Students' Cross-Racial Interactions at an Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution

by

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DEDICATION

For Florence Ellen Dwyer, you saw neither the start nor the end to this project, but I know you have been with me the whole time.

This work honors the dreams you achieved, those you deferred, and the dreams you had for me.

I love you always.

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To everyone that has helped me along this very long journey, I am so grateful for your support and belief in me. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative investigation at Southwestern State University (SWSU), an Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) explores students' experiences with cross-racial interactions. Specifically, this dissertation examined the extent to which African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White juniors and seniors interacted with students from racial backgrounds different from their own. Prejudice reduction, critical mass theory, and cross-racial interaction literature were utilized as a foundation to engage in this grounded theory investigation. Findings revealed that regardless of race, students' perceptions of others and their level of comfort in diverse settings played the biggest role in whether or not they engaged in cross-racial interactions. Students who were involved in multi-racial and multicultural organizations had the most positive cross-racial interactions. Greek letter organizations were consistently identified as mono-racial settings which in most cases thwarted cross-racial interaction. Finally, findings about the Emerging HSI designation reveal that other than its efforts to become an HSI, there is nothing discernible that distinguishes SWSU as an Emerging HSI from a traditionally White institution. Implications for future research and practice include replicating this study at other sites, conducting a follow-up study at SWSU, and developing additional programs to encourage cross-racial interaction among students.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Peer interaction is recognized as perhaps the most influential source of change in college" (Antonio, Cheng, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin, and Milem; 2004, p. 508).

Overview

Over the last two decades numerous studies have investigated students' cross-racial interactions in college and documented the benefits students accrue by engaging with diverse others (Adams, 1997; Aleman, 2001; Antonio, 2001; Astin, 1993a; 1993b; Chang, 2001; Gurin, Dey, Gurin & Hurtado, 2004; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, 2003; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005, Milem, 1994).[1] Students gain numerous benefits from engaging with diverse others such as: (a) greater cognitive flexibility, (b) socio-historical thinking, (c) critical thinking, (d) socio-cognitive outcomes (e.g. leadership skills, social, and cultural awareness), (d) democratic outcomes (e.g. propensity to vote in elections, a belief that conflict enhances democracy, and a concern for the public good), (e) prejudice reduction, (f) cultural awareness and acceptance, and (g) a greater sense of civic responsibility once they graduate (Antonio, 2001; Astin, 1993a; 1993b; Chang, 2001; Gurin, et al., 2004; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2003, Milem, 1994).

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[1] Studies on cross-racial interactions have documented how often and where students engage with college peers who have different racial backgrounds from themselves. Such studies have also investigated whether or not these interactions were positive or negative.

Literature clearly delineates the benefits of interacting across race; however, many college students are not engaging in cross-racial interactions. Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005) stated that, "when 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." (p. 9). This dissertation investigated students' collegiate cross-racial interactions to understand, *if,* where, when, and how often students engage in cross-racial interactions. This study also examined why some students engaged cross-racially and how students' perceptions of their own racial group and their perceptions of other racial groups impacted their experiences with cross-racial interactions. Finally, this investigation is unique in that it delved into cross-racial interactions in an understudied setting—Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Emerging HSIs).

Significance of the Study

Institutions of higher education have been becoming more diverse (Carnevale & Fry, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In order to better serve the diverse college student population it is important that institutions of higher education are equipped to serve students with a multitude of backgrounds. One of the central goals of educational institutions is to ensure that graduates are prepared to live and work in an increasingly diverse and global society (Bastedo, Batjargal, Eufrasio, & Yaroslav, 2009; Bikson & Law, 1994; Bok, 1986; Bowen, 1980; Business Higher Education Forum, 2002). Presently, people of color comprise more than 35% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). As the U.S. society grows increasingly diverse the future

workforce depends upon the full participation of people of all races. However, many

voice that students are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of a multicultural

society (Bikson & Law, 1994; Business Higher Education Forum, 2002; Schroeder, 2003;

Wright, 1997). This finding is particularly surprising given the changing landscape of

higher education that provides students with more opportunities to interact with diverse

peers than ever before.

