yet because fraternities and sororities on most college campuses tend to be racially homogeneous (i.e., they fail to meet the first condition), they more often promote racially homogeneous friendship groups rather than racially diverse friendship groups (Jayakumar, 2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009; N. D. Martin, 2014; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007). It would probably never be feasible or effective to establish cultural diversity quotas for traditionally White Greek organizations. However, if student affairs educators could find

a way to diversify these organizations more organically, with buy-in from their members, they could hold great promise for facilitating interracial friendship and the important learning that results from these relationships. This is an intriguing possibility for educational practice, and I hope future researchers will investigate its potential.

Friendship groups are also an important source of propinquity, and depending upon whether the friendship group is homogeneous or heterogeneous, the mechanisms of balancing and triadic closure (the tendency for students to “close” their friendship networks by befriending peers with whom their friends are friends) can lead a student to develop primarily *interracial* or primarily *intraracial* (i.e., homogeneous) friendships (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Seventeen of my participants discussed sharing membership in a friendship group as a factor influencing the development and/or sustainment of their friendships. In terms of development, spending time together in a friendship group helped them to get to know each other better (facilitating the processes of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract”). The general pattern among those who developed their friendships through friendship groups is that they started by hanging out with a group of friends, often in their first semester. Then, two of the members of that group discovered they have something in common or feel some other interpersonal attraction, and they began spending time together as a pair in addition to spending time with the whole group, leading to the development of a friendship. In terms of sustainment, having a close friend that gets along well with their other friends allows them to not have to divide their time between friends (a logistical consideration); in addition, having

the support or endorsement of their other friends—whether explicitly stated or implied through the other friends’ willingness to spend time as a group—provides external validation of the interracial friendship (an interpersonal consideration).

Regarding educational practice to support interracial friendships, my findings concerning the role of friendship groups in facilitating close friendship development suggests that finding ways to help students develop culturally diverse friendship groups can lead to deeper interpersonal relationships among members of that group, congruent with Wimmer and Lewis (2010). Institutions can help students to diversify their friendship groups by implementing policies and programming that put students from differing cultural backgrounds in each others’ way—providing them with the *opportunity* to connect—but then also giving them a *reason* to connect (e.g., around a shared interest or purpose) (Bowman & Park, 2014; Camargo et al., 2010; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). As I discuss above, living-learning communities exist at this intersection and therefore have promise for diversifying students’ friendship groups, as would Greek organizations if they offered sufficient structural diversity.

Ultimately, the challenge for student affairs educators and institutional leaders is that cultural homogeneity is the default for most college students (and for most of U.S. society as well) because it doesn’t require stepping outside of one’s comfort zone or taking the risk involved with engaging the unfamiliar. In the absence of a compelling purpose for interacting across difference, many students (perhaps excepting those with Exploratory Orientation) will choose not to do so because it’s “too hard.” Yet colleges and universities can reduce the

anticipated discomfort and risk involved in interacting with culturally diverse peers by providing students with opportunities to connect across deep (versus surface cultural) similarity; if we can aid students in Embracing Similarity, cultural differences will cease to become a factor preventing the development of intercultural peer relationships.

Equipping students to engage in positive intercultural interaction and friendships. For many students, especially those who come to college from homogeneous neighborhoods and schools and/or who lack Exploratory Orientation, interacting with a fellow student from a different racial or ethnic group requires them to step outside of their comfort zones. Indeed, the cognitive challenge and disequilibrium this involves is a large part of the reason why interracial interaction and friendship lead to learning and growth (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005, 2007), but it's also understandable why many students are reluctant to embrace the discomfort and potential risk of rejection involved in attempting to cross cultural differences without institutional support (Hurtado et al., 2002). For these students, living together might become an especially important facilitating condition because in sharing the same room or suite, students can interact across difference in the comfortable and secure environment of "home." Bryan, Kandace, and Rachel—three participants who did not actively seek friendships with peers outside their own racial groups—provide evidence of the power of living together for fostering interracial friendship development. The residence hall room or suite is a space in which students often feel comfortable, relaxed, and in familiar territory, making interactions across cultural difference seem less uncomfortable, risky, or threatening. Residence halls,

where students can relax and hang out, represent a low-stakes environment for interpersonal peer interaction; classrooms, by contrast, are high-stakes environments where students must perform and compete. Although the sampling strategy I used for this study doesn't permit me to make conclusions about the campus environments in which interracial friendships are more or less likely to develop, I nonetheless think it is notable that only two of my 21 participants initially met their friends in class. My substantive theory suggests that certain outcomes of a college education—in this case, societal outcomes related to appreciation for diversity, pluralistic orientation, and reduction of prejudice, which result from intercultural peer relationships—cannot be achieved through the formal curriculum and, instead, must be achieved through the co-curriculum.

As student affairs educators, then, we must be intentional as well as creative in identifying ways to support interracial friendship development, especially among students who may not be inclined to step outside their comfort zones. This may require us to rethink what we consider to be an “educationally purposeful” intervention (Kuh, 1996; Kuh et al., 2006). We too often focus on the means in determining if an intervention is educationally purposeful (for example, designing living-learning communities and student organizations focused upon academic majors or career interests). Instead, my theory suggests that we should instead consider whether the *outcome* is educationally purposeful; if so, we need to implement the most effective means to help students achieve that outcome, even if the means may not resemble prevailing notions of what is, and isn't, an educationally purposeful intervention. For example, an institution might establish a comic book-themed living-

learning community. If the institution's Residence Life Division then ensures racial diversity in selecting interested students to live in the community, the combination of propinquity (living together), shared interests (similarity-attraction), and a low-stakes, social environment promises to facilitate interracial friendship development even among students who would otherwise not see friendship potential in peers from other racial groups.

Educational interventions are also necessary for interrupting the cycle of perpetuation of segregation—that is, the notion that without intentional interruption, segregation in one environment (e.g., in K-12 schools) will lead to segregation in future environments (e.g., college, neighborhood of first home, etc.) due to the effects of racial homophily (Goldsmith, 2010; Milem & Umbach, 2003; Milem et al., 2004; V. B. Saenz, 2010). Conversely, experiencing heterogeneity in earlier environments can lead an individual to seek heterogeneity in future environments (Hurtado, 2003; Hurtado et al., 2002; Jayakumar, 2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz, 2010; Wolfe & Fletcher, 2013). V. B. Saenz (2010) also found that students of Color who came from predominately White pre-college environments reported the highest frequency of positive cross-racial interaction in college, while White students from predominately White pre-college environments reported the lowest frequency. Congruent with these findings, the students of Color in my study who came from predominately White pre-college environments (Marcelo and Natasha) both indicated valuing racial diversity in their peer relationships; they actively rejected homogeneity and sought heterogeneous environments and friendships.

However, my participants' experiences seem to conflict with previous findings regarding the predictive role of pre-college diversity exposure in that some of my White participants who grew up in predominately White pre-college environments (e.g., Charles, Maggie, and to some extent Brynn) also discussed valuing and actively seeking racial diversity in their peer interactions and relationships. One possible explanation is that the students in this latter category represent exceptions rather than the norm, and I suspect that may be true. But from the perspective of effective educational practice, it's important that we learn from the experiences of these students so that we can help more students who lack pre-college exposure to diverse cultures to see the value in interracial peer relationships. Helping students develop a curiosity about the world around them (i.e., helping them to develop Exploratory Orientation) and providing programming in which they can develop the skills and comfort needed to interact with peers from other cultural backgrounds might be effective in encouraging more students to seek intercultural interactions and friendships, and, consequently, to achieve the crucial learning and development outcomes that result. As V. B. Saenz (2010) concluded, "racially and ethnically diverse college settings, as well as students' college diversity experiences, significantly mediate or interrupt these perpetuation effects [of homogeneous pre-college environments]" (p. 30).

Another possible practical intervention institutions could implement in order to facilitate interracial friendship development among students who might otherwise not step outside their comfort zones is to assign students who are most likely to lack pre-college exposure to diversity (as evidenced by their hometowns and high schools) to roommates

from other racial/ethnic groups.⁴ In this case, the roommate assignment provides a developmental challenge (i.e., it creates disequilibrium), but for it to lead to learning and growth, we also need to provide developmentally appropriate support (Sanford, 1962), such as multicultural competence and general interpersonal skills trainings to help ensure interactions are positive and connection-fostering rather than negative and disconnection-fostering (Bowman & Denson, 2011; Hurtado, 2005; Hurtado et al., 2002; Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2013). For example, residence halls could offer intercultural training, which Tanaka (2003) describes as “an approach to learning and sharing across cultures where no cultures dominates” (p. 16) and in which members of different cultures are engaged in interaction and exchange. Roommate assignments could also be structured as intercultural learning partnerships (Quaye & Baxter Magolda, 2007) through which students can co-construct learning through dialogue and reflection about racial issues (facilitated by a trained Resident Advisor/Director or other educator). Both of these types of interventions focus on developing students’ ability to understand and appreciate others’ perspectives. They also facilitate students’ engagement in respectful and reflective dialogue through which they can develop appreciative knowledge of their cultural differences as well as discover and embrace common aspects of their backgrounds and experiences. Notably, because interventions such as these are designed to facilitate students’ intercultural connection in a relational context (i.e., through guided interactions with peers), they promise to be more effective at helping

⁴ This suggestion does raise some potential ethical issues regarding differential treatment of students based upon their backgrounds; however, I would argue that the learning and development benefits would justify the differential treatment as long as institutions provide adequate support for these students to ensure they are equipped to engage in positive and respectful roommate relationships.

students develop the ability to respectfully connect with each other across their cultural differences than more traditional, classroom-style approaches to improving cross-cultural competence and understanding that do not have a relational focus.

Furthermore, from an equity perspective, the burden should not be placed on one roommate to serve as educator to the other; demographically, at a predominately White institution it's most likely to be a student of Color educating a White student in this arrangement, which is an inequitable expectation to place upon students of Color as an implicit condition of their presence on campus (Iverson, 2007; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012; Schmidt, 2007). Ultimately, as student affairs educators, we need to create environments and interventions that encourage *all* students to engage with culturally diverse peers to ensure their learning, rather than allowing students to “opt out” of interracial interaction and friendship because of the potential risk or discomfort involved (Hurtado et al., 2002).

Encouraging reluctant or anxious students to step outside of their comfort zones is not the only challenge that colleges and universities must address through supportive interventions; many students—even those who intentionally seek out intercultural peers—are hampered by a lack of skill or confidence in how to respectfully interact across cultural differences. Among my participants, some in ongoing friendships as well as some whose friendships had ended discussed challenges in sustaining their friendships due to their own or their friends' lack of comfort or skill in interacting across cultural differences, which negatively affected their ability to Embrace Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Bridge Difference to Connect. Other participants discussed observing students around them

struggling to connect with culturally different peers on campus for the same reasons. As educators, we cannot expect that simply bringing students from different cultural groups together will lead to interaction, friendship, and learning, nor can we assume that those students who are motivated to step outside their comfort zones in forming friendships with students from other cultural groups have the skills they need to do so successfully. As educators, we need to ensure that our students are equipped with the knowledge and skills that will lead them to have positive, connection-fostering interactions rather than negative, disconnection-fostering interactions with culturally different peers. Although Bowman (2012a) did find that negative interracial experiences may lead to positive learning outcomes, they may also lead to disengagement from diversity (Engberg, 2007; Hurtado, 2005).

Regardless, interracial friendship necessitates that students be able to Embrace Similarity across their cultural differences to develop friendships and to Bridge Differences when they arise to sustain those friendships. Because many students (especially White students, and to a lesser extent African American students) come to college lacking significant prior interaction with other racial groups (Milem & Umbach, 2003), they are unlikely to have developed the skills and knowledge they need to constructively engage in the processes of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference and Bridging Difference to Connect in order to develop and sustain friendships with peers outside of their own race. In her interview, Rachel, who identifies as Hispanic and White, discussed having a negative interaction with a Ukrainian male former friend around issues of cultural difference that devolved into hurtful conflict. She shared her belief that her university needs to do more

to help incoming students develop the skills, comfort, and respect needed to have positive interactions and relationships across cultural differences:

But there have been issues with other people that I guess – maybe with the university could've maybe prepared me, or residents for, or students better for. Because yeah, coming in your freshman year, those are totally different experiences that you've never had ... [Southeastern University] is so much about like, 'oh, diversity, and we're so accepting,' but at the same time not really preparing you to be accepting of someone else's culture or respecting it or being willing to learn more about it.

As Rachel suggests, creating campus environments that support interracial interaction and the discovery of deep difference is an important start, but we also need to provide students with intentional support to help them develop the skills they need to interact respectfully across cultural difference—for example, in the form of developmentally tailored multicultural competence training beginning in the first weeks of their first semester (or even during orientation).

Maggie's example of being unable to confront her former friend Nikki after Nikki expressed a desire to spend more time with friends of her own race also illuminates the challenges college students have in developing and sustaining interracial friendships when they lack (or feel they lack) multicultural competence. As Maggie described,

... that's the thing I regret, is that I wish at least I had a conversation about it, but I felt really uncomfortable about having it, and I was like meek. Well, I understood it less then, I think, and so I was like, "I don't want to have this conversation and get

her angry.” It’s really hard, I think, for anyone to talk about race, but especially when you’re uncomfortable and trying to walk on eggshells sometimes, and you don’t wanna – when you’re just ignorant and you want to learn more instead of sounding like an oppressor and being ignorant on purpose.

Her example suggests exactly the sort of support she feels she could have used in order to have a constructive, positive discussion with Nikki that might have fostered relational connection (i.e., to Bridge Difference to Connect with Nikki), rather than becoming angry and frustrated, leading to disconnection from Nikki. Beyond disconnection, a more significant risk is that a student who has a negative experience with a peer of another race may choose to entirely opt out of interracial interaction on campus; in other words, it may enhance his/her intergroup anxiety (Davies et al., 2001; Pettigrew, 1998a). Engberg (2007) discusses “the important role that students’ positive interactions across race serve in attenuating their intergroup anxiety. Conversely, students’ negative interactions across race played an even larger role in increasing their intergroup anxiety” (p. 310). For White students, opting out of interracial interaction will negatively affect their achievement of diversity-related educational outcomes; for students of Color, the effects of negative interracial interaction extend deeper to affect their belonging, integration, persistence, well-being, and overall educational experience and outcomes (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Hurtado et al., 1998; D. R. Johnson et al., 2007; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012).

Therefore, we need to employ intentional interventions to develop our students’ skills and confidence in engaging in respectful and constructive conversations about their cultural

differences, in order to support them in developing and sustaining interracial friendships. Intergroup dialogue (Zúñiga, 2003), which is “a face-to-face facilitated conversation between members of two or more social identity groups that strives to create new levels of understanding, relating, and action,” represents a promising possible intervention for aiding students in developing these skills, as do the intercultural learning partnerships (Quaye & Baxter Magolda, 2007) and intercultural training (Tanaka, 2003) mentioned previously. Overall, “contact theory makes clear that if positive results from cross-racial interaction are desired, the environmental conditions that improve the quality of contact are just as important as having the interpersonal contact” (Chang, 2007, p. 28). Colleges and universities can and should be shaping these environmental conditions at the level of interpersonal interaction among students (as well as at the institution level, as discussed below) through intentional interventions designed to support students in developing and sustaining interracial friendships.

Furthermore, students of Color on predominately White campuses are often put in the position of having to educate their White peers about how to be culturally sensitive and respectful when, for example, a peer makes a comment rooted in prejudice or ignorance of other cultural groups. This is a heavy—and unjust—burden to place upon students of Color, adding to the struggles they already face as members of marginalized groups on campus. The alternative choice to serving as an involuntary peer educator is to allow White students’ microaggressions and prejudiced comments to go unchallenged, which carries a different set of negative consequences for students of Color (Guiffrida, 2003; Morrison, 2010; Solórzano,

Yosso, & Ceja, 2000). These factors clearly complicate the friendship development and sustainment process between White students and students of Color by creating a racial “awareness barrier” (Morrison, 2010), as Maggie’s and Kandace’s experiences attest.

Rick provided an illustration of a moment of microaggression by his White friend Elise, which I discussed in chapter four; although her comment upset him, he chose not to confront her about it (employing the avoidance strategy of Bridging Difference to connect) and he felt he made the right decision for their relationship in doing so. As a student affairs educator who values equity and inclusion of students from all cultural backgrounds, I found myself torn between wanting to respect Rick’s autonomous right to determine which relational connection strategies are best for him in his relationships, yet also wanting to rail against the injustice that as an African American student at a predominately White institution, he is sometimes placed in the untenable position of having to endure racist statements from his peers for the sake of sustaining his friendships with them. Students of Color at predominately White institutions should never have to accept prejudice and racism as the price of interracial friendship, nor should they have to serve as multicultural educators for their White peers. Yet when we as student affairs educators encourage interracial interaction and friendship without equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to respectfully engage with peers from other cultural groups, we are, in effect, relinquishing our professional obligation to support *all* students and instead transferring that obligation to students of Color.

The learning that results from intercultural peer interactions and friendships is clearly important, as I discuss extensively in chapters one and two. But we cannot expect students of Color to engage in intercultural relationships that may impact their well-being and educational experiences for the sake of ensuring diversity-related learning (primarily for White students) (Iverson, 2007; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012; Schmidt, 2007). Therefore, institutional leaders and student affairs educators must attend to diversity *and* equity in designing interventions to support interracial friendships, and this includes ensuring that students of Color as well as White students have the specific support they need to positively engage with culturally different peers (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). Interventions to support the dual goals of diversity and equity include multicultural competence programming, workshops to raise White students' awareness of racism (Morrison, 2010), racial justice ally training (Reason, Scales, & Roosa Millar, 2005), intercultural training (Tanaka, 2003), intercultural learning partnerships (Quaye & Baxter Magolda, 2007), and the creation of on-campus cultural communities and "safe spaces" (such as ethnic organizations) for students of Color (Guiffrida, 2003; Patton, 2006; Villalpando, 2003).