Employers, parents, and the general public have increasingly articulated that

students are ill-prepared for the diverse working world they will surely encounter

(Wright, 1997; Schroeder, 2003). Subsequently, higher education researchers have

devoted a great deal of scholarship to investigating the impact of interacting with diverse

peers during college (Adams, 1997; Aleman, 2001; Gurin, et al., 2002). In spite of the

sustained attention to this to topic, little has been written about the ways Hispanic-

Serving institutions (HSIs) (as well as other Minority-Serving Institutions) prepare

students for the diverse society beyond post-secondary education. The present study

addresses these quandaries by gaining a greater understanding about how students from

various racial backgrounds interact with one another, if at all; and how students view the

changing racial landscape of Southwestern State University (SWSU).

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation intentionally explored students' cross-racial interactions at

Southwestern State University an Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution. SWSU was

founded as a Normal School and over time expanded its scope to become a

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comprehensive doctoral institution and an HSI.[2] SWSU's stated mission is "dedicated to excellence in serving the educational needs of the diverse population of [the state] and the world beyond" (SWSU website, 2011). As a public institution SWSU is charged to serve the citizens of the state equitably. In order to better represent the demographics of the state, officials at SWSU recognized the need to admit and graduate more Latino students. Therefore, the SWSU president charged the university to become "intentionally diverse." The purpose of this dissertation is to better understand what experiences students are having with regard to cross-racial interactions at a diverse institution that was actively seeking the HSI designation. Specifically, this study investigated *if* students were interacting across race, and if they were what were they gaining from these experiences. This dissertation also sought to understand how students viewed the HSI designation and how the HSI designation impacted their experiences. Finally, studies on HSIs and particularly Emerging HSIs are few and far between. I chose to study this topic because I was interested in learning what is missing from the HSI discussion and what areas warrant further research.

The Growing Role of Hispanic-Serving Institutions in Higher Education

Hispanic-Serving Institutions are newer additions to the higher education landscape that emerged in the 1970s and were federally recognized in the 1980's (Santiago & Andrade, 2010). HSIs are 2-year and 4-year institutions that have a full-time equivalent (FTE) Hispanic undergraduate enrollment of at least 25% (Santiago, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Once institutions have reached this 25%

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[2] A Normal School is an educational institution that educates teachers.

threshold, they become eligible to apply for Title V funding from the U.S. Department of Education. The Title V, Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions program, was designed to address these inequities. The goals of Title V are to:

1. Expand educational opportunities for Hispanic students

2. Improve the academic attainment of Hispanic students

3. Expand and enhance the academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability of colleges and universities that are educating the majority of Hispanic college students and,

4. Help large numbers of Hispanic and other low-income students complete postsecondary degrees.

(Santiago & Andrade, 2010, p. 5)

Inquiry into Hispanic-Serving Institutions emerged out of a need to better serve Hispanic students. Nationally, 51% of Latinos who start college complete a bachelor's degree in six years, compared to 59% of White students who obtain their degree in the same time period (Kelly, Schneider, & Carey, 2010). Although HSIs make up only 6% of the colleges and universities nationwide, they serve almost half of the Latino students in the U.S. (Gasman, 2009; Mercer & Stedman, 2008). Despite representing a small percentage of colleges and universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions have been growing at a tremendous rate over the last three decades. In 1990 there were 137 HSIs, and in 2012 there are 238 HSIs (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities [HACU], 2012).[3] Furthermore, statistical projections indicate that by 2015, the Hispanic student

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[3] The number of HSIs that are members of HACU differs from the number of institutions the U.S. Department of Education has listed as "High Hispanic Enrollment" institutions. The Department of Education lists 257 that had high Hispanic enrollment as of Fall 2006.

college enrollment will increase by 42% (Hussar & Bailey, 2006). Given the significant role HSIs play in educating Latino students as well as students from all racial backgrounds, little research exists that investigates the impact HSIs have on their students, or students' experiences within them. The present study sought to investigate the extent to which students interact across race at an Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Researchers have also recently identified a subgroup affiliated with HSIs—Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Emerging HSIs are institutions that have 15-24% full-time Hispanic enrollment. These institutions are critical in educating Hispanic students. In the 2006-07 academic year "emerging HSIs enrolled 14 percent of all FTE [Full Time Enrolled] Hispanic undergraduates at public and not-for-profit degree-granting institutions" (Santiago & Andrade, 2010, p. 6). Studies have found that emerging HSIs cover a broad geographic area and the location of Emerging HSIs has expanded over time. In the 2006-07 academic year, the 176 Emerging HSIs were located in 20 states (Santiago & Andrade, 2010). Today, HSIs and Emerging HSIs are found in states such as Kansas, North Carolina, and Washington which have not historically been known for having high Latino populations. In order to project institutions that will soon become HSIs, researchers have begun to look at Emerging HSIs as an important tool. By examining Emerging HSIs, scholars are better able to determine the number of institutions that will soon: (a) become Hispanic-serving, (b) become eligible to apply for federal Title V funding, and (c) be well positioned to serve and graduate Hispanic and low-income students (Santiago & Andrade, 2010). In fact, the study by Santiago and Andrade concluded that of the 176 Emerging HSIs, 67 had 20-24% Hispanic enrollment,