While analyzing Amina's transcript, I realized that her concerns are different than many of my other participants, especially around the issue of intercultural interactions. Specifically, she discussed in her interview how difficult she finds it to interact and get along with peers from other cultures because she feels they do not share her values (especially White students) or respect her culture (i.e., her ethnicity and religion). She developed a friendship with Nawal in part because she felt Nawal was one of the few people she has

encountered at Southeastern University who shares her values. Although Amina and Nawal share a religion, they have different ethnic backgrounds (Nawal is Egyptian while Amina is Pakistani). In contrast to other participants, who valued their interracial interactions and friendships for helping them to develop comfort in interacting with and relating to diverse others, Amina felt the primary benefit of her friendship with Nawal is that it serves as a buffer against the marginalization, disrespect, and pain she experiences in her other interracial peer interactions on campus, and Nawal further provides Amina with validation and emotional support to help her weather and manage these negative experiences. I suspect that Amina's experiences might parallel the experiences of some students who choose not to develop interracial friendships despite having the opportunity to do so: they may fear pain or discomfort will result from their attempts to meaningfully interact with peers from other cultural groups. For students of Color on predominately White campuses, opting out of interracial friendship may be a self-presentation strategy (Guiffrida, 2003; Morrison, 2010; Solórzano et al., 2000).

Amina's experience of forming a close friendship with someone with whom she shares one salient cultural identity (religion) but does not share another (ethnicity) suggests a possible way in which institutions might encourage such students to develop interracial friendships: creating environments focused upon a shared cultural identity that are also racially and ethnically diverse. Davies et al. (2011) suggest that

to enhance the positive effects of cross-group friendships, we should first work to reduce anxieties as people initially approach cross-group interactions. We should also

promote strategies that foster meaningful interactions with outgroup members over time, such as self-disclosure and other friendship-building activities that involve spending time together, to nurture greater empathy and closeness between members of different groups. (p. 342)

Living-learning and residential communities based upon a shared religious identity, which have recently been implemented at some private and public colleges and universities in the U.S. (Grasgreen, 2013), are one possibility that may meet the conditions Davies et al. (2011) suggest, but only if they are coupled with supportive multicultural competence programming and an intentional effort to ensure racial/ethnic diversity among residents. However, Park's (2012a) case study of a religious student organization at a structurally diverse university found that members struggled to develop meaningful relationships across race; she concluded that while the pursuit of common goals can facilitate interracial interaction (as Allport's [1954/1988] contact hypothesis suggests), it does not eliminate the problems associated with racial inequality and marginalization that complicate efforts to form deeper relationships like friendships. An environment that facilitates deeper, social levels of connection, such as a living-learning community, may overcome some of these barriers, but we need additional research to determine how institutions can most effectively leverage shared cultural identities to support the development of interracial friendships.

Additional considerations for practice. An additional implication for practice that my participants' experiences illuminate is the existence of a "critical window" for interracial friendship development during the first weeks of students' first semester on campus. During

this time, students are engaged in social mixing and exploration in order to find their niches and establish their friendship groups on campus. Supportive examples from participant interviews and journal responses illustrating the existence of a critical window include:

Isabella: I think number one I would not come in having a really close friend as your roommate, that kind of thing, because that really restricts you in meeting people.

Because I know for me, I knew no one. No one came from my school – well, like three people. And I moved in way early because I was in the Honors Program. And so I didn't know my roommate. I didn't know anyone. And so I came in and it was – I met so many people those first couple weeks. And for meeting people with different cultures, those first two weeks it's acceptable to sit down with anyone. That's very rare that that's going to happen and like you can sit down at the dining hall, sit next to someone and be like, "Hey, what's up?" And it's completely normal and you don't know them. So if you want to meet people of other cultures, I know that's a great way to just like, wow – like I don't know much about China but there's a Chinese person sitting there, I'm just going to talk to them. And you get to meet cool people.

Marcelo: [Tara: If you hadn't met Jasmyn at orientation in your first year but maybe met her this year, do you think that you would have become friends, because you weren't sort of in the situation of meeting people for the first time and being new to college?] I don't see why we wouldn't have become friends, but I definitely think we wouldn't have become that close of friends. At this point, it's just, we're all very busy,

we're doing different things, we already have a close group of friends that you call up last minute and they come over. So it's not something I think people are actively looking for as much. So, "Oh, I'm getting along well with this person. Oh, that was fun. See you next week." Not, "Oh, what are you doing this weekend? Let's go get together sometime." Some people may do that, but that's not something I see as much.

Sloan: I would just say from day one, don't let the welcome week interactions you have with different people just be like, oh, we hung out during welcome week. Take the initiative to get that person's phone number or something, and then, it could start small like that. Like I feel like had I met Ashley during welcome week, and I realized that she was this outgoing, fun person, and I was an outgoing fun, person. And we're like, "Hey, give me your number. Why don't we go eat at the dining hall for dinner tonight." And then after that if that goes well, just be like, "Hey are you going to this event tomorrow?" And just build on it from the first day because everybody's new on the first day, so nobody's gonna judge you for trying to make friends. And I feel like sometimes people just go with their roommate or their suite or with their RA or whatever it may be, or people they knew from high school. And they go do the welcome week stuff, and then they start classes, and then it becomes like a social stigma to try and make friends where it's like, everybody kind of already developed their friendship circles in that first two weeks. And so it becomes difficult to be that

person to reach out and be like, “Hey you wanna get something to eat?” And it’s like, “Oh, I have my new friend that I already met last week, and we already have plans.” That would be my biggest advice, to just start day one, ‘cause nobody’s gonna judge you on the first couple days. But unfortunately it does become well, oh, you know, people recognize that you’re trying to be their friend, but they already are working on a friendship circle, so it’s harder to do. So just do it from the first day.

My participants’ experiences and perspectives demonstrate that time—specifically, the first weeks a student is present on campus—may be a facilitating, although not a required, condition for the development of interracial friendships. Newcomb (1962) also discusses the important influence of “early propinquity in college—when most other individuals are relatively indistinguishable, since most of them are strangers” for the development of peer relationships (p. 474). He adds, “...other things equal, [a college student] is most apt to maintain close relationships with those with whom he first develops them (as determined in part by propinquity)” (p. 476). Newcomb’s ideas regarding propinquity, and specifically “early propinquity,” are congruent with my participants’ idea of a “critical window” for forming intercultural peer relationships. When students have not yet had time to establish their peer groups on campus—when everyone is “relatively indistinguishable”—the racial homogeneity that often results from friendship network balancing (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010) cannot yet be a factor in preventing interracial friendships from forming. Once friendship groups have formed, however, the other effects identified by Wimmer and Lewis

(2010) that lead to homogeneous friendship networks take hold, reducing the likelihood that a student will develop interracial friendships. Marcelo provides a congruent insight:

Well, the main thing at first was just being in a new place, such a big place. And when everyone was coming here, at first you're trying to make friends. You get along well with this person. They could very well become a close friend. Even now as we get to the later years, you kind of have established your friends. Every once in a while, you make a new one, but it's difficult for them to become one of your very close friends, because at this point you already have a group and those people already have their groups.

In terms of implications for practice, the existence of a critical window for interracial friendship development suggests that colleges and universities might achieve the greatest impact by investing time and resources in targeting supportive programming to reach students during their first few weeks on campus. The potential yield, in terms of interracial friendship development, from these early interventions promises to be much greater than that of interventions timed to reach students after this critical window has closed for two reasons. First, network amplification effects will lead students with diverse friendship groups to increase the heterogeneity of their networks over time, while those with homogeneous friendship groups will likely continue to have only same-race friends (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Furthermore, because of positive spillover effects to other cultural groups, students who develop even one interracial friendship early on in their college careers will be more

likely to develop relationships with peers from other cultural groups over time (McClelland & Linnander, 2006).

Of course, it is possible to develop interracial friendships at other times or in other ways, but it just requires more work (or luck, possibly) to establish a connection with someone when you, and others around you, may not be seeking to make relational connections and branch out from your established friendship groups. Sloan and Ashley are an excellent contrasting example; they met during their senior year through working together on campus. But their jobs required them to spend one-on-one time together and gave them time to talk, which allowed them to discover a connection with each other. Brynn and Brittany are another contrasting example; they also met while working together on campus. It's possible that working together has some promise for developing interracial friendships, as it requires two students to interact repeatedly over an extended amount of time, and it also satisfies two of Allport's (1954/1988) conditions for optimal prejudice-reducing contact in that working together generally requires two individuals to share a purpose and work collaboratively toward a goal. In addition, students working together are often of equal status (another of Allport's conditions), and if they're working in an on-campus job, they have institutional support behind them (his fourth condition). And of course, working together is a form of propinquity (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010).

A practical implication, then, is that while living together in the first year might be the *most* powerful facilitating condition for interracial friendship formation, working together on campus is another promising way in which institutions can support interracial friendship

development—and thereby facilitate students’ achievement of the positive learning and development outcomes that result from these relationships. Colleges and universities wishing to encourage interracial friendship development, especially among students for whom the critical window has already closed, might want to invest in creating more on-campus employment opportunities. A related implication is that on-campus units employing students must seek cultural diversity in their outreach and hiring, to ensure that students working for them will have an available pool of diverse peers as potential friends (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010).

Another commonality between Sloan’s and Brynn’s friendship development conditions is that they both met their friends while working in on-campus jobs during the summer, when they had minimal additional obligations (e.g., classes and co-curricular activities). This could provide an example of another dimension of the critical window: students are most open and able to connect with their peers when they don’t have competing priorities and therefore have the freedom to spend time on activities that foster relational connection, such as talking, hanging out, and engaging in fun activities together. It could also be that from an emotional perspective, participants have lower stress and anxiety levels during these times due to the lack of competing priorities and other obligations, and therefore the stress or anxiety that might be associated with stepping outside of one’s comfort zone to connect with someone of another cultural background is more manageable. This condition holds true for Sloan and Brynn as well as for the participants who met during orientation or their first few weeks on campus. It seems, then, that having leisure time may also be a

facilitating condition for the development of interracial friendship (for logistical and/or emotional reasons). One suggested implication for practice is that allowing first-year students to move in earlier than other students at the start of the fall semester will give them time to begin to establish these relational connections, free from other responsibilities and worries. Some institutions do this, but others have moved toward short summer orientations, which may not provide the optimal conditions that facilitate interracial friendship development—especially since students attending summer orientation don't yet live on campus, and so they're unable to connect with those they live with, missing another powerful form of connection.

Creating Campus Environments that Promote Student Learning and Development through Intercultural Friendship

In the previous section, I discussed how colleges and universities can support students in developing and sustaining interracial friendships through programming and practices. In this section, I discuss how they can support and enhance the learning and development that occur through interracial friendships. My substantive theory, as well as my participants' experiences from which I generated it, provide new insight into how colleges and universities can create campus environments that facilitate the development and sustainment of interracial friendships, and they also lend additional support to ideas others have suggested in previous scholarly literature on this topic. In our interviews, I asked participants about their perceptions regarding interracial friendships on Southeastern University's campus as well as ways in which Southeastern University has shaped their friendship (positively or negatively).

Many of the ways in which participants felt the university had positively shaped their friendship connected to the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference. Specifically, many identified on-campus events and activities as opportunities to connect with their friends and deepen their friendships through spending time together. Culturally-focused programming allowed them to Explore Other Cultures as a mechanism of connection. Campus environments such as dining halls, libraries, coffee shops, and residence halls provided them with comfortable spaces in which to engage in the central processes of developing and sustaining their friendships.

Yet some participants also criticized Southeastern University, especially regarding its activities and programming focused on cultural diversity. Although not all participants shared these criticisms, those who did felt that these activities and programs more often undermined, rather than facilitated, interracial friendship. I share their criticisms here as they likely are not specific to Southeastern University but rather reflect challenges common to most predominately White institutions, especially large universities.

Rachel made a powerful observation in her interview that resonated strongly with me. She discussed feeling that so much of the (multi)cultural programming at Southeastern University focuses on the entertainment value or consumption of cultural products like food, music, and dance rather than on developing the skills students need to be able to understand and interact with students from those cultures (i.e., what the literature might call multicultural competence, although she didn't use that term). At the time I interviewed my first wave of participants, I was also co-teaching a class on diversity in higher education with a faculty

member in my department. One of our weekly assigned readings for that class, written by Patricia Hill Collins, reflected Rachel's insight:

One common pattern of relationships across differences in power is one that I label "voyeurism." From the perspective of the privileged, the lives of people of color, of the poor, and of women are interesting for their entertainment value. The privileged become voyeurs, passive onlookers *who do not relate* to the less powerful, but who are interested in seeing how the "different" live. (Collins, 1993/2013, p. 607)

In other words, college students from the majority group (i.e., on most campuses, White students) can voyeuristically observe the lives of the racially and ethnically "different" students on campus without ever having to learn how to relate to these students. This is clearly a significant problem with much existing diversity programming within our institutions: we do not promote social justice and the ending of oppressive systems (in fact, we may *perpetuate* oppression) when we treat underrepresented cultures as though they exist for the enjoyment of and consumption by members of the campus community. Southeastern University, for example, hosts an annual cross-cultural tea where attending students can have a cup of tea and a cookie from four or five represented cultural groups. Yet the opportunities for actual interaction with students representing each of those cultures are limited to asking for tea or a cookie; nothing about the event requires students to step outside of their comfort zones or face development-fostering disequilibrium, or even to have a conversation with a student from one of these groups (Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2003, 2005; Hurtado et al., 2002; Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2013). Similarly, the Student Union sponsored a "Taste of

Southeastern University” event featuring samples of food and performances from cultures around the world represented by Southeastern students. Once again, opportunities for engaging in meaningful intercultural interaction and developmental challenge at this event were minimal at best. These sorts of events are common at colleges and universities, yet they fail to provide opportunities for intercultural relational connection—true interculturalism, in Greg Tanaka’s (2003) use of the term—that leads to learning.

Higbee and Barajas (2007) discuss the idea of Universal Multicultural Instructional Design (inspired by the idea of Universal Instructional Design), whereby multiculturalism and multicultural competence are fully integrated into the curriculum. As Higbee and Barajas describe, Universal Multicultural Instructional Design involves attending to student development and intergroup relations in the curriculum and co-curriculum by ensuring all formal and informal classes and programming meet such principles as “help[ing] students acquire the social skills needed to interact effectively within a multicultural educational community” and “teach[ing] all members of the educational community about the ways that ideas like justice, equality, freedom, peace, compassion, and charity are valued by many cultures” (p. 18; see Higbee & Barajas [2007] for the full list of principles). Taking my participant Rachel’s as well as Patricia Hill Collins’s criticisms to heart, I challenge my fellow student affairs educators to consider how to apply Universal Multicultural Instructional Design to the co-curriculum on their campuses to facilitate meaningful intercultural interaction among our students. What would cultural programming incorporating the principles of Universal Multicultural Instructional Design look like? Can

intercultural learning opportunities be built into entertainment-focused cultural events, or would it require us to think entirely differently about the cultural programming we provide on our campuses? I admit that I'm not sure of the answers to these questions, but in the interest of facilitating meaningful intercultural interaction and friendship to ensure student learning, we need to rethink and redesign opportunities for cultural exploration.

Kandace offered another criticism of diversity programming that is also not unique to Southeastern University. She discussed feeling like the university, and especially the School of Management where she's a student, frames diversity with an "asset" message—that learning to cooperate with diverse others is a skill to tout on one's résumé in order to obtain a good job—rather than as a value that students should hold and work toward. Her criticisms parallel those of Iverson (2007), who found institutional diversity policies often use "marketplace discourse that produces people of color as a commodity that (who) has value to the university" (p. 599) for enhancing the reputation of the institution and its graduates. Pertaining to interracial friendships, this "asset" or "commodity" approach to diversity may lead students (especially majority White students) to see interracial interaction and friendship as utilitarian and self-serving rather than as opportunities for authentic relational connection. Kandace discussed always wondering whether her friend Jill had an authentic desire for friendship "in [her] heart" or if she felt "obligated" to be Kandace's friend. When we as educators frame diversity and intercultural interaction as a "good thing to do" for extrinsic reasons, we may inadvertently devalue the intrinsic motives that foster to meaningful intercultural relationships, leading our students to form peer relationships that are superficial,

inauthentic, and unfulfilling (Dace, 2012; Walker & Miller, 2004). From the perspective of educational practice, then, institutional leaders and student affairs educators need to be conscious of the intentional and unintentional messages we're communicating to our students about diversity and multiculturalism, as our messages may shape the quality of students' intercultural relationships. Do we imply that relationships with culturally diverse peers are a means to an end, or do we clearly communicate that these relationships are valuable as an end in themselves?

Some of my participants also addressed the contentious issue of whether ethnic student organizations facilitate or hinder interracial friendship development. A few (Amina, Natasha, and Rachel) intentionally chose not to become involved with Southeastern University's Multicultural Student Support Services or with student organizations focused on their own racial or ethnic groups because they felt doing so would isolate them from peers from other cultural groups on campus. Some of the empirical literature on the predictors of interracial interaction and friendship is congruent with their perspective (Bowman & Park, 2014; Park, 2014; Stearns et al., 2009). Yet we also know that ethnic student organizations play a critical role in supporting minority students' persistence, success, and well-being in predominately White institutions (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012; Patton, 2006; Sidanius et al., 2004; Villalpando, 2003). As an educational researcher who values social justice, I want to unequivocally state my support for ethnic student organizations on college campuses and directly counter one possible misinterpretation of my research: I do not believe my substantive theory, nor the assumptions

about student learning in which it is situated, suggest that we need to encourage interracial interaction and friendship formation to the extent of abolishing all racially homogeneous campus environments. Yes, there are many educational and societal benefits that result from interracial interactions and friendships during college, as I've discussed in detail throughout this dissertation. However, this does not negate the substantial benefits that also result from same-race interactions among students of Color. I firmly believe there is ample room for student affairs educators to support both intraracial and interracial interaction and friendship on our campuses.

Students of Color can both be involved in ethnic organizations *and* have interracial friendships; in fact, Bowman and Park (2014) suggest that the social support provided by ethnic organizations can enhance their comfort in interacting with peers from other racial groups. While I advocate enthusiastically for institutions to create interventions and programming that encourage and support interracial interaction, if we as educators choose an "either-or" approach, rather than a more constructive "both-and" approach (Park, 2014), we will deprive students of Color of the support they need to persist and succeed at predominately White institutions, reducing structural diversity and ultimately undermining the goal of encouraging intercultural interaction. As Y. K. Kim et al. (2015) conclude, "our findings suggest that the peer interaction in ethnic organizations facilitates the growth in interracial friendship for Latino students, and it does not prevent White, African American, and Asian American students from having close friends of other races" (p. 74).