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meaning that 67 colleges and universities are on the cusp of becoming HSIs and have the potential to do so within the next several years. These institutions on the cusp are of particular interest to researchers and policy makers who are seeking to determine if some colleges and universities are effectively serving Hispanics before they officially become Hispanic-serving. Santiago and Andrade (2010) are particularly interested in understanding what might be occurring at Emerging HSIs that transforms "their institutional policies, programs, and practices to better serve their own "critical mass" of Latino students" (Santiago & Andrade, 2010, p. 7).

The present study delved into this topic and explored the extent to which students interacted across race at an Emerging HSI. At the time data was collected the institution was actively pursuing an HSI designation in order to more accurately represent the racial demographics of the state and the region it serves. Now, the institution—Southwestern State University (SWSU)—has reached the 25% marker and is a fully recognized HSI (HACU, 2011).

As the Latinos population continues to grow it is imperative that colleges and universities are able to produce a diverse and educated workforce. According to projections from the U.S. Census, by 2020 Hispanics will comprise 22% of the U.S. college-age population (Huneke, 2010). While focusing on the education of Latino students is essential to the future of the United States it does not mean that the educational experiences of non-Hispanic students should be ignored. In addition to understanding Latino students' experiences, it is also important to understand how students from other racial backgrounds are being impacted by the shift in compositional

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diversity. Much can be learned from creating educational excellence for Hispanic students. Santiago and Andrade (2010) stated:

> Serving Latino students does not mean that institutions serve Latinos at the expense of other students. A Latino student success model is not an either/or proposition. Rather, institutions that serve their students well can build on what works in serving Latino students effectively to better serve other students as well.
>
> (p. 8)

From Santiago and Andrade we see that there is much we can learn from Latino students' success that can be applied to serve students of all backgrounds.

Importance of Cross-Racial Interactions

Considering the context of HSIs and Latino student success has been central to this study. Equally as important has been gaining an understanding of the context of students' cross-racial interactions. Many researchers have investigated cross-racial interactions and have found that they manifest in different ways, depending on the setting. For example, Orfield and his colleagues determined that pre-college living environments matter in determining collegiate cross-racial interactions (Orfield, & Eaton, 2003; Orfield & Lee, 2006). Specifically, they determined that most students are coming to college from highly segregated communities and high schools. As a result, students from all racial backgrounds often have their first interaction with diverse others in college. Due to their inexperience and lack of knowledge of cultures outside of their own, students may be hesitant to engage in cross-racial interactions and as a result, lack core diversity competencies after graduation that many employers seek when hiring recent college graduates (Bikson & Law; 1994; Business Higher Education Forum, 2002).

Many students in this study were matriculating from mono-racial pre-college environments to multi-racial college environments and leaning to navigate this new racially diverse setting. Much of the literature on cross-racial interactions analyzes it in terms of *frequency* (how often interactions occur), *quality* (if interactions were positive or negative), and *context* (which settings—curricular/co-curricular/social) all of which engendered different types of interactions. Within this dissertation I utilized previous research to investigate frequency, quality, and context of cross-racial interactions at SWSU. I also kept in mind that much of the previous cross-racial interaction research has been quantitative and this investigation is qualitative. By conducting a qualitative dissertation which was concerned with "how" and "why" cross-racial interactions did or did not occur, frequency, quality, and context were not always best suited to assess cross-racial interactions. This dissertation utilized quantitative literature to frame the study and as a starting point to consider cross-racial interactions because few, if any, investigate cross-racial interactions from a qualitative perspective. Specific and more context-appropriate ways in which cross-racial interactions can be understood through a qualitative lens are discussed in the findings chapters. Finally, this dissertation investigated not only the cross-racial interactions of students at an Emerging HSI, but this study also analyzed students' experiences using theories that have not previously been applied to the HSI or Emerging HSI setting. Prejudice reduction theory, critical race theory, and literature on cross-racial interaction and campus climate are employed as a foundation to understand students' cross-racial interactions on campus, and how the institutional context may have impacted these interactions.

Scope of the Investigation

Students' experiences with diversity at HSIs and Emerging HSIs are understudied topics that warrant further consideration. Because HSIs (and Emerging HSIs in particular) are newer types of colleges and universities, there is little research on any topic related to these institutional types. Much of the existing literature on students' experiences at HSIs examines Latino students at these institutions, not students of other racial backgrounds. HSIs and Emerging HSIs serve a wide range of students and it is important to consider that people of different racial backgrounds may have different experiences. Due to the limited literature on students' cross-racial interactions at Emerging HSIs, we do not know the type of cross-racial interactions students of any racial background are having at Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

The present study contributes to this gap in the literature by utilizing interviews to explore how students from three racial/ethnic groups (African American, Latino/Hispanic, and White) experienced cross-racial interactions at Southwestern State University. This investigation sought to understand if students interacted more or less in certain setting and if certain groups or activities promoted more cross-racial interaction than others. To investigate these quandaries, data was used from 26 interviews of juniors and seniors at Southwestern State University.

Not only did this project study cross-racial interactions, but did so in a location (the Southwest) where there is a growing Latino population and during a time when there has been a great deal of discussion about diversity in higher education. As a result of the current socio-political climate regarding diversity and college admissions, many institutions, SWSU included, have found themselves in precarious situations, wherein

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they are being asked to increase their Black and Latino enrollment while being unable to admit students on the basis of race (citation withheld for anonymity, 2007). This conflicting situation serves as the backdrop and provides context for the following research question:

How do African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White students at Southwestern State University interact and/or have friends from racial and ethnic groups different from their own?

The sub-questions that this study addressed included:

1. How does campus climate at Southwestern State University affect African American, Latino, and White students' cross-racial interactions?

2. What are African American, Latino, and White students' impressions of students from racial backgrounds other than their own attending Southwestern State University?

Organization

This dissertation is organized into nine chapters. These chapters: introduce the topic of the study, provide relevant background information, describe the methods used for data collection, introduce the student research participants, present the findings, analyze the findings, modify theory, and provide recommendations for future research and practice. The Introduction provided an overview of the study, described its relevance, contextualized the study in a way that framed the issue, and illustrated the gaps in the literature this research will fill.

Chapter II is a review of several areas of literature that offer background information on this study. Empirical research studies that utilize both quantitative and

qualitative methods are consulted. Additionally, literature is synthesized from multiple

disciplines including sociology, psychology, and higher education. Within this chapter

the review of the literature begins by describing the importance and theoretical basis of

HSIs. The chapter highlights the socio-political climate of higher education, and then

moves on to discuss campus racial climate. This discussion pays particular attention to

the differences between the climate of Emerging HSIs, HSIs and traditionally White

institutions (TWIs). Research on the specific experiences African American, White, and

Latino students have in TWIs follows, as does a section on students' interracial

interactions on college campuses. This chapter is concluded by delineating the conceptual

framework which is based on this collection of literature.

Chapter III details the methodology used in this study. In this chapter, the purpose

of the study is reiterated, the research methodology is outlined, and the research is

strategy revealed. The role of the researcher is also discussed, as are the data collection

procedures, the selection of research participants, and the research process. Data analysis

is described in this section, and ethical issues are presented. Chapter III concludes with a

description of the study's limitations and a description of the pilot study.

Chapter IV introduces the research participants. A brief description of each of the

participants is provided so the reader can gain a better understanding of the students that

informed the findings. Chapter V is the first of the findings chapters. This chapter

describes the Emerging HSI context and how this specific setting impacts students' cross-

racial interactions. This chapter discusses findings about how students feel about SWSU

becoming an HSI. Specifically, this chapter delineates how participants expressed interest

in: 1) ensuring students who were not Latino still felt welcome at SWSU once it became

an HSI, and 2) making sure SWSU was becoming an HSI for altruistic reasons, rather than for the sole reason of receiving Title V grant money.