In summary, the desire to connect across deep similarity and the desire to connect across demographic similarity are not mutually exclusive goals, and in fact may be synergistic. So in terms of implications for educational practice and institutional policy, the question becomes, how can institutions provide the benefits students of Color gain from ethnic organizations (cultural familiarity, cultural expression and advocacy, and cultural validation) (Museus, 2008) *and* promote interracial interaction and friendship? One option may be to encourage collaboration among student organizations focused upon specific cultural groups (Museus, 2008). In addition, is it possible that while same-race peers may facilitate adjustment to college and belonging, as Museus (2008) describes, a different-race peer can also serve as a “sherpa” (connecting with the process of Exploring Other Cultures) to support a student of Color in adjusting to and finding a sense of belonging at a predominately White institution—especially if that peer is also from an underrepresented cultural group? These are important areas for future research, to ensure that our promotion of intercultural friendship does not come at the expense of educational equity for students of Color.

Implications for Educational Outcomes: Facilitating College Students’ Learning and Development through Intercultural Friendship

As I discussed in chapter two, the literature on interracial interactions and friendships among college students has extensively documented the educational outcomes that result from interracial contact, in order to provide support for race-conscious admissions policies. These outcomes are crucial for college graduates to develop in order to participate as citizens

in our pluralistic society, and the need to foster students' development of these outcomes provides the rationale for why institutional leaders and student affairs educators must be intentional about supporting interracial friendship among our students. While I designed my research to focus on the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment rather than the outcomes of these relationships, my participants nonetheless shared with me evidence of positive outcomes resulting from their friendships, which I described in chapter four. Below I connect these outcomes to others' findings regarding the outcomes of interracial interaction and friendship and discuss the implications for educational practice suggested by these outcomes.

Outcome: Valuing Interculturalism. Although not all of my participants displayed evidence of Valuing Interculturalism, many did. Among those who did, they demonstrated having developed an affinity for cultural diversity and exchange because of the enrichment it brought to their lives, and they also demonstrated a desire to act upon that affinity to seek culturally diverse interpersonal relationships through which they could continue their growth and development. In many ways, Valuing Interculturalism is similar to the concept of pluralistic orientation, which is a societal learning outcome (or "21st century skill") consisting of "measures[,] skills, and dispositions appropriate for living and working in a diverse society" (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013, p. 18) and that is developed through engagement in diversity-related learning opportunities in college. Interracial peer interactions and friendships are especially effective in developing pluralistic orientation (Engberg, 2007; Hurtado, 2005; Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013; Jayakumar, 2008). Hurtado and

Guillermo-Wann (2013) specifically operationalize pluralistic orientation as consisting of the following factors:

- Tolerance of others with different beliefs
- Ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues
- Openness to having my own views challenged
- Ability to work cooperatively with diverse people
- Ability to see the world from someone else's perspective

In addition, pluralistic orientation—or appreciation for pluralism—also

... extends beyond mere toleration of others representing different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values to encompass acceptance and good will. As pluralists we do not simply endure the presence of those who are different from us; we welcome them with expressions of generosity, kindness, hospitality, and respect. ... pluralism does not demand that we deny the existence of truth or maintain a relativistic stance in which all truths are equally valid. Pluralism, instead, involves making commitments in the presence of diversity, all the while maintaining a disciplined openness to learning from others. Lastly pluralism does not necessitate “flattening” differences in search of a basic, underlying commonality that unites us all. Although we may (and probably will) discover common ground with others in our diverse society, pluralism allows authentic differences to exist—and, in fact, those differences contribute to the richness and vitality of the world in which we live.

(Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2013, pp. 89-90)

Consistent with the induction and non-preconception principles of grounded theory inquiry, I did not look for evidence of pluralistic orientation among my participants in analyzing my data; rather, only after I had developed the concept of Valuing Interculturalism did I explore the literature on pluralistic orientation to connect it with my own conceptual ideas that are grounded in my participants' experiences. Clearly there are many parallels between my outcome Valuing Interculturalism and the concept of pluralistic orientation. However, one key difference between them is that Valuing Interculturalism represents more than just a set of "skills and dispositions" (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013); it also consists of an *active affinity toward* cultural difference in interpersonal relationships and the development of a personal value or goal to pursue these relationships for the sake of learning and growth. Participants who demonstrated evidence of Valuing Interculturalism were more than just tolerant of or open to cultural differences and alternate perspectives; they were also taking action through engagement with their peers in order to live this value, similar to Eck's (2006) definition of pluralism as "energetic engagement with diversity" and "active seeking of understanding" (emphasis removed; p. 1). In this regard, Valuing Interculturalism also overlaps to some extent with the concept of Openness to Diversity and Challenge (Whitt et al., 2001), specifically regarding the desire to seek alternate perspectives that challenge one's own assumptions. However, Openness to Diversity and Challenge only measures students' enjoyment of casual interaction with culturally different others; it does not address close interpersonal relationships like friendship. Therefore, it seems that students who display

evidence of Valuing Interculturalism have likely also developed pluralistic orientation and Openness to Diversity and Challenge, but the converse is not necessarily true.

It's possible that my outcome Valuing Interculturalism might be a combination of pluralistic orientation and the concept of Exploratory Orientation from my substantive theory. As I discuss in chapter four, Exploratory Orientation is an active affinity for experiences, people, and ideas that are novel, exciting, or challenging (i.e., that create some level of disequilibrium), and students who demonstrate Exploratory Orientation engage in the active pursuit of difference (although not necessarily cultural difference; in this regard it also differs from Openness to Diversity and Challenge). Exploratory Orientation is a facilitating (although not required) condition for interracial friendship development, but it can also be an outcome in that students who may not have previously possessed an affinity for alternate and challenging perspectives can develop it through the central processes of interracial friendship. Students who have Exploratory Orientation prior to development of their interracial friendships may, through the friendship, come to develop pluralistic orientation and experience a reduction in prejudice. In fact, my substantive theory suggests that students who come to college with Exploratory Orientation but without significant pre-college exposure to other cultural groups may develop pluralistic orientation relatively quickly when they do engage with diversity in college. Alternatively, having a close interracial friend may lead a student to develop Exploratory Orientation as well as outcomes related to appreciation of and affinity for diversity. In both cases, the student will have achieved the outcome of Valuing Interculturalism, and if this outcome operates similarly to other key outcomes of

interracial interaction and friendship, it is likely that its positive effects will persist through graduation and into adulthood as the student chooses to live and work in diverse settings (antonio, 2001b; Hurtado, 2003; Jayakumar, 2008).

From the perspective of institutional practice and policy, my substantive theory provides support for N. D. Martin et al.'s (2014) position that "to fully realize the benefits of a diverse student body may require extending preferences to students who demonstrate a commitment to diversity" (p. 725). I agree with their argument, but I also feel that admissions officers should seek to identify prospective students who demonstrate the *potential* to develop a commitment to diversity, especially for those students who come from homogeneous pre-college backgrounds where they may not yet have had a chance to engage with other cultural groups. To identify these students, admissions applications might ask students to provide evidence of Exploratory Orientation, since my theory suggests that Exploratory Orientation is a precursor for interracial friendship and achievement of the outcome Valuing Interculturalism. For example, does the student intentionally seek experiences and ideas that require stepping outside of his or her comfort zone and that challenge his or her assumptions? Can the student discuss how s/he has grown as a result of these experiences? Does s/he intend to pursue these experiences in college, and how?

My theory also suggests that it may be too simplistic to suggest that there is a straightforward predictive relationship between the homogeneity (or heterogeneity) of a student's pre-college background and his/her likelihood of interracial interaction and friendship (e.g., Bowman, 2012b; Bowman & Denson, 2012; Fischer, 2008; Jayakumar,

2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Milem et al., 2004; N. D. Martin et al., 2014; Odell et al., 2005; Park, 2014; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007; Schofield et al., 2010; Stearns et al., 2009). Some of my participants (Kandace, Maggie, Charles, and Brynn) discussed coming from pre-college environments in which they had few encounters with individuals from racial/ethnic groups other than their own. All four of these participants discussed intentionally seeking interactions and experiences in college that would require them to step outside their comfort zones; some intentionally sought cultural diversity while others sought experiences and people that would challenge them to grow in a broader sense (i.e., that did not necessarily involve seeking cultural diversity). Significantly, these four participants came to college with Exploratory Orientation—which facilitated their ability to develop interracial friendships—despite the fact that they lacked pre-college diverse friendships or interactions.

As student affairs practitioners, we cannot assume that students who lack pre-college exposure to diversity will necessarily be anxious about or choose to avoid intercultural interaction; indeed, in some cases these students may be the ones who are most thirsty for the stimulation that intercultural interaction provides. Therefore, in designing programming to support intercultural interaction and friendship, we need to cater to students at three different levels of development: (1) those who are comfortable with culturally diverse peer interactions, (2) those who are anxious about or reluctant to engage in culturally diverse peer interactions, and (3) those who lack experience with culturally diverse peer interactions but are nevertheless eager to engage in them. We may be inclined to target our programming to students in the second group by creating environments that encourage them to step outside of

their comfort zones and minimize the risk involved in doing so, presuming that these students need the most support. That may be true, but we should also consider that students in the third group may only need minimal interventions early in their time at college (such as developing their skill in interacting respectfully with other cultural groups through, for example, intercultural or ally development trainings, as discussed earlier in this section) to equip them to seek interaction with peers from other cultural groups. Indeed, we may achieve the greatest educational benefit with the least investment of time and resources by targeting supportive interventions to students in the third group—those with Exploratory Orientation—who are already comfortable with and primed to seek challenging experiences that facilitate their growth.

However, we must also not assume that students in the first group—those who are comfortable with intercultural interaction—do not need any support. Rather, we should be seeking to develop these students as role models and advocates (“intercultural ambassadors”) for intercultural interaction and relationships in our campuses. Such students might benefit from programming to equip them to act upon their desire to confront stereotypes and prejudice, perhaps through bystander intervention or racial justice ally trainings. Reason et al. (2005) discuss the metaphor of “world travelers” who cross “racial borders in the pursuit of understanding” (p. 64); students who have engaged in the process of Exploring Other Cultures through their interracial friendships are especially well positioned to engage in this process as racial justice allies and to bring along other students in that experience.

Outcome: Integrating the Self. Achieving the outcome of Integrating the Self involves intrapersonal and interpersonal development facilitated through the relational context of interracial friendship. First, the student becomes more whole and authentic and develops a more realistic self-image. As a result, s/he develops an enhanced ability to form meaningful and authentic connections with others across cultural boundaries, and s/he is also better equipped to set aside his/her prejudices in interacting with others and to model for his/her peers how to do the same. This sort of development is especially significant for students who come to college with limited prior exposure to cultural groups other than their own, which includes roughly three-quarters of White students and half of African American students (Milem & Umbach, 2003). Because White students occupy a position of privilege as the dominant cultural group on most college and university campuses as well as in U.S. society at large, friendship with students of other races is especially powerful in helping White students develop a more realistic sense of themselves:

The situation of “structured-in” inequality also distorts the dominant person’s sense of who she/he is in the world, whether the smaller immediate world of friends and family or in the larger society. A person who is socialized to believe that she/ he is “better than” can have a sense of identity that is built on relational images that are malformed and misguided. (Walker & Miller, 2004, pp. 130-131)

Interpersonal relationships with peers from other racial groups can provide White students with more authentic self-images; in this way, interracial friendship can help White students accomplish the outcome of Integrating the Self.

Interracial friendships also provide students of all racial backgrounds with opportunities for positive challenge or “good conflict” (Walker, 2004) that leads to intrapersonal and interpersonal growth. Maggie provided an example of being challenged, as a White person, to develop a more realistic self-image through her friendship with Nikki (who is African American):

[Tara: When Nikki and her friends would make you conscious of your whiteness, how would you react, or how did you take that?] I mean, I kind of just blushed and laughed it off, but at the same time, I would go home and kind of re-evaluate myself and be like – I don’t know – how am I presenting myself to everyone. And I tried to push myself to – like now, when I do walk into a room, I look into the racial makeup of the room and think about things like that. That’s changed a little bit. ... I think in the end it was a positive change. At the time, it was really uncomfortable and embarrassing, I think, especially – I’ve never been proud of my race, and so then I was like the least proud. And I think, if anything, I’m more critical of White people, I guess, because of my experiences.

Because positive challenge that leads to growth is only possible in a relational environment of trust and caring, it is unlikely to occur in casual interracial interactions. This may also explain the positive effect many have found friendship to have on reduction in prejudice (e.g., Fischer, 2011; Levin et al., 2003; J. N. Martin et al., 2010; McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Odell et al., 2005; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Spanierman et al., 2008; although Bowman & Park [2015] found interracial friendship to have no effect on

prejudice reduction). Walker (2004) describes how a process such as Integrating the Self enhances empathy, which may explain its connection to prejudice reduction:

As a person develops more clarity about her own thoughts and feelings, she becomes more available to the relationship. In this relationship, she continues to learn about herself and the other person, thereby enhancing her capacity for self-empathy and empathy for the other. (p. 98)

These findings underscore how important it is for colleges and universities to create conditions and interventions to support the development and sustainment of interracial friendships.

Relationship of interracial friendship outcomes to college students' broader learning and development. Although these two outcomes, Valuing Interculturalism and Integrating the Self, represent two separate learning and development outcomes, they are fundamentally connected in that achievement of one is related to achievement of the other. Many forms of development and growth occur to some extent in interpersonal contexts, whether in the classroom or in relational contexts such as friendships (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Bowman & Denson, 2011; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Walker & Miller, 2004). Furthermore, both outcomes dovetail with two of Chickering's seven vectors: Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships and Developing Integrity. Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships consists of growth in two areas: (1) Tolerance and appreciation of differences, which "implies a willingness to suspend judgment, to refrain from condemnation, and to attempt to understand an unfamiliar or unsettling way of thinking or

acting rather than to ignore, attack, or belittle it” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 146); and (2) Capacity for intimacy, which involves moving toward relationships characterized by “interdependence between equals; people developing along this vector become more able to see partners clearly, with all their flaws and strengths, rather than distorting the view with rose-colored glasses” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 147). Developing Integrity “involves three sequential but overlapping stages:” (1) Humanizing values: “shifting away from automatic application of uncompromising beliefs and using principled thinking in balancing one’s own self-interest with the interests of one’s fellow human beings”; (2) Personalizing values: “consciously affirming core values and beliefs while respecting other points of view”; and (3) Developing congruence: “matching personal values with socially responsible behavior” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, pp. 236-237).

My outcome Integrating the Self involves discovering and reflecting upon who one is—and who one wants to be—through relational connection, and coming to understand and appreciate oneself more holistically and authentically facilitates the ability to understand and appreciate others more holistically and authentically, as Chickering and Reisser (1993) document. My outcome Valuing Interculturalism involves learning to understand and appreciate others more holistically and authentically, including understanding one’s values in relation to others and “consciously affirming core values and beliefs while respecting other points of view” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, pp. 236-237); this, in turn, facilitates the development of future interpersonal relationships as well as the reflective process involved in Integrating the Self. Overall, Chickering and Reisser note that “studies have found consistent

increases in the maturity of students' interpersonal relations and in non-authoritarian thinking and tolerance for other people and their views" (p. 148). My participants' experiences provide additional evidence that peer relationships facilitate important diversity-related learning and development—at both the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels—for college students. In addition, by implementing policies and programming to support interracial friendships on campus, colleges and universities can help students achieve broader developmental tasks.

Summary of Implications for Practice: A Metaphor for Interracial Friendship

Metaphorically, the process of interracial friendship among college students is similar to growing a fruit tree in your yard. You may start with a single seed or with a small sapling (these are students' varied propensities or orientations for seeking diverse perspectives and relationships based on their personalities and pre-college experiences); as gardeners know, sometimes a tree grows from a single seed, but a sapling will always have a better chance of survival. You plant it in your yard (the institutional environment and overall climate), and depending on where you live, the soil in your yard may have or lack certain nutrients that may encourage or retard the tree's healthy growth (just as the institutional environment and climate can encourage or discourage interracial interaction). The water you give it and the sunlight it receives are equivalent to the institution's programming and other supportive interventions; it may be a lot or a little, and the tree's growth will vary accordingly. Some fruit trees may be resilient to dry conditions or lack of sunlight whereas others may not (some students may need a lot of support to develop interracial friendships whereas others may not

need much if any support). The young tree may use phototropism to actively grow towards sunlight (just as some students, especially those with Exploratory Orientation, actively seek intercultural opportunities), but some varieties are more adept than others at this. If the conditions within the young tree itself as well as within the environment in which it grows are optimal, it will eventually mature and produce fruit; the fruit produced represent the outcomes of the friendship. It's also possible the tree may grow to be big and look healthy but might never produce fruit because something in its specific growth environment (e.g., water, dirt, climate, sunlight) is missing or because it's contracted a disease that has weakened it; this parallels the cases when interracial friendship may not lead to the desired outcomes. The quality of the fruit it produces (i.e., the strength of the outcomes) also depends on these external and internal conditions. In addition, a gardener must consider the right time of year to plant the tree (paralleling the idea of a "critical window" for interracial friendship development, as I discuss earlier in this section). If you plant the seed or sapling in the middle of winter, it won't grow at all no matter how much sun, water, and rich soil it gets—unless you live in a warm climate, of course. Although my participants' experiences show that interracial friendships don't have to develop in the critical window of the first few weeks on campus, that time is perhaps the most ideal for ensuring that a friendship will "take root" and grow optimally to produce fruit.

This metaphor, in which the fruit tree represents an interracial friendship between two college students, illustrates how input (I), or student-level factors, and environmental (E), or institution-level conditions, interact to ultimately produce fruit (outcomes) under conditions

optimal for growth and health. Sometimes the planted seed or sapling fails to grow into a tree (i.e., a friendship does not develop), or sometimes it grows into a tree but then dies (i.e., a friendship that can't be sustained). Yet sometimes the tree may still produce fruit before it dies, just as some interracial friendships that end may still result in achievement of learning and development outcomes. Like gardeners growing fruit trees, student affairs educators and institutional leaders need to identify the optimal environmental conditions for supporting interracial friendships on our campuses and then work to create those conditions to ensure students develop these relationships and to facilitate their learning and growth within them.