Chapter VI presents findings about where cross-racial interactions were and were not occurring on SWSU's campus. Accounts of limited cross-racial interactions occurring in curricular and non co-curricular settings are delineated. Greek letter organizations are highlighted as a setting that epitomized mono-racial membership and a lack of cross-racial interaction. Finally, multiracial student organizations are highlighted as model environments in which frequent and meaningful cross-racial interactions occurred at SWSU.

Chapter VII is the third findings chapter. This chapter discusses findings about why students were not engaging in many cross-racial interactions at SWSU. Participants expressed that they were interested in engaging in cross-racial interactions, but did not do so because they felt uncomfortable entering into situations where they were the only student from their own racial background. Moreover, many students came from mono-racial precollege environments and were unsure about how to initiate interaction with others who had different backgrounds.

Chapter VIII analyzes students' perceptions about cross-racial interaction. Within this chapter students explained how their perceptions of the racial make-up of student organizations impacted their cross-racial interaction. Students also described how stereotypes others had about their race influenced how they viewed themselves and whether or not they would be welcomed into a new setting. Chapter IX, the final chapter, summarizes the findings and provides a deeper analysis of them. Within this analysis I reflect on the literature and theory that frames the study and suggest ways in which

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theory can be altered and better applied to cross-racial interactions. Finally, this chapter

provides recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Students' experiences with diversity at Hispanic-Serving Institutions have been largely overlooked by most academics in the field; though this topic is not entirely void of related research. Chapter II explores the topic through the examination of the few studies that exist on students' experiences at HSIs, research relevant to campus racial climate, and cross-racial interactions. The first section discusses briefly the significance of HSIs within higher education. Following this examination, a discussion about what HSIs are ensues. Next the contemporary higher education political climate is discussed. The subsequent section examines literature about the campus climate at Traditionally White Institutions (TWIs) and specifically discusses the experiences African American and Latino students have on such campuses in contrast to White students. The following segment of this chapter focuses on student interracial interactions on college campuses detailing the research as well as the situations in which cross-racial interactions produce the greatest civic engagement outcomes for students. This section is followed by the conceptual framework and model which will guide this study; the framework will be used specifically to craft the methodology which will be delineated in Chapter III. Finally, this chapter is closed by a summary section.

Historical Evolution of HSIs

Higher education institutions with Latino student populations equal to or greater than 25% have existed since the late 1960s. However, up until 1992 these institutions were not identified by the term Hispanic-Serving Institutions; rather they were stand alone colleges and universities that happened to have large Latino student populations (Laden, 1999). In 1992 the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 was reauthorized and these institutions became integrated as a network, gained federal recognition, and became a part of the collective now known as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. In 1998 the HEA was reauthorized again and the definition of HSIs was shifted from Title III to Title V of the act which encompasses "Developing Institutions" (Laden, 1999).

HSIs were placed under Title V of the HEA because Congress determined that: Hispanics were less likely to enroll in and graduate from college, especially when compared to Whites, HSIs educate a disproportionate number of Hispanic students compared with other institutional types, and HSIs receive substantially less money from state and local governments compared with other higher education institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Under Title V, HSIs receive federal dollars to:

> Expand and enhance the academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability of colleges and universities that are educating the majority of Hispanic college students and helping large number of Hispanic students and other low-income individuals complete postsecondary degrees. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 1)

Although often underfunded, HSIs have been succeeding in providing many Latino students access to higher education (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Benitez (1998) stated, "Hispanic-serving institutions are playing an essential role as

educators of the nation's fastest-growing ethnic group, and they represent a potent political force for the future," (p.57).

Theoretical Rationale for the HSI Designation

The creation of the 25% threshold for HSIs was born out of critical mass theory. Researchers selectively chose this percentage based on previous research. Kanter's (1977) work on critical mass theory found that there are four distinct points at which group dynamics change based on their composition of minority and majority members. She named these four groups: *uniform, skewed, tilted,* and *balanced. Uniform* groups are groups that are largely homogenous. *Skewed* groups are those in which minorities make up 15% or less of the group. In *tilted* groups non-dominant group membership falls within the 15-40% range. *Balanced* groups are those in which minority and majority membership is close to one another in the 40-60% range. Kanter (1977) indicated that when minority group membership is at 15% or below these group members can feel marginalized. Within the homogenous and *skewed* groups "dominant types also control the group and its culture" (p. 966). When groups approach 35% minority this is the point at which "minority members are potentially allies, can form coalitions, and can affect the culture of the group" (p. 966).

While the HSI designation is 25%, institutions that are considered Emerging HSI are those with 15-24% full-time Hispanic enrollment. Although Emerging HSIs fall on the lower end of the "change" spectrum, they still fall within Kanter's *tilted* boundaries. In the expert testimony Dean Jeffery Lehman of the University of Michigan Law School provided for the *Grutter v. Bollinger* affirmative action case he expressed that "critical

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mass means numbers such that underrepresented minority students do not feel isolated or like spokespersons for their race" (O'Conner, 2003, p. 6). When Kanter's work is coupled with this expert testimony a compelling case is displayed: that once a sizable minority group emerges within the larger group there will be a distinct change in terms of the norms, values, and culture within the organization. While HSIs are touted for educating large numbers of Latino students, they also serve students from all racial backgrounds. The present project adds to the literature on Hispanic-Serving Institutions and provides insight into the experiences HSI students are having on campus.

Contemporary Socio-Political Climate Influencing the Southwest

The nuances of race, policy, and higher education are particularly apparent when examining higher education within the Southwestern region of the United States. In addition to the policies enacted in the Southwest and nationally (discussed below), other local issues such as immigration, bilingual education, teaching ethnic studies, honoring native peoples and traditions, and the historical legacy of slavery and Jim Crow laws also frequently emerge. This multitude of issues made the Southwest a highly interesting and complex environment to investigate race, diversity, and students' experiences with cross-racial interaction within the higher education setting.

Over the past two decades states in the Southwest have been a source of activity regarding regional and national debates on racial politics and race related policies in higher education. Several key changes to laws and policy regarding higher education have occurred that have had a substantial influence on many aspects of how public universities negotiate diversity. These policies include: *Hopwood v. Texas* case, the Texas

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"Top 10 Percent Law," Proposition 209 (California), the *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* cases (Michigan),[4] as well as other state proposals and initiatives that collectively affected the landscape of race and college admissions. Each of these is briefly discussed below.

During the mid 1990s public higher education was confronted with the *Hopwood v. Texas* case in which two law students disputed their rejection to the University of Texas's law school claiming that they were denied admission based on their race. The final ruling in the case was decided in 1996 in which it was determined that race could not be taken into account in order to create a diverse student body. Moreover, the court determined that it was illegal to use race as a determinant of admissions or financial aid (Kain, O'Brien, & Jargowsky, 2005).

Following this ruling the number of non-White students who were admitted into Texas institutions fell significantly. In response to this demographic shift Governor Bush enacted the Texas "Top 10 Percent Law" two years after the Hopwood decision. The Texas Top 10 Percent Law guaranteed that all students in the top 10% of their graduating class would be able to attend any of Texas's public institutions of higher education. The merits of this law and the myriad nuances and effects it had on college- going students in the state of Texas are too vast and complex to detail within this study; yet, of note is that it initially provided the illusion that college-going rates for non-White students had risen to pre-*Hopwood* rates when in fact this was not the case (Kain et al., 2005).

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[4] *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* were two raced based admissions law suits that there filed against the University of Michigan's President Lee Bollinger. *Grutter v. Bollinger* was a case in which admission into the University of Michigan's Law School was challenged. *Gratz v. Bollinger* was a case in which undergraduate admission into the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts was challenged.

The debates over affirmative action continued and in 1995 the Regents of the University of California decided "to end the use of race, ethnicity and gender in admissions" (Douglass, 1997, p. 1) by enacting Special Policy 1 (SP-1). Support for this decision was bolstered by the passage of Proposition 209 in 1996 which amended the California state Constitution to prohibit the use of race, sex, or ethnicity in public employment, public contracting, and public education (Takagi,1998). Proposition 209 changed the nature of the affirmative action debate so much that Spann (1997) called this decision "staggering in scope and irreversible in demeanor" (p. 189).

In 2000 another educational plan was enacted in the "Southwestern State," the state in which SWSU is located. This initiative is still active today and seeks to "close the gaps in student participation, student success, excellence, and research" (citation withheld for anonymity, 2012). More specifically, this plan has the goal of narrowing the gap between Whites and Black and Hispanic/Latino college attendance. Therefore, among the continuing affirmative action debates SWSU was, along with other institution within the state, in essence charged with increasing their Black and Latino enrollment while being unable to admit students on the basis of race.