Implications for Methods

As I noted in my statement of subjectivity in relation to the grounded theory method I presented in chapter three, I believe in the power of grounded theory for producing scholarship that is innovative, oriented toward social justice, and informs practice. Too often, however, researchers claiming to use the method do not incorporate all four of its defining features (non-preconception, theoretical sampling, constant comparative analysis, and generation of theory) or do so incorrectly, thereby diluting the rigor and credibility of their research as well as the credibility of grounded theory as a legitimate method of inquiry. A number of grounded theorists have expressed concern about this method “slurring” or “erosion”—the weakening of rigor in the grounded theory method and procedures while retaining the grounded theory label (e.g., Baker et al., 1992; Cutcliffe, 2000; Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Holton, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2008; Suddaby, 2006). I have found method slurring to be a problem in the higher education empirical literature as well. In

reviewing all empirical articles published between January 2008 and April 2013 in three of the top journals in the higher education and student affairs fields (*Journal of College Student Development*, *Journal of Higher Education*, and *Review of Higher Education*), I found 27 that claimed to use the grounded theory method. Of these, a troubling 16 (59%) used grounded theory procedures for data analysis only (i.e., the constant comparative approach) without adhering to the other three defining features of the method (non-preconception, theoretical sampling, and generation of theory). Only one article faithfully implemented all four defining features. Clearly, it is a matter of significant concern for the scholarship of our discipline that so few empirical studies published in the top journals seem to have an accurate and methodologically rigorous grasp of the grounded theory method and its defining procedures. Furthermore, in a review of empirical articles published in three top higher education journals (*Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, and *Review of Higher Education*), Wells, Kolek, Williams, and Saunders (2015) found that the number of grounded theory studies published in these journals decreased from 12 in 1996-2000 to 2 in 2006-2010. Their finding suggests either that fewer grounded theory studies are being conducted in higher education, or that these top journals are not publishing the studies that are being conducted (perhaps because such studies are not sufficiently rigorous).

Grounded theory has much power to advance knowledge within the fields of higher education and student affairs, and therefore it is troubling that the number of grounded theory studies published in our top journals has decreased in recent years and that the quality of those that are published is questionable. As Glaser (1978) observed, “More and more people

wish to discover what is going on, rather than assuming what should be going on, as required in preconceived type research” (p. 159), and using the grounded theory method of inquiry enables us to discover significant new understandings about “what is going on” within our institutions and among our students. However, if we are not engaging in rigorous and methodologically faithful grounded theory research, we undermine our ability to produce the insightful and practically useful scholarship that can invigorate our fields. Methodologically weak research also prevents our findings and related recommendations from being seriously considered by policymakers and practitioners. Indeed, the intensifying push at the federal level for rigorous educational research has led to unfortunate questions about the value of qualitative research in general (Rudalevige, 2009; Wells et al., 2015). It is imperative, therefore, that all educational research—especially qualitative research—adheres to the highest possible standards of rigor and credibility to ensure that the work we do will continue to inform national educational policy.

Consequently, I issue two challenges to my fellow higher education and student affairs scholars. First, for fellow scholars who know little about the grounded theory method of inquiry, I challenge you to step outside of your research comfort zones to learn more about what grounded theory is and what it can do. Further, I encourage you to consider using grounded theory in your own research to produce *new* theories and insights that expand and challenge our existing ideas, rather than furthering “the high incidence of inter-citation” (Bensimon, 2007, p. 449) of the “big name” theories and concepts in our fields. Second, I challenge all of us—especially journal reviewers, conference discussants, and those teaching

qualitative methodology—to raise our standards for what we allow to be called “grounded theory research” so that the scholarship we produce using this method is as rigorous as that produced through other qualitative and quantitative methods. I cannot yet claim to be an expert in rigorous grounded theory, nor can I assert that my own research that I have presented here is an exemplar of rigorous grounded theory inquiry. However, I was intentional about honoring the criteria for rigor and credibility for grounded theory research (which I presented in chapter three) as well as the defining features of the method in the design and execution of this research, and throughout this study I reflected upon my methodological rigor through memoing and made methodological decisions that I felt were congruent with faithful and rigorous use of the method. I encourage my fellow higher education and student affairs scholars who use the grounded theory method to similarly reflect upon and incorporate the defining features and criteria for rigor in designing and conducting your own research.

As Wells et al. (2015) suggest, “the [higher education] field might be well served by fostering and promoting scholarly efforts that produce a wider variety of fruits” from our “research trees” (p. 188). Greater use of the grounded theory method of inquiry in higher education can help us generate the “wider variety of fruits” for which they, and others, advocate, but we must ensure its faithful and rigorous use to ensure those fruits do not rot upon the tree.

Implications for Future Research

Future Research at the Institution Level

The most promising area for future research involves applying my substantive theory in different institutional contexts than the one in which I generated it (a large, public research university located in the Southeastern United States) to see if or how the central processes of interracial friendship development and sustainment vary among students at different types of institutions. As I discuss in chapter three, I had initially planned to recruit participants from four different types of institutions, but I chose instead to limit my recruitment to one institution for the sake of the conceptual depth and explanatory power of my substantive theory. However, it's possible that the theory I generated may not explain the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment at, for example, a small, private liberal arts institution, a women's college, or a minority-serving institution. Regional differences might also create dimensional variation within the theory.

However, one contribution my research makes to our understanding of interracial friendship among college students is that I chose to study interracial friendships at an institution located in a region of the U.S. that's been underrepresented in the existing literature on this topic, as I discuss in chapter two. Nonetheless, my theory should be applied at colleges and universities located in other parts of the U.S. and modified accordingly. Furthermore, I recognize that my research focuses exclusively on the U.S. higher education context, a bias that's becoming increasingly unjustifiable. Intercultural friendship has been shown to have powerful effects on reducing prejudice in other parts of the world (Davies et

al., 2011; Pettigrew, 1998a; Turner et al., 2007), and therefore another potential area for future research is to examine whether the processes of Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures are relevant for students attending institutions located outside of the U.S. Ultimately, modifying my theory by applying it in other contexts will strengthen its explanatory power and utility for practice.

In addition, it’s possible that there is intra-institutional contextual variation that my theory does not adequately account for. While sampling in grounded theory is not driven by a need to ensure representation of specific populations, the micro-environments of specific institutional subcultures have been found to differentially affect interracial friendship (Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Park, 2014). Therefore, future research should apply my theory not only in different types of institutions, but also in different institutional subcultures to determine if or how the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment differs for students situated in these different micro-environments (e.g., different types of student organizations, Greek-affiliated students, student government, international student communities, varsity athletic teams, etc.). Findings from such research can be used not only to modify my substantive theory, but also to identify the needs of students in these different environments and practices that are especially effective at supporting interracial friendship. In examining how the process of interracial friendship development and sustainment may vary in different institutional contexts and sub-contexts, it will be useful to explore how the overall process may vary as well as how the central sub-processes comprising my substantive theory

(Bridging Difference to Connect, Cultivating Trust and Establishing a “Silent Contract,” Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference, and Exploring Other Cultures) may vary in terms of their properties and dimensions.

My substantive theory suggests some potentially promising ways in which institutions can, through policies and programming, support the development and sustainment of interracial friendships, as I discuss above in my section on Significance and Implications for Educational Practice and Policy. An important area for future research is to investigate which of these interventions are most effective or successful (and why) at supporting students in developing interracial friendships. While V. B. Saenz (2010) identified broad categories of the sort of activities and interventions that foster positive cross-racial interaction, such as living-learning communities, multicultural organizations, and diversity coursework, we need a better understanding of what specific elements or characteristics of these activities lead to the outcomes we desire and how we can involve more students in them, especially those who might not be inclined to participate. Future research also needs to further examine the interaction between institutional context and the student characteristics that shape an individual’s experiences within that context, such pre-college exposure to diversity, identity development status, or level of intercultural maturity. For example, some students may feel more comfortable engaging in interracial interaction and friendship than in intraracial relationships (Morrison, 2010), and as a result interracial relationships may not offer the same level of growth-fostering disequilibrium for these students as they do for others.⁵

⁵ Many thanks to Allison Mitchall for suggesting this insight.

Finally, we need to understand which of these activities and interventions are most effective at supporting interracial *friendships*, as these may differ from those that support interracial interaction (Bowman & Park, 2014).

Future Research at the Student Level

One question that drove my initial desire to pursue this research topic was to understand why some college students are more inclined than others to pursue friendships with peers from other cultural backgrounds, when many college students are not. In other words, why were my participants able to Embrace Similarity with culturally different peers? This question is especially important for White students at predominately White institutions, who are much more likely than students of Color to have racially homogeneous friendship groups (Chang, 2007; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; D. Cole, 2007; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Park, 2014; Park & Y. K. Kim, 2013; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007; Stearns et al., 2009). My substantive theory begins to identify some possible explanations, such as the concept of Exploratory Orientation; it seems that some college students have greater motivation or desire to seek friends who enrich their lives by providing access to alternate perspectives and new experiences. My participants' experiences also complicate previous findings that pre-college exposure to diversity (such as attending diverse high schools, coming from diverse neighborhoods, or having diverse pre-college friendships) is positively related to heterogeneous friendships in college (Bowman, 2012b; Bowman & Denson, 2012; Fischer, 2008; Jayakumar, 2008; Y. K. Kim et al., 2015; Milem et al., 2004; N. D. Martin et al., 2014; Odell et al., 2005; Park, 2014; V. B. Saenz, 2010; V. B. Saenz et al., 2007; Schofield et al.,

2010; Stearns et al., 2009). While some of my participants had extensive pre-college exposure to diversity, many did not, and neither was there a clear relationship between pre-college exposure to diversity and Exploratory Orientation; indeed, some of my participants seemed to possess Exploratory Orientation precisely *because* their lack of pre-college exposure to diversity made them more inclined to seek new experiences and perspectives. A promising avenue for future research, then, is to move beyond simplistic predictive factors to understand why some college students intentionally seek friendships across cultural differences. Why are some students able to look beyond demographic differences to Embrace Similarity at a deep level when most of their peers are unwilling or unable to look beyond the surface? Gaining an answer to this question may help student affairs educators design interventions to encourage all college students to develop intercultural friendships, and, through these relationships, achieve critical diversity-related learning and development outcomes.

Another related area for future research is the converse of the question I posed above: Why do some college students who have the opportunity to form intercultural friendships—those who are surrounded by culturally diverse peers in environments of diverse propinquity—choose not to do so? While Exploratory Orientation facilitated the interracial friendship development of some of my participants, others developed their friendships despite lacking Exploratory Orientation because they were in environments that facilitated their ability to find deep similarity with peers of other races around them (e.g., living in a culturally diverse residence hall). In an ideal world, I would have theoretically sampled for

students who occupy environments of diverse propinquity but have homogeneous friendship groups. However, this is a tricky population to recruit, as potential participants may interpret the eligibility criteria as an accusation of racism. Had I sampled for these students in my study, I could have compared them with students who have interracial friends to identify critical differences between the experiences of these two groups.

Future research could focus on exploring the experiences of students without interracial friends, to see if there are critical moments or intervention points at which they might have formed an interracial friendship but did not, or more broadly, if they can illuminate reasons why they haven't formed these relationships. For example, was it an intentional decision to avoid these relationships? Or was it circumstantial—in other words, they mainly occupy homogeneous environments? Are they seeking such relationships but for some reason haven't been successful, and if so, what do they feel they would need in terms of campus support in order to develop these relationships? Comparing students with interracial friends to those without them can also help us to understand why being surrounded by culturally diverse peers (both at the campus level as well as in sub-contexts) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for encouraging the development of intercultural friendships. Such research may potentially identify effective interventions to encourage students who intentionally or unintentionally “opt out” of intercultural friendships to instead “opt in.”

Wimmer and Lewis (2010) suggest a similar focus for future research, noting, ... there is virtually no research on why members of certain ethnic and racial categories avoid members of certain other categories and thus develop fewer ties with

them than chance alone would predict while other ethnic and racial categories seem to attract or establish many more out-group ties and fewer in-group ties than we would expect. (p. 635)

Their framework, in conjunction with my substantive theory, could provide a useful conceptual lens for a future qualitative study, which could focus on the experiences of students who have no interracial friends but yet meet the conditions identified by Wimmer and Lewis that would otherwise predict they would have at least one interracial friend—for example, they attend a small but structurally diverse school, are social, are in racially diverse majors, have or had roommates of a different race, and have friends who have interracial friends. Pertinent questions to ask, informed by my substantive theory, might include: Were these students *unable* to Embrace Similarity (the initial process of interracial friendship development) with racially diverse peers in order to develop interracial friendships, or did they *choose* not to? Would developing their multicultural competence equip them with the skill and confidence needed to Embrace Similarity, Explore Other Cultures, or Bridge Difference to Connect with peers from other racial groups? What other types of support might encourage them to seek friends outside of their own racial group? Answering some of these questions will help colleges and universities design policies and programming to address these students' relational needs and help them achieve the learning and development outcomes that result from intercultural friendships.

We also need to better understand how colleges and universities can support the development and sustainment of interracial friendships among students of Color, especially

African American students who come from pre-college environments in which their own racial or ethnic group was predominant (for example, Kandace in my study). Although White students, on average, have the lowest level of pre-college diversity exposure and the fewest interracial friendships in college, African American students tend to rank higher on both of these homogeneity measures than other students of Color (Fischer, 2008; Milem & Umbach, 2003). Furthermore, Stearns et al. (2009) found that friendship diversity decreased for Black students over the first year of college, suggesting that they are not receiving the support they need to develop and sustain interracial friendships. Because White students tend to have the lowest levels of pre-college diversity exposure and interracial friendships in college, they have been the primary focus of efforts to support and encourage interracial interaction and friendship. Yet students of Color who come from homogeneous pre-college environments may be equally uncomfortable and unskilled in interacting with peers from other cultural backgrounds, and they need our support as well. Future research should examine which interventions and programming are most effective in supporting students of Color who come from homogeneous pre-college environments. Supporting the ability and desire of students from all racial backgrounds to interact with culturally diverse peers through effective and targeted interventions may also hold promise for improving the campus racial climate for underrepresented students by helping them to feel like they belong and are welcomed by their peers, rather than marginalized and isolated (Chavous, 2005; Paolini et al., 2007).

Finally, although I did not examine racial identity development in this research, my participants' experiences—especially those whose friendships ended—suggest that there may

be a relationship between identity development and the process of developing and sustaining interracial friendship. Marcelo's experience with his friend Jasmyn, in particular, suggests that conflict may result, or that the process of Embracing Similarity without Forgetting Difference may be complicated, when the two members of the friend pair place different saliency on race in their overall multidimensional identities (S. R. Jones & McEwen, 2000) or occupy different racial identity development statuses (Morrison, 2010) or levels of intercultural maturity (Quaye & Baxter Magolda, 2007). Similarly, Kandace's and Maggie's experiences suggest that differences in racial identity development or saliency can lead to relational disconnection that threatens friendship sustainment; relative to my theory, their different identity statuses might make the process of Bridging Difference to Connect difficult or impossible. For example, if one friend—for whom race or ethnicity is a salient identity—feels her race is ignored or dismissed by the other friend—for whom race is not a salient identity—she may then feel marginalized, invalidated, and frustrated because she cannot bring her whole, authentic self to the relationship (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Dace, 2012; Morrison, 2010; Walker & Miller, 2004). As a result, she may choose to end that friendship and seek relationships with same-race peers instead. A similar relational challenge may result if the two friends begin at a place of similar racial identity development/salience but diverge over time as their racial identity development journeys lead them to different, and incompatible, identity statuses—for example, if one friend enters the Immersion phase while the other remains in a Pre-Encounter phase, to use Cross and Phagen-Smith's (1996) terminology. How can friends sustain their relational connection in the face of challenges

related to racial identity development, and how can institutions simultaneously support students in their identity development journeys as well their interracial friendships? These are significant questions for future research on college students' interracial friendships.

Future Research on the Outcomes of Interracial Friendship

Although the purpose of my research was not to examine outcomes of interracial friendship, my participants provided evidence of two outcomes: Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism, as I discuss in chapter four. Future research might focus on theoretically saturating these outcomes and determining how the processes of interracial friendship facilitate their achievement, with an eye toward leveraging those processes to ensure more students achieve these outcomes. Valuing Interculturalism is an especially significant outcome from the perspective of the diversity rationale: if our goal, as educators, is to prepare college graduates who are “ready to engage and work with people whose backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are different from their own” (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013, p. 1), then we need to help all students learn to value interculturalism. Although Valuing Interculturalism is a concept I generated inductively, per the principles of the grounded theory method of inquiry, it has much in common with the critical democratic and societal outcomes that others have identified as resulting from interracial interaction and friendship, including intercultural understanding, perspective taking, prosocial values, appreciation for diversity, pluralistic orientation, and civic participation (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012; Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; E. L. Dey et al., 2010; Engberg, 2007; Gurin et

al., 2004; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, 2005; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Pike et al., 2007; Rude et al., 2012).

The outcome of Integrating the Self is also worthy of future research, especially to the extent that discovering how to be one's whole, authentic self within the context of an interracial friendship may help college students recognize the potential for relational connection across difference—racial or otherwise—in their future interpersonal relationships. In this way, Integrating the Self and Valuing Interculturalism could be mutually facilitating outcomes of interracial friendship; alternatively, they might represent intra- and interpersonal dimensions of a single, broader outcome.

Shortly after I developed my substantive theory, however, Bowman and Park (2015) published research challenging the assumption that interracial friendship is a more powerful form of interracial interaction, in terms of its effect on student learning and development outcomes; in fact, their results led them to conclude the opposite: “Overall, cross-racial interaction is significantly and positively related to almost every student outcome, while close interracial friendship is not positively associated with any of the dependent variables within the full sample” (p. 15). Most troublingly, they found that while interracial interaction led to reduction in racial prejudice, interracial friendship did not. While others' research over the past sixty years has concluded that the deep emotional ties and long-term sustained interaction between friends makes friendship a uniquely powerful force for prejudice reduction (Allport, 1954/1988; Davies et al., 2011; McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Turner et al., 2007), Bowman and Park

hypothesize that because friendships lack novelty and challenge, they cannot provoke the cognitive dissonance that facilitates growth.

Their results present a significant challenge to the foundational premise of my research presented here, as well as that of the substantial body of research documenting the prejudice reduction benefits of interracial and intergroup friendship among college students and within society at large. Yet my participants' qualitative experiences seem to contradict Bowman and Park's quantitative results. Many of my participants clearly displayed evidence of Valuing Interculturalism, which involves not only learning to appreciate diverse perspectives (connecting with the concept of pluralistic orientation), but also embracing interculturalism as a personal value and life goal in order to continue their growth and development. I cannot conclusively state that *all* of my participants achieved this outcome, but I am confident that at least some of them did and that engaging in the process of Interpersonalizing Cultural Difference through interracial friendship led to their achievement of this outcome. Clearly, we need additional research examining the outcomes of interracial friendship among college students to resolve these conflicting results.

In proposing his contact hypothesis in the 1950s, Gordon Allport (1954/1988) crystallized into theory a phenomenon that others had observed at an anecdotal level for many years: that interpersonal relationship across cultural difference has the potential to reduce prejudice. Decades of research since Allport's seminal work have established the power of close interpersonal relationships such as friendship for achieving social understanding (e.g., Boisjoly et al., 2006; Bowman & Park, 2014, 2015; Camargo et al.,

2010; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Chavous, 2005; Engberg, 2007; Fischer, 2011; Hewstone et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2005; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2009; J. N. Martin et al., 2010; Odell et al., 2005; Pettigrew, 1998a, 1998b; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Rude et al., 2012; Schofield et al., 2010; Shook & Fazio, 2008; Spanierman et al., 2008; Stearns et al., 2009). When we engage in relationship with others who are culturally different from ourselves, we come to care about them as whole individuals rather than as depersonalized representatives of the cultural groups to which they belong. We also discover that what we share is much greater than what we do not. As a result, our attitudes change—not just toward the individuals we befriend, but more broadly toward other members of our friends’ cultural groups, reducing our levels of prejudice and social distance toward members of groups whom we may not (yet) have befriended. In this way, promoting the development of interracial and intercultural friendships among college students has the potential to fundamentally change our society for the better; as these students graduate and enter our workplaces, neighborhoods, and governments, they carry their values for interculturalism and cultural understanding with them and act to share and promote those values among their neighbors, colleagues, and children.

The tragic murder of Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha, and Razan Abu-Salha in Chapel Hill, NC on February 10, 2015—which took place as I was writing a draft of this chapter a few miles away at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Davis Library—reinforced why colleges and universities have a societal obligation to encourage and support the development of intercultural friendships among college students. If Deah and

Yusor's neighbor Craig Hicks, who has confessed to the three students' deaths and is awaiting trial, had taken the time to get to know his neighbors—to find things they may have shared as fellow humans and to develop appreciate knowledge about them as Muslims—would shooting them have ever crossed his mind? We will never know the answer, of course, but my research, alongside that of Gordon Allport and many others, suggests it would not. Building a society in which we all can embrace similarity across our cultural differences while also honoring and valuing those differences can, in fact, begin on our college and university campuses. Encouraging and supporting our students in developing and sustaining interracial friendships is a critical step in creating the society we wish to see. I hope my substantive theory illuminates how we can work together as student affairs educators and institutional leaders to do this.

Conclusions

My research into the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships, and the substantive theory I have generated through this research, highlight several important conclusions for higher education institutions seeking to promote student learning through campus diversity as well as for the scholarship of diversity-related student learning.

As I discuss in chapter one, one impetus for this research was my desire to “provide institutions with better, actionable insight into the dynamics of diverse student interaction and its outcomes” (Clarke & antonio, 2012, pp. 40-41) to guide them in supporting and facilitating these interactions and the learning that results from them. My research and the

substantive theory I've generated emphasize the need for colleges and universities to take intentional action to support their students in interacting and developing interpersonal relationships with culturally different peers. Too often institutions rely upon structural diversity and multicultural programming to facilitate intercultural interaction, but this "add diversity and stir" approach does not necessitate that students interact across cultural differences, nor does it equip them to do so in a meaningful and respectful way that leads to learning and development (Chang, Astin, & D. Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2004; Halualani et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005; Milem et al., 2005; Pettigrew, 1998a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006).

Most of my participants felt that interracial friendships were uncommon on Southeastern University's campus, echoing the findings of extant quantitative research on the prevalence of these relationships. Furthermore, even though all of my participants had developed interracial friendships, many of them—especially those who were unable to sustain their friendships—discussed feeling that they lacked the intercultural skills needed to engage appreciatively with fellow students from other cultural backgrounds. It seems that little has changed since Hurtado et al. (2002) commented,

... much is left up to students' own preferences for engagement with diversity.

Students often prefer the comfort of familiarity rather than risk what can be learned from the disequilibrium that results from encounters with others from substantially different social backgrounds. Practitioners must be attentive in promoting cognitive

and affective student development if they hope to successfully prepare students for living in a diverse world. (p. 184)

Although Hurtado and her colleagues addressed their criticism to large public universities (such as Southeastern), others' research suggests that other types of institutions have also fallen short of intentionally supporting students' diverse interactions. As institutional administrators and student affairs educators, we can—and must—do more to support our students in developing and sustaining these relationships that are so critical for their learning and development as future members of our pluralistic society. My substantive theory illuminates promising ways in which we can create intentional programs, policies, and interventions to achieve this goal, as I discuss throughout this chapter. The bottom line, however, is that colleges and universities cannot continue to justify taking a hands-off approach to intercultural interaction among their students. We are intentional about facilitating other forms of student learning, both inside and outside the classroom; we must be equally intentional about supporting students in learning through interaction with culturally diverse peers.

In addition, my research expands the body of empirical literature focused on the diversity rationale, or making the case for the consideration of racial diversity in college admissions. In particular, this research makes two contributions. First, as Chang (2013) notes, “Although the research is clear on *if* diversity contributes to educational benefits, we are only beginning to uncover *how* or *which* processes and conditions promote those benefits” (p. 172). My substantive theory provides an explanation for how a diverse student

body contributes to student learning through the mechanism of interracial friendship, and it also illuminates the conditions that facilitate the development of these relationships. While there is still much research to be done, as I note above in my section on implications for future research, my theory has established a foundation upon which scholars in the higher education and student affairs fields can continue to build in order to better understand how to support college students' diversity-related learning and development.

Second, my study highlights a significant limitation within the diversity rationale research. Because this body of research originated from the need to provide empirical evidence to document the educational benefits that result from racially diverse student bodies, in order to defend against legal challenges to affirmative action, it has (understandably) focused almost exclusively on racial diversity to the exclusion of other forms of cultural diversity. However, my participants' experiences show that from the perspective of college students, racial diversity and other forms of cultural diversity (e.g., religion, national or regional origin, class, sexual orientation identity) are largely inextricable in terms of how they affect students' interactions and relationships with diverse peers. This finding suggests that researchers' attempts to separate race from other forms of cultural difference in examining diverse peer interactions and the learning that results (e.g., through dichotomous quantitative variables) is artificial and may not account for students' actual, lived experiences. Indeed, this may possibly explain why some recent research on the outcomes of interracial friendships has yielded contradictory findings suggesting that interracial friendships may not lead to learning (e.g., Bowman & Park, 2015). Rather than

experiencing *interracial* friendships, my research suggests that college students are experiencing *intercultural* friendships in which their racial differences are only one, more or less salient, component of the cultural differences between them that shape their relationships and the learning and development that result.

Accordingly, as researchers we need to expand our own focus to account for the broader reality of students' experiences if we hope to truly understand how diversity and diverse interactions on campus lead to achievement of critical learning and development outcomes. Notably, if I had approached this research seeking to apply an existing conceptual framework—nearly all of which focus upon racial diversity—rather than utilizing an inductive, grounded theory design, I may never have unearthed this insight. As I argue in my section on implications for methods earlier in this chapter, higher education and student affairs scholars need to move beyond the usual methods and frameworks we rely upon in order to generate new and deeper insights and explanations. Like Clarke and Antonio (2012) and Chang (2013), I believe it is time to rethink how we approach studying college students' interactions with diverse peers and the learning that results by seeking new conceptual frameworks and alternate methods of inquiry, both quantitative and qualitative. My substantive theory provides one new conceptual framework, and grounded theory is a possible alternate method of inquiry others might utilize in the future. But there are many other possible approaches, and we have much to learn from applying them in our work as scholars and practitioners.

Chapter Summary

I designed this research to generate “actionable insight” (Clarke & antonio, 2012, p. 40) into college students’ interactions with diverse peers. I chose to focus specifically on interracial friendship as a particularly powerful and meaningful form of interaction and a critical mechanism through which college students attain the educational benefits of diversity. Through my research, I developed a substantive theory that explains the process by which college students develop and sustain interracial friendships. A substantive theory is meant to inform practice, and in this final chapter, I presented extensive recommendations for educational practice as illuminated by my theory. I also discussed the contribution my theory makes to existing theories and concepts pertaining to interracial friendship, suggested implications for methods in the fields of higher education and student affairs, and made recommendations for future research to address the questions that remain as well as new questions spurred by my research. By examining the process (the “how”) of college students’ interracial friendships, rather than the predictive factors and outcomes (the “what”), my research provides new, deeper insight into these relationships and the ways in which student affairs educators and institutional leaders can effectively support them in the interest of student learning and development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

North Carolina State University is a land-grant
university and a constituent institution of the
University of North Carolina

Office of Research and Innovation
Division of Research Administration

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Campus Box 7514
Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-7514

919.515.2444 (phone)
919.515.7721 (fax)

From: Deb Paxton, IRB Administrator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: February 18, 2014

Title: A Grounded Theory of the Process of College Students' Interracial Friendship
Development

IRB#: 3800

Dear Tara Hudson,

The project listed above has been reviewed by the NC State Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research, and is approved for one year. **This protocol will expire on 2/18/15 and will need continuing review before that date.**

NOTE:

1. You must use the attached consent forms which have the approval and expiration dates of your study.
2. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.
3. Any changes to the protocol and supporting documents must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
4. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days by completing and submitting the unanticipated problem form on the IRB website.
5. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.

Sincerely,

Deb Paxton
NC State IRB

Appendix B: Recruitment Email to Program Contacts

From: Tara D. Hudson (tdhudson@ncsu.edu)

To: [PROGRAM CONTACT]

Subject: Seeking participants for a study of college students' interracial friendships

Dear [NAME OF PROGRAM CONTACT],

I'm writing to seek your assistance in recruiting participants for research I'm conducting on undergraduate college students' interracial friendships. Specifically, my research aims to understand the process by which college students develop friendships with students from other racial backgrounds, and how different aspects of their experiences on campus affect these friendships. This research is important because interactions with peers from different cultural backgrounds are critical for college students' development of "21st century" intercultural skills such as multicultural competence, appreciation for pluralism, and ability to take others' perspectives – learning outcomes associated with diversity on campus. I'm seeking participants for my study who are current undergraduate students at [INSTITUTION NAME], at least 18 years of age, and who currently are, or previously were, close friends with a fellow student of a different racial or ethnic background.

I have obtained Institutional Review Board approval from my institution, North Carolina State University to conduct this research. I'm happy to send you a copy of my approval letter if you would like.

I would appreciate it if you could send the following announcement to undergraduate students in [NAME OF PROGRAM]. If you have specific students in mind who you think meet the criteria for inclusion in this study and might be interested in participating, please feel free to contact them directly with this information. If you or your students have any questions about my research, don't hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks,

Tara D. Hudson

Doctoral Student, Educational Research and Policy Analysis, North Carolina State University
tdhudson@ncsu.edu

Seeking participants for a research study on college students' interracial friendships

Do you currently have, or have you ever had, a close friend who is a fellow student at your college and is of a different racial or ethnic background than you? If so, I would like to talk with you about your experiences in this friendship. Participation in this research study will involve completing a questionnaire, participating in one to three interviews with the researcher, and writing several online journal entries. You can participate in the study on your own or with your close friend of a different racial or ethnic background. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you complete the study, you will receive a \$35 Visa gift card. By participating in this study, you will help me develop a theory of how college students develop friendships with students from other races. This theory may help colleges and universities create campuses that are more supportive and encouraging of students' interactions across cultural differences.

If you would like to participate, please contact Tara Hudson, doctoral student in Educational Research and Policy Analysis at North Carolina State University, at tdhudson@ncsu.edu.

Appendix C: Consent Form

North Carolina State University INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH This form is valid from 2/18/14 through 2/18/15

Title of the Study: A Grounded Theory of the Process of College Students' Interracial Friendship Development

Principal Investigator: Tara D. Hudson

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Alyssa Rockenbach

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study seeks to understand the experiences of undergraduate college students in interracial friendships, in order to generate a theory of how college students develop these friendships and how these friendships are shaped by contextual factors relating to the campus environment of the college or university the students attend. The theory developed through this research may inform the creation of more-effective diversity policies and programming on college campuses by identifying possible institutional strategies to support students' interracial friendships. In addition, studying how college students' interracial friendships develop will provide insight into how higher education institutions can create environments that support these friendships, thereby facilitating college students' achievement of critical learning and development outcomes. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. If you are not at least 18, please notify the researcher.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in three activities: (1) complete a questionnaire, (2) participate in at least one and no more than three face-to-face interviews with me, and (3) respond to a short series of journal prompts online.

Questionnaire: At our first meeting, you will complete a written questionnaire that asks you about yourself and your experiences with your friend of a different race/ethnicity. The questionnaire should take about 15-30 minutes to complete.

Interviews: You will be asked to participate in at least one, and as many as three, face-to-face interviews with me. During these interviews, I will ask you about your experiences in an interracial friendship. I will ask your permission to audio record the interview. Each interview will require between 30 minutes to 2 hours of your time. I will ask you to invite your friend to participate in the second interview; however, it is your choice whether or not to do so, and your friend is free to choose whether or not to participate.

Journaling: After completing one or two interviews, I will ask you to respond to a short series of journal prompts online using a restricted blog. I will provide three to five specific journal prompts asking for additional information about your experiences in an interracial friendship, and you will have two weeks to respond to them. I anticipate that responding to online journal prompts will take each participant between 1 to 3 hours total.

In addition, after the interviews have been transcribed, I will ask you to review the transcripts (which I will email to you) for accuracy and to email any comments or corrections you have to me. At the conclusion of the study, I will also ask you to review and provide comments on the theory of college students' interracial friendship development that I generate through this research. Participation in the transcript review and theory review is optional; however, doing so will help make sure that my conclusions make sense and reflect your experiences. Reviewing transcripts will likely require 30 minutes to 1 hour of your time. Reading and providing feedback on the grounded theory that I develop through this research will likely require 1-2 hours of your time. I will also seek feedback on the credibility and practical utility of the theory I generate from student development professionals as well as others who have experienced interracial friendships in college but did not participate in this study. No data or other information that would jeopardize your confidentiality will be shared with others who review the theory.

Risks

The risks to you for participating are minor. One possible risk is that because you will be discussing your friendship with another person, that other person may be able to identify what you have said about your friendship in the final report. To minimize this risk, I will ask you to choose pseudonyms for yourself and for your friend. If you do not wish to choose pseudonyms, I will choose them for you. I will use my best judgment in determining whether

to include in my final report excerpts from the data that could potentially prove harmful to the friendship being discussed, and if necessary, I will remove or alter identifying information. (For example, if discussing a critical event in the friendship that took place at a specific location, I will change or remove the location before including the data excerpt in the written report.) In addition, I may ask you to discuss negative aspects of your friendship. If any of the questions I ask you make you uncomfortable or upset, you may choose not to answer those questions or to discontinue your participation in this study without penalty. If I notice that you seem uncomfortable or upset, I will ask you if you wish to continue. If you feel that you would like to contact Southeastern University's counseling center at any time, you can reach them at [contact information removed for institutional confidentiality].

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. However, because the purpose of this research is to develop a practically useful theory of college students' interracial friendship development that college and university staff and administrators can use in their practice to support students' interracial interactions and friendships, you may indirectly benefit by contributing your experiences and knowledge to help develop this theory, thereby leading to future campus environments that are more supportive of students like you who have friends of other races or ethnicities. You may also indirectly benefit from the opportunity to reflect upon an interpersonal relationship that is (or was) meaningful to you.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. All study documents and data will be stored securely in password protected files on the researcher's personal computer and on a flash drive kept in a locked safe. All study documents and data (including questionnaires, interview transcripts, and journal entries), as well as any data included in oral or written reports, will use the pseudonyms you have chosen for yourself and for your friend (or that I have chosen for you) so that you and your friend cannot be identified. Only I, members of my dissertation committee, and the transcriptionist I hire will have access to study data and documents. However, only I will know your true identity. All study documents that contain personally identifiable information will be destroyed one year after I have defended the dissertation for which this research is the basis.

Compensation

For participating in this study you will receive a \$35 Visa gift card. You must complete all three phases of the study (questionnaire, at least one interview, and all journal prompts) to receive full compensation. If you participate in at least one interview and complete the questionnaire but do not participate in journaling, you will receive a \$20 Visa gift card.

What if you are a Southeastern University student?

Participation in this study is not a course requirement and your participation, or lack thereof, will not affect your class standing or grades at Southeastern University.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Tara Hudson, by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at tdhudson@ncsu.edu.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

Consent to Participate

"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."

Subject's signature_____ **Date** _____

Investigator's signature_____ **Date** _____

Appendix D: Interview Guide

1. Tell me about how you and [name of friend] came to be friends.

Follow-up prompts:

- How long have you been friends?
- How did you and [name of friend] meet?
- What were some of the things about [name of friend] that led you to want to be friends with him/her?
- Tell me about what was going on in your life when you and [name of friend] became friends.

2. How would you describe your friendship with [name of friend] today?

Follow-up prompts:

- What does your friendship with [name of friend] mean to you?
- How has your friendship with [name of friend] grown or changed since you first became friends?

3. Tell me about some of the things you've experienced with [name of friend].

Follow-up prompts:

- How have these affected your friendship?
- Tell me about an experience you've had with [name of friend] that you'll always remember. Can you walk me through what happened?

4. What are the benefits of being friends with [name of friend]?

Follow-up prompt:

- What do you treasure most about being friends with [name of friend]?

5. Tell me about what you typically do when you spend time with [name of friend].

Follow-up prompts:

- Tell me about some things you like to do with [name of friend].
- Tell me about what you and [name of friend] talked about last time you were together. Tell me about where you were.
- Tell me about some of the place where you and [name of friend] like to spend time together on campus. What about off campus?

6. Tell me about what you typically do when you're *not* spending time with [name of friend].

Follow-up prompts:

- How do you feel when you're not able to spend time with [name of friend]?
- Tell me about something you prefer to do without [name of friend].

7. How do you feel your friendship with [name of friend] has shaped who you are?

Follow-up prompts:

- Tell me about the strengths you've discovered or developed through your friendship with [name of friend].
- Tell me something you've learned from being friends with [name of friend].
- How has your friendship with [name of friend] changed your perspective or your views about things? Can you give me an example?
- How would your family members or other friends say your friendship with [name of friend] has shaped you?

8. How do other people feel about your friendship with [name of friend]?

Follow-up prompts:

- How do your other friends feel about your friendship with [name of friend]?
- How do your family members feel about your friendship with [name of friend]?
- How do your roommates feel about your friendship with [name of friend]?

9. Tell me about some of the people who have been most supportive of your friendship with [name of friend].

Follow-up prompts:

- How has [have] this person [these people] been supportive? Can you give me an example?
- How has his/her/their support affected your friendship with [name of friend]? Can you give me an example?
- Who has been a big influence on your friendship with [name of friend]?

10. Tell me about some of the ways you and [name of friend] are similar.

11. Tell me about some of the ways in which you and [name of friend] are different.

12. Tell me about any challenges you face in being friends with [name of friend].

Follow-up prompts:

- How has [have] this challenge [these challenges] affected your friendship with [name of friend]? Can you give me an example?
- Tell me about a disagreement you've had with [name of friend]. How did you feel about that?
- If you could change anything about your friendship with [name of friend], what would you change?
- What do you find difficult about being friends with [name of friend]?

13. How does being here at [name of institution] affect your friendship with [name of friend]?

Follow-up prompts:

- What are some of the ways being here has made it easy to be friends with [name of friend]?
- What are some of the ways being here has made it difficult to be friends with [name of friend]?
- Do you think being friends with someone of another race is common here at [name of institution]? Tell me about why you think they're common [uncommon].

14. Where do you see your friendship with [name of friend] next year? After graduation?

15. What advice would you give to next year's incoming students here at [name of institution] about making friends with someone of another race?

16. What else would you like to add about your friendship with [name of friend]?

Follow-up prompt:

- Is there anything about your friendship with [name of friend] that occurred to you during this interview?

17. Is there something I should have asked you that I didn't?

18. Please tell me about the item you brought with you and why it's a meaningful representation of your friendship.

Appendix E: Participant Questionnaire

A. *To begin, please tell me a little bit about you.*

1. When did you begin college (for example, fall 2012)?
2. When do you expect to graduate?
3. What is your current major?
4. How old are you? (You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study.)
5. What racial and/or ethnic group(s) do you identify with?
6. Do you identify as male, female, transgender, or with another gender identity?
7. Where did you grow up?
8. What activities or organizations are you involved with in college?

Dates Involved	Activity/Organization	Approx. Hours/Week	Role(s) Held (for example: member, secretary, etc.)
---------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------	--

Which of these activities are *most* important to you?

9. Which information sources on your campus do you rely upon or read/follow most often? (e.g., newspaper, website, listservs, etc.)

B. *Next, please tell me about your friendships in high school and college.*

1. How many close friends did you have in high school?
2. How many of your close high school friends were of a different race or ethnicity than you?
3. Think about the friends you have here on campus. How many close friends do you currently have?

4. How many of your close friends here on campus are of a different race or ethnicity than you?

C. *Next, please tell me about your relationship with the friend you'll be talking with me about today.*

1. How long have you and this person been friends?
2. Tell me about how you and this person came to become friends.
3. Is your friend the same age as you? If not, how old is s/he?
4. What racial and/or ethnic group(s) does your friend identify with?
5. Does your friend identify as male, female, transgender, or with another gender identity?
6. Where did your friend grow up?
7. Please provide a metaphor or simile to describe your friendship: "Our friendship is (was) _____." If you prefer, you can draw a picture of your friendship in the space below.

D. *Finally, please tell me your thoughts about how your college supports or does not support the development of friendships among students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.*

1. Do you feel like intercultural friendships are common or uncommon on campus? What are some of the reasons they're common (or uncommon)?
2. What events or activities does your college sponsor that support intercultural friendships?
3. What more could the administrators of your college do to support intercultural friendships among students?
4. What more could your fellow students at this college do to support intercultural friendships among students?

Appendix F: Prompts for Solicited Journals

Wording for Participants Whose Friendships Are Current

1. I'd like to learn more about the ways in which you and your friend handle disagreements or differences (we discussed some of these things in our interview). Think about a significant moment when you and your friend disagreed or differed. How did the two of you respond in this moment? Looking back, do you feel like you should have responded differently, or do you feel comfortable with the way you responded? Has the way you and your friend respond to disagreements or differences changed over time? If so, how has it changed?
2. Some participants have discussed the role of trust in their friendships, and I'm interested in learning more about how trust develops and the role it plays in your friendship. How did you come to develop trust with your friend? Can you describe a key moment when you realized that your friend was someone you could trust? What does trust mean to you and your friend, and has this meaning changed over the course of your friendship?

Wording for Participants Whose Friendships Have Ended

1. I'd like to learn more about the ways in which you and your friend handled disagreements or differences (we discussed some of these things in our interview). Think about a significant moment when you and your friend disagreed or differed. How did the two of you respond in this moment? Looking back, do you feel like you should have responded differently, or do you feel comfortable with the way you responded? Did the way you and your friend responded to disagreements or differences change over time? If so, how did it change?
2. Some participants have discussed the role of trust in their friendships, and I'm interested in learning more about how trust develops and the role it played in your friendship. How did you come to develop trust with your friend? Can you describe a key moment when you realized that your friend was someone you could trust? What did trust mean to you and your friend, and did this meaning change over the course of your friendship?

3. Do you feel like your friendship has helped you to better understand your friend's racial/ethnic or cultural group? Do you feel more comfortable spending time among other members of your friend's racial/ethnic or cultural group than you did before you became friends? Do you feel like your friend has learned more about your own racial/ethnic or cultural group as a result of being friends with you?
 4. Friendships change over time, and I'm interested in learning more about how your friendship has changed. What is the main way in which you feel like your friendship has changed (for better or for worse) over time? What has been the "high point" or best moment of your friendship, and when did it happen? What has been the "low point" or worst moment, and when did it happen? How have these moments affected your friendship?
 5. One participant described a moment when he and his friend realized they wanted to "build a friendship together." Do you feel like you and your friend had a moment when you realized you wanted to build a friendship together? If so, please tell me about it: When did you realize you wanted to build a friendship together? How did you go about building your friendship? (For example, what did you do, or not do? What are the key steps you took to build it? Did you make any agreements or promises?) How are you continuing to build or grow your friendship today?
3. Do you feel like your friendship helped you to better understand your friend's racial/ethnic or cultural group? Do you feel more comfortable spending time among other members of your friend's racial/ethnic or cultural group than you did before you became friends? Do you feel like your friend learned more about your own racial/ethnic or cultural group as a result of being friends with you?
 4. Friendships change over time, and I'm interested in learning more about how your friendship changed. What is the main way in which you feel like your friendship changed (for better or for worse) over time? What was the "high point" or best moment of your friendship, and when did it happen? What was the "low point" or worst moment, and when did it happen? How did these moments affect your friendship?
 5. One participant described a moment when he and his friend realized they wanted to "build a friendship together." Do you feel like you and your friend had a moment when you realized you wanted to build a friendship together? If so, please tell me about it: When did you realize you wanted to build a friendship together? How did you go about building your friendship? (For example, what did you do, or not do? What are the key steps you took to build it? Did you make any agreements or promises?)

Appendix G: Email to Participants for Member Checks

Subject: Draft theory of interracial friendships for your feedback

Hi [NAME],

I hope you're doing well and that your spring semester is off to a good start! After much work with the information you and the other participants in my study gave me, I have a draft version of my final product to share with you for your feedback, if you're still interested in providing it. As I mentioned when we first met, my goal with this research was to generate a theory explaining the process by which college students develop and sustain close interracial friendships. The experiences and stories that you shared with me played a significant role in helping me develop this theory, and I'm very thankful to you for sharing them with me. I could not have done this without you.

I'm attaching two pdf documents here: one is the full version of my theory and the other is a much shorter overview. You'll probably want to read the overview rather than the longer version, but I wanted to include both versions in case you're interested in seeing the additional details behind each of the concepts in my theory. The longer version also includes many excerpts from your and others' interviews and journals to illustrate different parts of the theory.

If you have time to look at my draft theory and give me feedback, I'd love to know specifically: (1) How well does the theory I've generated resonate or fit with your experiences? (Keep in mind it may not exactly reflect your experiences since it's meant to apply to interracial friendships generally.) (2) Does it make sense? (3) Is there anything significant missing from it?

If you're able to send me any feedback you have by **Tuesday, February 17**, that will give me time to incorporate your feedback into the final version of my theory that I present to my dissertation committee. If you're not able to send me feedback, that's totally fine, but I wanted to make sure you had the opportunity to see what you helped me to produce. Thank you again!

Best,
Tara

Appendix H: Email to Practitioners for Practitioner Checks

Subject: Seeking practitioner feedback on my theory of college students' interracial friendships

Hi [NAME],

I hope you're doing well and that your spring semester is off to a good start! I have a favor to ask of you. As you know, I've been working on my dissertation research, the purpose of which was to generate a grounded theory explaining the process by which college students develop and sustain close interracial friendships. My hope is that this theory will inform educational practice so student affairs educators (and colleges and universities generally) can better support students in developing and sustaining these friendships because of the important role they play in helping students achieve critical learning and development outcomes like reduced prejudice, pluralistic orientation, perspective taking, etc. I've developed a draft of my theory and am hoping you might be able to give me some feedback on it in terms of your own experience as a student affairs practitioner. The grounded theory method encourages such "practitioner checks" since the goal of a grounded theory is for it have practical utility. If my theory doesn't inform practice, it doesn't have much of a purpose!

I'm attaching two pdf documents here: one is the full version of my theory and the other is a much shorter overview. You'll probably want to read the overview rather than the longer version, but I wanted to include both versions in case you're interested in seeing the additional details behind each of the concepts in my theory. The longer version also includes excerpts from my participants' interviews and journals to illustrate different parts of the theory.

If you have time to look at my draft theory and give me feedback, I'd love to know specifically: (1) How well does the theory I've generated reflect what you've observed with your students in your professional role? (Keep in mind that my theory is meant to apply to interracial friendships generally, so no single student's experience will exactly match my theory, but my hope is that it applies broadly to the experiences of students in interracial friendships.) (2) Does it make sense overall? (3) Is there anything significant missing from it, based on what you've observed in your practice? (4) Is this theory something that you might find useful in informing your practice, in terms of helping you provide support to students in interracial friendships?

If you're able to send me any feedback you have by **Tuesday, February 17**, that will give me time to incorporate your feedback into the final version of my theory that I present to my dissertation committee. Any feedback you have will help strengthen the explanatory value

and usefulness of my theory. I understand I'm asking a lot of your time, so if you're not able to give me feedback, I completely understand.

Many thanks,
Tara

Appendix I: Participant Vignettes

Participant pseudonym: Alisha

Friend pseudonym: Charles

Alisha is an 18-year-old, female, African American freshman at Southeastern University originally from South Carolina. She's majoring in communications. Alisha described how she comes from a background (both her family, hometown, and high school) where diversity was normal and appreciated, and this has shaped her experience at Southeastern University. Five of her seven closest friends in high school and all of her nine closest friends in college were/are of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Alisha and Charles, who is also a participant, are close friends. They met in the fall semester of their first year through mutual friends, even though they live in different dorms. Alisha and Charles often talk about life and feelings; these conversations are what helped them become close, especially since Alisha felt like Charles was the only one who listened and gave her feedback when she was talking about life. She described their late-night talks as "good for the soul." She feels their friendship has helped broaden her own perspective on differences among people. Charles tells a lot of racist jokes, which initially bothered Alisha but now she tells them right back to him and doesn't mind when Charles tells them, because they're both "sassy." Being friends with Charles has helped Alisha learn not to judge others but rather to "listen to their story" for each person she meets; she realizes that she needs to just "sit down and just listen" to others and to "take the time to get to know somebody," and she feels like others need to make the effort to do this too.

Being friends with Charles has also helped her learn patience, because she feels people can't help how they were raised (in regard to being comfortable or uncomfortable with diverse others); she connected this to what she shared about Charles telling racist jokes and that he was raised in a mostly White town and attending a mostly White high school. Music is something she and Charles share; they both like Beyonce, and Charles is introducing Alisha to other music she wouldn't normally listen to because he has broader musical tastes than she does. After getting to know Charles, Alisha feels like his "race isn't even a factor to me anymore." On her questionnaire, Alisha drew a stick figure picture of her and Charles, with Charles towering over her because he's so much taller than she is and "he gets things that I can't reach."

Participant pseudonym: Amina

Friend pseudonym: Nawal

Amina is a 19-year-old biochemistry major at Southeastern University who plans to go to medical school after she graduates. She identifies culturally as Pakistani and Muslim; she was born in Pakistan (Karachi) and moved to North Carolina with her family as a child. She had a hard time fitting in and making friends prior to college because she always felt like the only Pakistani, and others would make fun of her and hurt her because of her apparent cultural differences and her Islamic faith. She hasn't had much more success with making friends in college, although she has not let that keep her from becoming involved and achieving her goals. She spent her first year of college at another university; she transferred to Southeastern University for her second year and now lives at home with her parents. She's involved with student conduct, the career center, the pre-health club, and in microbiology research. She holds an officer position in the university's Muslim students' organization, although she doesn't often attend their meetings. Because she's had few members of the Pakistani community around her in K-12 school and college, essentially all of her close friends have been of other races or ethnicities. Her closest friend in high school was a Chinese girl, but she and Amina don't talk much anymore because they're at different colleges. Amina finds that it's hard for her to make friends with culturally different peers; the exception is fellow Muslims and Asian peers.

Amina met her friend Nawal in the statistics class she took during her first semester at Southeastern University, and they've been friends for a year and a half. Nawal is Egyptian and also Muslim, and her family and Amina's family attend the same masjid. Amina feels Nawal's friendship is supportive and enlightening, and has helped lift a burden off Amina's chest. However, she doesn't share everything with Nawal because she feels that friendships should have some boundaries. The only disagreement that Amina and Nawal have had is about Amina's feeling that she would prefer to be married, so that she could have a close relationship with someone to support her in college, whereas Nawal feels Amina should wait until she's at least partly through med school before getting married. Amina feels Nawal helps her to be a better person. She also feels that Nawal has helped her return to Islam and they often talk about ethical and spiritual questions. They're both very busy with heavy course loads and Amina is very involved on campus, and so they don't have much free time, but they sometimes study together or get meals together, especially brunch. Nawal recently got engaged, and this is one of the significant differences Amina identified between her and Nawal—they're in different stages of life and have different priorities, and Amina also feels that she's a little more immature than Nawal because she's not at that stage of life yet. Another difference Amina identified is that Nawal makes friends more easily than Amina feels she herself does. Amina suspects that after they both graduate, they'll likely grow apart.

Participant pseudonym: Anastasia**Friend pseudonym: George**

Anastasia is a 19-year-old, female, freshman biology major at Southeastern University. She identifies as being of mixed race, of Caucasian, Guyanese, and Indian heritage. She grew up in Indiana and North Carolina. Five of her seven or eight closest friends in high school were of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and four of her five or six closest friends at Southeastern University are of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Anastasia's parents "are really supportive of multiracial friendships" because "they understand that it helps in understanding the world and to see people as people and not necessarily different races," and because they faced some discrimination when they got married (Anastasia's mom is White and her dad is Black and from Guyana). Anastasia lives in an internationally focused living-learning community at Southeastern University and is president of the community's hall council. She's also involved in a couple of sport clubs (gymnastics and wakeboarding) and with Habitat for Humanity. Anastasia took a gap year prior to starting college during which she lived in Ukraine and worked in an orphanage there. As a result of her time there she developed proficiency in the Russian language and wants to add a Russian minor.

Anastasia's friend George is male and originally from Mexico; he moved to the U.S. at age 11. She and George met because they both live on the same floor in their residence hall. George is 18 (also a first-year student) and identifies as Hispanic and Mexican. They grew close through staying up late talking at the beginning of the fall semester and through trips with the wakeboarding club, where they didn't know anyone else. Anastasia and George have conversations about how to change the world, and although they're often on opposite sides of an issue, these discussions are more like debates than disagreements—they "don't seep into our relationship"—and having these conversations "just makes you think about what you've been taught." Anastasia shared that George inspires her with his work ethic, and being friends with George has also helped Anastasia to focus more on her goals because George is very goal-oriented. The metaphor Anastasia chose for her friendship with George is hot sauce, because "it improves every dish and we are always talking about improving ourselves and the world and we love hot sauce" (from questionnaire).

Participant pseudonym: Bryan
Friend pseudonym: Erik

Bryan is a freshman at Southeastern University, age 18, and he identifies as a Caucasian male. He lives in a living-learning community for honors students, which is where he met his friend Erik, who is an African American male and also 18. Both Bryan and Erik grew up in North Carolina, but Bryan says he grew up in a very White town, whereas Erik grew up in a more diverse area of the state. Both Bryan and Erik are engineering majors, although in different specialties. Of Bryan's four closest high school friends, one was of a different race or ethnicity; at Southeastern University, Bryan has seven close friends, of whom five are of a different race/ethnicity.

Bryan and Erik met during their first semester as they lived on the same hall in their residence hall. They hang out in a group of friends from their hall; Bryan and Erik have never spent any one-on-one time together. Bryan's metaphor for his friendship with Erik is a cactus: "prickly on the outside but potentially life-saving on the inside." Elaborating on this in the interview, Bryan explained that "prickly" is because they like to give each other a hard time (they're both very sarcastic), but their friendship is also supportive—the "life-saving" part. Erik and Bryan differ politically (Bryan is conservative and Erik is more liberal), and they sometimes discuss politics, but their discussions are always respectful because they recognize that they are each entitled to their own opinion. One of the things that's connected Bryan and Erik is their love of superhero movies and also music, although their musical tastes differ; through Erik, Bryan has learned more about rap music. Another difference is that Bryan is religious and participates in an evangelical Christian student organization, whereas Erik is less religious, although he was raised in a religious family. Bryan doesn't really discuss religion with his friends because he feels they're all less religious than he is and he doesn't want to force his views on them. Bryan feels that one of the primary benefits of being friends with Erik is that he provides a different perspective when they talk about things.; he also treasures that Erik has a great sense of humor and the two of them can joke around. Erik is also more studious than Bryan, so being around Erik has helped Bryan procrastinate less. Ultimately, Erik is "always friendly. He is always willing to talk to you," and that's the primary reason why Bryan is friends with Erik; the close proximity and shared interests have also contributed to their friendship.

Participant pseudonym: Brynn**Friend pseudonym: Brittany**

Brynn is a 20-year-old, junior, criminology major at Southeastern University. She identifies as White, and her close friend Brittany, also a 20-year-old junior at Southeastern University, is African American. They met as orientation leaders the summer after their first year of college. They became very close very quickly, and at the end of the summer won the superlative “cutest couple” (and were given a joint nickname merging their two names: “Bryntany”) because they were always together. Now Brittany is one of Brynn’s best friends, someone she feels she can share anything with. They’ve never lived together, which Brynn feels is a good thing based on her previous experiences living with friends, but they are talking about living together next year for their senior year. However, Brynn currently lives in her sorority house, and says Brittany is there so often that some of her sorority sisters think she’s a member too. Brynn feels like her sorority sisters respect her friendship with Brittany.

Brynn and Brittany are both studying abroad in the spring in different countries, and they’re worried about being apart for so long because they see each other almost every day. They’re able to see each other often during school breaks too because their hometowns aren’t too far apart. They spend most of their time just hanging out, getting food, and studying. They listen to music together a lot and have similar musical tastes; although Brynn prefers more country music and Brittany prefers rap, they listen to each other’s music and also enjoy songs from their childhood. They often sing together, and they recorded a CD of them duetting that’s one of their most cherished memories and symbols. They also spend a lot of time together in a service organization on campus; Brynn was a member first and encouraged Brittany to join.

Brynn grew up in a very culturally homogeneous town and went to a very culturally homogeneous high school, so prior to college she didn’t have any friends from other racial or ethnic backgrounds. At Southeastern University, two of her five closest friends are racially or ethnically different from her. She’s met Brittany’s family and gets along well with them, and Brittany has met her family, who loves her and thinks she’s a good influence on Brynn. Brynn feels she and Brittany connected so well initially and continue to be so close because they share a lot of interests and values. For example, they both place a high value on their educational and career goals (e.g., they both want to go to graduate school); although their specific goals differ, they share a value of high aspirations and encourage each other in reaching for them. They also encourage each other to step outside their comfort zones and grow in different ways (e.g., in deciding to both apply to study abroad). Sometimes Brynn feels she has “two different worlds” because her friendship groups don’t overlap (her sorority group and her group with Brittany and another student of a different race), but she doesn’t see that as a problem, and in fact seems to feel having two worlds helps broaden her experiences. She and Brittany have talked about their future together as friends after graduation, and they really want to stay as close as they can, although their graduate school and career plans may make that challenging.

Participant pseudonym: Caroline
Friend pseudonym: Lily

Caroline is an 18-year-old first-year student at Southeastern University. She's majoring in history with a teacher education concentration and is also active in the German club. She identifies as a White female and she grew up in a large city in North Carolina. Caroline lives in the university's internationally themed living-learning community and considers that to be her most important activity because "it is where I have made my closest friends at university." Caroline has a number of international friends from high school, all from European countries, and she says she prefers being friends with people from other countries because she feels like she has to compete with American friends, which is "is just not as interesting to me when I could be learning about culture and language, which is something I'm really interested in." Two of her three closest friends in high school were of different races/ethnicities, and both of her two closest friends at Southeastern University are of different races/ethnicities.

Caroline met her friend Lily, who is 21 and female, at the beginning of the year because they are suitemates in their residence hall. Lily is an exchange student from Taiwan who is studying at Southeastern University for the year; in May she'll return home. Caroline and Lily were drawn to each other because they're both shy and quiet, and also because they're of similar (short) stature. Lily initially thought Caroline was an international student too because she was so quiet. They became closer this past winter when Lily broke up with her boyfriend in Taiwan; she had a very difficult time dealing with the break-up and Caroline was really her only support. Since then, Caroline and Lily have become much more intimate in terms of their willingness to open up to each other and trust each other. Caroline and Lily have a lot of shared interests like art, poetry, and tea; they sometimes have tea parties in their room. They also get meals together sometimes. Being friends with Lily has helped Caroline learn much more about Taiwan, including where it's located, and the artifact she shared—a keychain shaped like Taiwan with Chinese writing that Lily gave her—is a symbol of that. Caroline values having a different, non-American perspective on things. She's also met a number of other Asian students through Lily and feels that's shaped her as a person. The one difficulty Caroline has in being friends with Lily is that Lily is dedicated to her studies and is very busy, so it's hard for them to find time to spend together. Caroline is also sad that Lily will be returning to Taiwan at the end of this year, although she hopes they will stay in touch and Caroline may go visit her someday. Caroline's other friends have been supportive of her friendship with Lily and understand when she wants to spend time with Lily since Lily will be leaving the U.S. soon. The simile Caroline used for their friendship is that it's "like two hands reaching out across a huge ocean, attempting to reach the other side" (from questionnaire). Caroline says she and Lily have discussions more than disagreements; "if there's something we don't share, like a common belief in, we tend to just reach the middle and be like, okay, that's how you view it, that's how I view it" (from interview).

Participant pseudonym: Charles

Friend pseudonym: Alisha

Charles is a current freshman at Southeastern University who lives in a residence hall on campus. He identifies as a White male and is 19 years old. He's an engineering and psychology double major. His friend Alisha is a 19-year-old African American female who is also a freshman and lives in a different residence hall across campus. They met through shared friends and are part of the same friend group, but they've also grown closer as friends one-on-one since their first semester. Charles is widely involved on campus including in multiple scholars programs, a leadership program, and service activities. In high school, four of Charles's 7-10 closest friends were of other races/ethnicities, and here at Southeastern University, two of his 5-7 closest friends are. Charles and Alisha share some interests like gossiping and thrift store shopping, but they've grown closer because they've established trust and intimacy, largely through having conversations about "risky topics" like religion. In particular, they had conversations in the first semester of their friendship about how Alisha was feeling about a member of their mutual friendship group, and Charles was willing to listen to Alisha about that. This semester they have lunch together twice a week. Charles and Alisha also share similar values, like valuing family.

Charles feels like his friendship with Alisha has helped him learn about other perspectives, broadened his own thinking, and helped him be more reflective, and he feels like the two of them are "utilizing each other to grow further" (from interview). Charles grew up in a predominately White town in Ohio and went to a predominately White high school, whereas Alisha is from a small town in South Carolina that is more diverse racially and socioeconomically. Alisha has introduced him to a number of activities and experiences that Charles feels he never would have been associated with if it weren't for their racial difference, and he feels that's a good thing. Being friends with Alisha has also helped Charles become aware of when he may be clinging to stereotypes or being inappropriate, and he feels he helps Alisha with that as well. Another benefit of their friendship is that it gives Charles new perspectives on and solutions for his problems: "a new idea of advice and a new way of thinking. That's probably been why I've been so attracted to this friendship" (from interview).

Participant pseudonym: Dan
Friend pseudonym: Sammy

Dan is a first year business administration major at Southeastern University, age 18. He identifies as a White male. He grew up in Slovakia but doesn't necessarily consider it "home" because he traveled a lot. He attended high school here in the U.S. He lives on campus in an internationally themed living-learning community. Two of his five closest friends in high school were of other races/ethnicities, and one of his five closest friends at Southeastern University is (Sammy). He met his friend Sammy (age 19), who is an African American (of African ethnicity) male from a large city in North Carolina, through a mutual friend and by having a class together in the fall. After class they would go to lunch together. Dan feels they really got to know each other by spending lunch time together, when they would hang out and listen to music together in the car, both rap and Slovakian music. While they don't have these car sessions anymore, Dan feels that they were the foundation of their friendship. Now they work together a popular clothing store in the mall near campus. They don't have class together anymore, so they primarily see each other at work and on weekends if they get together to hang out or go to a concert, although they both have busy schedules so that doesn't happen as often as Dan would like. They don't live together (Sammy is a commuter student and lives at home), so this also makes it hard for them to hang out.

Dan considers Sammy to be one of his closest friends because he can be open with Sammy and doesn't feel like he has to be someone else with him. When Dan first arrived at Southeastern University, he felt like he didn't fit in with or share the experiences of a lot of the students on campus because he wasn't familiar with Southern culture (e.g., hunting, football). Sammy helped Dan understand some of these things better, but Dan was also attracted to Sammy because Sammy wasn't interested in these things either, coming from an African family. With Sammy, Dan felt he could talk about things he understood and was interested in (e.g., music, sports, girls), because Sammy understood and was interested in those things too. Dan feels that he and Sammy have similar values as well, even though they have different religions. Dan shared that when Sammy broke up with his girlfriend recently, Dan helped Sammy talk about it and have fun when he was upset about it. Dan feels that not everyone would be comfortable sharing this kind of experience with all of their friends, so it's a sign of how close he and Sammy are. Dan feels that one of the primary benefits of being friends with Sammy is that Sammy has exposed him to African culture as well as a different set of values than those Dan and his family have, and he feels that's a good thing because it's opened him up to new perspectives and new ways of thinking. But even though Dan and Sammy come from different cultural backgrounds, Dan doesn't feel those differences are salient in their day-to-day interactions; he doesn't think of Sammy as different from him.

Participant pseudonym: Erica

Friend pseudonym: n/a (discussed a friendship group)

Erica is an 18-year-old freshman at Southeastern University. She lives in an internationally themed living-learning community and is a zoology and international studies major; she added the international studies major because of her experience living in the living-learning community. Erica identifies as a Caucasian and American female, and she grew up in West Virginia in a town that was nearly all White and attended a high school that was nearly all White. She had around 20 close friends in high school and two of them were of other races/ethnicities. Here at Southeastern University she considers all of peers in her living-learning community to be close friends, about 70 total, and around half of them are of other races or ethnicities and represent multiple nationalities; they're male and female.

Erica doesn't feel like there's any one person from this group that's she's closest to or spends the most time with, so she talked about the group during the interview and in completing the questionnaire. She was surprised to find that she and many of her international friends share similar childhood experiences and memories; for example, they all watched the same cartoons or read the same books growing up. The differences she identified also were more experiential; for example, her friends from Europe traveled around Europe growing up because it's so easy to do there, and her friends from Southeast Asia were forbidden from working as teenagers whereas Erica's parents made her work. The metaphor she used to describe this group of friends is a family, and in the interview she discussed how they're like brothers and sisters in the way they interact. When some of her friends leave at the end of this year to go back to their home countries (i.e., those students who aren't from the U.S.), Erica expects her relationships with them will be like with extended family or distant cousins—they may not keep in touch all the time, but they'll be happy to see her and have her stay with them if she visits.

Participant pseudonym: Inga
Friend pseudonym: Natasha

Inga is a 19-year-old freshman at Southeastern University. She's majoring in Africana Studies and lives in an arts-themed living-learning community. She identifies as African American and female. At Southeastern University Inga is involved with several organizations and events focused on African American culture. Inga is inclined toward the arts and enjoys anime and cosplay. In high school all of Inga's five closest friends were of different races/ethnicities, and in college three of her four closest friends are of different races/ethnicities. Inga shared that she uses humor as a defense and used it a lot to deal with microaggressions and racism (e.g., jokes) in high school and to some extent in college too. In the interview, Inga discussed how her faith—being part of a fairly racially diverse and welcoming church growing up—has shaped her attitudes toward others.

Inga's friend Natasha is also a study participant. Natasha is also 18 and female, but she identifies as Asian American (Chinese). They met because they live together in their living-learning community; they were initially part of a larger friend group and gradually grew closer. Inga's metaphor for their friendship is "a sandwich. It can be any type of flavor that it wants to be with several spices of life. Despite the complexity and qualities of each layer, the bread (pan) is always fresh and so is the relationship" (from questionnaire). "Pan" is an inside joke that she and Natasha have (and that Natasha also mentioned in her interview with me); it has to do with "pan" or "pain" being the French word for bread but also the English word for pain, which they use to joke about awkward moments and life generally. Some of the interests Inga and Natasha share are wigs, late night Waffle House and Wal-Mart visits, cosplay, anime, and emotional conversations; these were mentioned by Natasha too. Inga and Natasha laugh a lot together, and they get into a lot of awkward but humorous situations like watching bad movies or acting like old men. Through her friendship with Natasha, Inga has learned to receive emotional support, not just to give it (although she gives a lot to Natasha too). Because Natasha is involved with Southeastern University's Women's Center, she's taught Inga a lot about gender roles and discrimination. Inga prefers to focus on personalities, not races, in her interactions and relationships with others.

Participant pseudonym: Isabella
Friend pseudonym: Alejandro

Isabella is 19-year-old animal science major in her second year at Southeastern University and lives in the living-learning community for honors students, where she's lived since her first year. She grew up in a large city in North Carolina and attended all inner-city, public K-12 schools, so in coming to Southeastern University, and especially living in the honors living-learning community, she experienced more White people than she'd ever seen in one place before, even though she identifies as White herself. Isabella is estranged from her family and is working to put herself through college; she has multiple jobs, but since she's been working since age 13, that's normal for her and she feels it keeps her from getting bored. She has a multicultural, multi-nationality friendship group, and this group is how she met her boyfriend, Alejandro, who is a 19-year-old international student from Guatemala. Eleven of her 16 closest friends in high school and 11 of her 14 closest friends at Southeastern University are of other races or ethnicities. Her friends' families are her "second families" since she's estranged from her own family; she likes having second families all over the world. Isabella came to college intentionally seeking diversity in her personal relationships because it "interests me more" when people have different backgrounds than she does (from second interview).

Alejandro and Isabella started dating in the fall, although they've known each other for a year, after connecting at a party hosted by a mutual friend. Isabella and Alejandro share interests in movies and food, but they differ in their cleanliness and stress levels. They're both very stubborn; this can lead to challenges sometimes, and Isabella has to remind herself to make an effort to compromise. Isabella is also much more social than Alejandro, and she enjoys partying while he doesn't. Isabella feels happiness is the main benefit of their relationship. Being with Alejandro has changed Isabella's perspective on family: "I had a very different upbringing [than he did]. So I guess like perspective-wise, perspective on family. I think his family sort of embodies what I would want my family to be one day" (from first interview). Another difference between them is that Alejandro is willing to make their relationship a priority over his relationships with his friends, whereas Isabella doesn't feel the same way about her friends; this can be a source of friction between them. The metaphor she used to describe their relationship was pasta: "it gets overcooked and tastes bad when we spend too much time together, and tastes bad when undercooked and we don't spend enough time together" (from questionnaire). Isabella feels like she and Alejandro may break up soon because they're too incompatible, but she's not worried that she'll lose her place in their friendship group if they do break up because she's already asked her other friends in the group about this and they reassured her they would still want to be friends with her. However, she doesn't feel she and Alejandro will continue to be friends if they break up. *[Note: Isabella and Alejandro broke up shortly after she completed her second interview.]*

Participant pseudonym: Kandace
Friend pseudonym: Jill

Kandace is a 19-year-old sophomore in Southeastern University's School of Management, majoring in human resources. She identifies as female and Black, with some Native American heritage as well, and she mentioned her dad is unsure of his cultural background but is mixed race. She grew up in a large city in North Carolina and attended an all-Black high school where she didn't have the opportunity to develop any interracial friendships, other than a White friend in Kindergarten. She's extensively involved on Southeastern University's campus, in Black cultural organizations as well as in university-wide and college-wide organizations. Kandace's peer mentor advised her to "get involved with the majority" at Southeastern University rather than just sticking with the African American community; she took this advice to heart and has done so.

Kandace and her former friend Jill were paired as random roommates their first year. They initially connected the summer before starting college because they had similar interests (running, Cook Out) and because Kandace's parents are from the same area of North Carolina as Jill. Because of these similarities, Kandace felt at first that they were "a match made in heaven" (from interview). Jill is White and comes from a town in western North Carolina. Kandace's parents had warned her that Jill's hometown is not known for its racial tolerance or enlightenment, and indeed, Kandace immediately encountered prejudice from Jill's friends on their first night together as roommates. Kandace and Jill's suite/hall freshman year consisted of four African American women, one woman from the Middle East, and the rest White women; Kandace and the African American women were immediately drawn together because of their cultural similarity. Their first night living together, Jill went out and got drunk, which rubbed Kandace the wrong way because that's not behavior she values. Throughout the year Jill continued to do things that Kandace did not agree with such as bringing guys back to the room with her to hook up, and this created a lot of conflict in their friendship. However, Kandace never confronted Jill about her behavior; instead, she vented to her African American friends in her suite. Kandace felt she and Jill ended up being "polar opposites"; they spent a lot of time apart because they had different personalities, obligations, values, and preferences for their time.

Jill and Kandace live across the street now in the same on-campus apartment complex, but in their three encounters this year, Jill has acted like she hasn't noticed or heard Kandace, which Kandace says hurts, but she's not devastated by it because she knows that losing Jill's friendship is not such a bad thing. Kandace feels that a benefit of her friendship with Jill is that she was "exposed to that world" (i.e., of a White person), which she never had been before, and Kandace appreciated that. She also feels that Jill "helped me learn a lot about myself" (from interview). Although Kandace has tried to not limit herself to interacting only with other Black students, all three of her current closest friends at Southeastern are the same race as her.

Participant pseudonym: Katelin

Friend pseudonym: Abby

Katelin is a 20-year-old, junior, female architecture major at Southeastern University, and she identifies as Caucasian. She attended a very homogeneous (White) high school, so she didn't have many diverse interactions prior to college. When she came to Southeastern University, she was assigned to a random roommate in the living-learning community for honors students, and she became very close friends with her roommate and two other friends with whom she also lived there. Their mutual friendships developed through spending a lot of time together in their residence hall and going to on-campus events and activities; she definitely feels that propinquity was a causal condition in developing and sustaining their friendships over the first two years, especially living together in their second year when they spent a lot of time hanging out on their hall and going out to eat together. Their four-person group was very tight and sister-like until Katelin and one of them, Abby (who is Italian and also a junior) had a falling out that began the previous spring and caused a lot of stress and tension in their relationship, eventually ending their friendship two weeks prior to our interview.

Katelin described her friendship with Abby on the questionnaire as “a dramatic rollercoaster ride.” Their main point of conflict was Abby's relationships with guys, and especially her most recent boyfriend. Katelin always felt that Abby could do better in terms of her boyfriends, and she never liked Abby's boyfriends. She also feels that Abby always felt like she needed a guy, and when Abby has a boyfriend, Katelin feels like she (and their other two mutual friends) become much less important in Abby's life. Katelin feels like trust was at issue at ending the friendship in the sense of equating trust with reliability; she felt she could no longer count on Abby to be there for her. Katelin and Abby had a “break-up” conversation to end their friendship; Katelin described how she was sobbing but Abby only shed a single tear when they hugged at the end. Katelin has told their other two mutual friends that her friendship ending with Abby won't affect her friendships with them, and so far it hasn't. Katelin felt that to continue to be friends with Abby, she would have had to overlook her issues with Abby's boyfriends and accept being a lower priority in Abby's life, and she wasn't willing to do that; she felt she needed to “be honest with herself” (from interview).

Participant pseudonym: Maggie
Friend pseudonyms: Nikki, Viviana

Maggie is a 20-year-old White female senior at Southeastern University majoring in social work. Maggie grew up in a town in Connecticut that she described as “very White,” and she went to very racially homogeneous K-12 schools (nearly all White students). Nikki was her first African American friend. She met Nikki at orientation prior to the start of their freshman year at Southeastern University, and they hit it off immediately because they were in the same major and were both the only two social people in their orientation group. They lived in adjacent residence halls their first year, so they spent a lot of time together in each other’s rooms and walking to class. In addition, because they were in the same major and had the same advisor, they had all of their classes together, so they studied together a lot too. They had some personality and value similarities—being social, prioritizing academics—but they also had some significant differences. Most significantly, Maggie was bothered by Nikki’s “aggressive” streak (she gave an example of when Nikki threw a highlighter at the wall near Maggie’s roommate when she was angry) and that Nikki had “strong convictions” (from interview)—right or wrong, black or white, no in between—a worldview that Maggie couldn’t relate to.

Maggie felt like coming to Southeastern University was a big culture shock, especially because of race relations in the South and Southern U.S. culture generally. She feels like she and Nikki may not have developed their friendship as easily if Maggie had grown up in the South, but coming from Connecticut, Maggie feels like she was completely naïve about these stereotypes, which helped her develop her friendship with Nikki but also caused tension because she sometimes felt like Nikki thought she was stupid for being ignorant of the stereotypes. She described in the interview how her friendship with Nikki was “the first time I really realized my Whiteness,” because Nikki and their group of friends, who were all Black, would point out Maggie’s racial difference from them. Maggie feels like her friendship with Nikki fizzled out rather than constituted a break-up, but the main conflict in their friendship occurred in the spring of their freshman year when Nikki shared that she felt like she needed to spend more time with other Black students on campus, which surprised Maggie because she “hadn’t really considered our races being a factor in this relationship at all” (from interview). Maggie didn’t confront Nikki when Nikki said this; she didn’t know how to and was a little scared of what Nikki’s reaction might have been. They stayed friends for another semester after that moment. Even though her friendship with Nikki has ended, Maggie feels she learned a lot from it about Black culture and how to be more comfortable with Black peers, and she also became more aware of her own race and its effects on interactions with others. All of Maggie’s current close friends at Southeastern University are Latina, and in contrasting her friendships with them with her friendship with Nikki, the main difference is that racial difference is never an issue in her current friendships: they are “more natural” and “there’s no elephant in the room,” and her closest friend Viviana, who is also Latina, is “not pushing me for not understanding her experiences” (from interview).

Participant pseudonym: Marcelo**Friend pseudonym: Jasmyn**

Marcelo is a 20-year-old junior in biological/environmental engineering at Southeastern University. He identifies as male and Latino; he is ½ Brazilian, ¼ Japanese, and ¼ other European groups. He grew up in a suburb of a large North Carolina city and attended a diverse high school. He never felt like a “minority” or “underprivileged” growing up; it just wasn’t something he was conscious of. He became friends with Jasmyn during orientation prior to his freshman year; he was attracted to her because she had a lot of positive energy and both of them were seeking to make new friends. When the semester started, his group of male friends from high school and her group of friends from her residence hall joined together to create a tight friendship group that was very racially diverse. They all spent a lot of time together in their first year. Jasmyn and Marcelo also spent a lot of one-on-one time together studying (they’re both in engineering) and as partners on the ballroom dance team.

Jasmyn is an African American woman and grew up in Tennessee. Marcelo discussed how Jasmyn’s background made her much more conscious of race and especially her status as a member of a group that is often discriminated against, and being friends with her helped Marcelo come to understand the experiences and treatment of racial minority groups better. However, he and his friends in their friendship group—including another African American person struggled to relate to Jasmyn’s background, and especially why it led her to see prejudice or racism in others’ actions and intentions: “She’s not my only black friend. She’s just the only one that I had to be careful what I said around. My other black friends would laugh about the same jokes with us” (from interview). But he also feels this is something significant he learned from their friendship: “I assumed everyone [students of Color] had had it the same way as me. ... I assumed the Civil Rights Act, that all seemed like something in the past. I had no idea that it was still a very real thing. So [the friendship] definitely opened my eyes up to that” (from interview).

Jasmyn’s greater attunement to racial dynamics than the others in their group led to conflict within the group, including a big fight they all had when they shared a house at the beach over Spring Break their freshman year. Jasmyn and Marcelo stayed in touch at the beginning of the sophomore year even though Jasmyn wasn’t really a part of the group anymore, because of the dance team. But their friendship ended mid-year their sophomore year when Marcelo felt that Jasmyn started to become romantically interested in him at the same time he had started dating another member of their friendship group, a White woman; he also had to leave the dance team about that time. Since their friendship ended, Marcelo has only spent time with Jasmyn once, when she asked him to help her study for physics at the end of their sophomore year. The metaphor he used for their friendship was “a bright candle that burned out too soon” (from questionnaire) because he felt they gave each other so much energy and he would have liked to remain friends with her.

Participant pseudonym: Max

Friend pseudonym: Nelson

Max is a junior electrical and computer engineering major at Southeastern University. He is 20 years old, from the New York City area, and identifies as Caucasian and male. Max comes from a background in which he gained comfort interacting with others from different cultures. Growing up in the New York City area, he attended diverse schools, although none of his three closest high school friends were from other races/ethnicities. Here at Southeastern University, two of his closest five friends are of other races/ethnicities. Max's close friend Nelson is African American, also 20 and male, and also a junior electrical and computer engineering major at Southeastern University. They've been friends for two years. Nelson grew up in a large city in North Carolina. Nelson and Max met in their first year at Southeastern University. They lived in the same residence hall but different parts of it, and so never would have saw each other or become friends if a mutual friend, who was friends with Nelson and lived in the same suite as Max, hadn't introduced them and given them a reason to spend time together.

Max and Nelson connected through deep discussions, especially about their different faith beliefs and worldviews. Nelson is a Christian and Max identifies as "agnostic, I guess" (from interview). Max attended a Catholic high school by choice, but religion wasn't a part of his upbringing as his parents emigrated to the U.S. from the Soviet Union, where they were not allowed to practice religion. However, both Max and Nelson came to their faiths on their own, rather than through their families, and this was a point of connection for them. Because they are in the same major, they spend a lot of time together studying and in classes, in addition to living together. They also share an interest in music, especially certain hip-hop and rap artists whose musical artistry they can appreciate. Max isn't sure if he and Nelson will continue to be friends after graduation, but Max is planning to discuss his post-graduation options with him because Nelson is such an important part of Max's life and he wants his input in that decision. Max feels that his friendship with Nelson has helped him to become more tolerant of others in regard to faith diversity. He also admires Nelson's optimism and upbeat attitude, and Max feels he's more positive and upbeat when he's around Nelson. Nelson is also not afraid to challenge Max when he feels Max isn't honoring his values.

Participant pseudonym: Michelle
Friend pseudonyms: Trey, Janelle

Michelle is a 20-year-old, female, business administration major at Southeastern University. She identifies as White and is from a large city in North Carolina. Michelle has lived in the living-learning community for honors students since her first year and is now an RA there. In high school, one of her two closest friends was of another race/ethnicity. Her high school was almost exclusively White, so she didn't have many opportunities to make friends of other races there. Michelle discussed two friends: (1) Janelle, who is a co-worker and study partner and (2) Trey, who is the friend she hangs out and has fun with. She has known each of them for two years.

Janelle is a 22-year-old senior in business administration; she is Chinese and female. She was born in China but was adopted by a family in the U.S. and grew up in the mid-Atlantic region. Janelle was Michelle's RA in their living-learning community when Michelle was a freshman, and initially Michelle didn't like her much because Janelle was rarely around. However, when Michelle also became an RA this year, she understood more about Janelle and has consulted with her on a number of work-related matters, and through that they developed trust. Michelle and Janelle also study together since they have the same major and some of the same classes. But they rarely do anything together if it's not related to work or school, and Janelle is not part of any of Michelle's friendship groups. Michelle feels that she and Janelle are similar in that they are both leaders, team players, and motivated. However, she and Janelle have different thought processes. Michelle doesn't think she'll keep in touch with Janelle after Janelle graduates.

Trey is 22 years old, African American, and male; he's originally from New York. Trey and Michelle share an interest in sports and met while waiting in line overnight for tickets for a basketball game during Michelle's freshman year; Michelle started talking to Trey, which is not something she normally does, which set the stage for their friendship. They share an interest in sports and also share a sense of humor. Trey and Michelle are part of the same circle of friends, which Michelle became a part of through Trey. It's a very racially diverse group and all male except for Michelle. The main benefit of being with friends with him is having fun: "I have somebody to do something with. And it's kind of like that break that I need, because I am so busy all the time that just having the time to actually relax with a friend and not think about anything related to school is really beneficial for my health" (from interview). Michelle feels like she sometimes gets comments and glances from others when she and Trey are together. Michelle hasn't seen Trey since the beginning of this semester and if she could change something, wishes she could have more time to spend with him. She described her friendship with Trey as "like ham and cheese; we go together" (from questionnaire). What Michelle treasures most about Trey is how much she can trust him: "With Trey I feel like I could talk to him about anything. He's just somebody I automatically trust, I know he's going to keep a secret" (from interview). Michelle does think she'll try to keep in touch with Trey after he graduates this spring, primarily through text messages and Facebook because he'll be moving to another state.

Participant pseudonym: Natasha

Friend pseudonym: Inga

Natasha is an 18-year-old female freshman living in Southeastern University's arts-focused living-learning community, majoring in environmental sciences. She identifies as Chinese American, and she grew up in Los Angeles until middle school, at which point she moved to North Carolina. Most of Natasha's friends in high school were Asian American (all four of her close friends). She didn't have a goal of meeting people from other backgrounds when she came to Southeastern University, but now she doesn't spend time with any Asian American students; all three of her three closest friends in college are of different races/ethnicities than her. Her friend Inga is also a freshman living in the same living-learning community, on the floor below Natasha. Inga grew up in North Carolina and is a 19-year-old African American woman.

Natasha met Inga through mutual friends in their living-learning village, and she was attracted to Inga because they shared interests in cosplaying and anime, and they have similar senses of humor. Humor is a big part of their friendship—lots of inside jokes, puns, and being silly (e.g., they sometimes pretend to be old men). Although Natasha feels she and Inga have a lot in common, especially their interest in late-night grocery shopping and Waffle House runs, food, watching bad movies, and humor, one of the key differences between them is their religious beliefs: Natasha is an atheist (or atheist-leaning) while Inga is Christian and her faith is very important to her. This difference becomes magnified when they're discussing sexual orientation identity, as Natasha identifies as bisexual or "a little gay" (from individual interview), but Inga feels that homosexuality is wrong per her religious beliefs. However, Natasha feels that she and Inga respect each other's beliefs and realize that these differences are not important in their day-to-day interactions; as Natasha said in her interview, "even though it sounds like it shouldn't work, it really does because she just doesn't try to push her own beliefs on others. ... It's based on mutual acceptance, that we're human beings and stuff like that." Natasha also values their differences, most chiefly their religious difference, because it's helped her become more tolerant of Christians; she feels that "difference helps you see through other people's eyes" (from individual interview). Natasha feels like she's learned from Inga how to give people the benefit of the doubt and to be more patient and kind and less judgmental of others. Sometimes Natasha and Inga have "accidental miscommunications" that are due to their different cultural backgrounds, but they're always small and not a "big deal" because they "talk openly" about them (from individual interview). Natasha and Inga are part of a larger group of about 15 friends, who are all diverse in various ways (ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.), so her friendships with Inga is well accepted in that group.

Participant pseudonym: Rachel**Friend pseudonym: Anya**

Rachel is a 20-year-old sophomore majoring in graphic design at Southeastern University. She lives in the living-learning community for honors students and has since her first semester. She identifies as female and mixed race: half Hispanic and half White (Italian ethnicity). She grew up in a large city in North Carolina. Rachel is extensively involved on campus in a variety of activities. All of Rachel's close friends in high school were, and three of her five close friends at Southeastern University are, of different racial/ethnic backgrounds than her own.

Rachel's friend Anya, an engineering major who is also a sophomore at Southeastern University, is of Russian ethnicity and moved to the mid-Atlantic U.S. with her family when she was six years old. Anya and Rachel were randomly assigned to be roommates in their first semester, and they became friends and are living together again this year. They have two other good friends who share their suite; together they call themselves the "quartet." When Rachel first found out her assigned roommate was Russian she had a lot of stereotypes about what Anya would be like, but she found those not to be true, which helped her learn why she shouldn't judge others based on assumptions. Anya and Rachel connected through shared interests like music, doing activities together on campus, and going to campus events. Living together on campus and lots of late-night talking and deep conversations helped them grow closer and become comfortable with each other. Rachel and Anya don't share a lot of the same values (e.g., on issues such as abortion or religion); however they have respect for each other's values and beliefs and don't debate each other when they talk about them: "we don't tread on each other's beliefs" (from interview).

They also have different personalities; Rachel is extraverted while Anya is introverted. Their different personalities are one of the main differences between them. Rachel didn't bring an object as an artifact but rather an idea, that technology and especially a Facebook group that their "quartet" uses is what best represents her friendship with Anya; it allows them to keep in touch wherever in the world they are. Rachel drew a picture and wrote a short description for her metaphor: she and Anya are "like 2 peaceful kittens ... but we still like our space" (from questionnaire). She elaborated in the interview that they can spend time together in the same room and don't necessarily have to be interacting to be close; their closeness and friendship are not dependent on constant active interaction; merely living together and being in proximity to each other is enough.

Participant pseudonym: Rick

Friend pseudonym: Alex

Rick is 22 and is a senior computer and electrical engineering major at Southeastern University. Although Rick and his family are from the U.S. and he identifies as an African American male, he grew up in Kenya (4 years) and Indonesia (14 years) and went to high school in Indonesia. So Rick has experience with other cultures and upon coming to Southeastern University had to adjust to American school culture; of his ten closest high school friends, all were of different racial/ethnic backgrounds than Rick. Here at Southeastern University, three of his four closest friends are of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Rick likes to play sports and is a member of the rowing club as well as a participant with his friend Alex in intramural soccer and basketball since his first semester. Rick has lived in the international living-learning community since his first year at Southeastern University and loves it. Because Rick didn't spend much time in the U.S. growing up, he didn't consider himself to be an American, and in fact discussed how he used to hold stereotyped views about Americans as being self-centered.

Rick's friend Alex is also a senior and is a White male of Romanian ethnicity who grew up in central North Carolina. Rick met Alex during his first semester through Rick's roommate, who went to high school with Alex and is also Romanian. Although Alex wasn't living there when they met, he visited a lot, and Alex moved into the living-learning community in his sophomore year and lived right above Rick, and this is when Rick feels they really got close because they spent a lot of time together and ate meals together. Alex helped Rick adjust to the culture and feel at home at Southeastern University, and Rick feels like he and Alex had a lot in common because he and Alex are both familiar with coming from other cultural backgrounds and adjusting to American university culture. One of the ways in which they got to know each other was through intramural sports, and Rick feels Alex helped mentor and coach him, especially in soccer. Through their shared experience playing sports, Rick feels Alex helped him learn to have more self-confidence and to believe in himself more and not care "what other people think about you all the time" (from first interview). On the questionnaire, Rick described his friendship with Alex as a tree, because their "friendship has branched out where each of us has introduced each other to other friends who are of other ethnicities and races." He describes Alex as "one of the most influential people I've met on campus" (from first interview). Rick feels like his friendship with Alex has helped him learn not to judge others based on assumptions.

Participant pseudonym: Sloan**Friend pseudonym: Ashley**

Sloan is a 21-year-old female from a large city in North Carolina. She is graduating from Southeastern University this semester with a degree in animal science. She'll be attending law school in another state in the fall. Sloan identifies as both African American and multi-racial. Sloan is a student leader and extensively involved on campus. In high school, only one of Sloan's six closest friends was of a different race/ethnicity, but at Southeastern University, she has one really close friend and several good friends who are of other races/ethnicities (of a total of three currently on campus and two who have already graduated).

Sloan's friend Ashley is 22 years old, from southeastern North Carolina, and also a senior at Southeastern University. Although Sloan often identifies as African American, her friendship with Ashley, who is White and Native American, has helped her "be my whole self" (from interview) because Sloan feels she can honor and explore parts of her identity that she has to hide or deny when she's with her African American friends (e.g., listening to country music). Through her friendship with Ashley Sloan has "discovered more of who I am" (from interview), including her faith, as Ashley has strong faith and has helped Sloan (re)discover hers. Talking and dialogue are a big part of Ashley and Sloan's friendship, but they also have a lot of fun together. "I found that being friends with Ashley and being able to just like – like how we talk so much about so many different things, and I'm able to express some of the ideas that I've had or some of the concerns or issues just that I've normally kept to myself, or maybe I'll blog about 'cause I don't really feel comfortable talking about them with anyone. It's made me more comfortable with who I am" (from interview). Sloan and Ashley only became friends at the beginning of the current academic year, but Sloan feels like she's known Ashley much longer than that because they've grown close so quickly. They met by working together on campus. Sloan describes their friendship as "dynamic" (from questionnaire). Sloan couldn't think of many differences between herself and Ashley, other than the fact that Ashley is single and on the "husband hunt": "I was kinda thinking about that at first because I had a feeling you might ask about our differences, but I don't know. I can't think of anything that jumps out actually. And it's because I can easily point out differences with my other friends, but I don't think I can point anything out between us that comes to my mind other than skin color, because we share the same views on a lot of things" (from interview).