In 2003 the Supreme Court heard the *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* cases and ruled that public institutions could not give applicants an automatic advantage because of race, but that race could be considered in the admissions process (Gurin et al., 2004). In the years following, other states continued to engage in the affirmative action battle. These included: Washington (passed Initiative 200 in 1998) and Michigan (passed Proposal 2 in 2006). Another banner year for the affirmative action debate was 2008 when numerous states were approached by Ward Connerly, chairman of the American

Civil Rights Institute, to lobby for affirmative action policies. These states included:

Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin (Schmidt, 2007;

Ware, 2012). For four years there was a brief respite on the debate of race in college

admissions, but recently, in 2012, affirmative action has once again been brought to the

national scene. The Supreme Court has recently agreed to revisit affirmative action in the

Fisher v. University of Texas case, and in the fall of 2012 the court will render another

decision about affirmative action (Liptak, 2012a). It is believed that this Supreme Court

decision will be the final say and have lasting impact on the use of race in college

admissions.

Finally, it is notable that since 2010 several new controversial laws focusing on

race and ethnicity have been passed in Arizona. Senate Bill 1070, passed in 2010,

requires "state law enforcement officials to determine the immigration status of people

they stop and suspect are not in the United States legally." (Liptak , 2012b, paragraph 2).

In 2011 a judge ruled that Tucson's ethnic studies program violated state law (Billeaud,

2011). These policies contribute to the heightened awareness of race and ethnicity in the

Southwest and affect the larger higher education climate in which students are attending

SWSU.

Campus Climate and Sense of Belonging

Before examining the experiences students have on college campuses, it is

important to consider the overall campus climate in which students interact. A growing

body of literature has emerged in the area of campus climate, and specifically campus

racial climate (Hurtado, 1996; Sedlacek, 1987; Watson & Kuh, 1996; White, 2000).

Therefore, it is necessary to include campus climate as an important concept which helps contextualize this study. Peterson and Spencer (1990) described campus climate as the resulting attitudes and behaviors of institutional culture. More specifically, they explained that climate is concerned with current perceptions and attitudes rather than the culture, or the deeply held meanings, beliefs and values. Because SWSU operates in such a dynamic racialized higher education context, the broader setting is worth describing in that this context influences the university and the students who attend it. The broader context was not the focus of the study, therefore the description of the socio-political climate described above should suffice as sufficient context.

Chavous (2005) found that "institutional norms regarding intergroup interactions shape students' own intergroup behaviors" (p. 251). Chavous' findings also align with previous research that found "students are racially socialized by their campus environments from the very beginning of their tenure at the institution" (p. 251). Chavous' research supports the idea that campus climate is in part about the institution.

The second aspect of campus climate that was closely attended to in this study was the micro level, or the specific climate or environment in which the student found him or herself on a daily basis. Namely, the types of experiences students had in classes, co-curricular student activity groups, fraternities and sororities, office hours and informal and social environments.

According to the extensive research on campus climate (Allen, 1992 & 1996; Flemming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Hurtado, 1996; Muñoz, 1986; Nettles,1988; Sedlacek, 1987; Simmons, 1995; Watson & Kuh, 1996; White, 2000), we know that students' experiences on college campuses, matter, and affect their educational and civic

engagement outcomes. Specifically, this research tells us that for African American students the following aspects contribute to the campus climate and determine the extent to which they feel satisfied with their college experience: GPA, academic growth, aspiration to a higher degree, involvement in campus activities, the extent to which students interact with faculty, a positive self image, and a sense of racial pride and cultural support. For Latino students the research demonstrates that anxiety around finances, the health of family members, and academic performance can negatively affect students' college experiences. Keeping this in mind, my study explored the above mentioned areas that contribute to campus climate, but also considered the ways African American and Latino students' experiences with campus climate were different than the experiences White students had on campus.

African American and Latino Students' Experiences at Traditionally White Institutions

In her 1996 study of campus racial climates, Hurtado examined 21 different variables relating to students, faculty, and administrators in the Follow-up Survey to the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). Here she found that African American students who defined their political views as liberal were likely to think that TWIs were racially hostile environments. Other studies such as Sedlacek (1987) and White (2000) discerned that Black students experience trouble at TWIs due to a number of factors such as: White students' negative perceptions of Blacks, poor communication with White faculty, institutional racism, a low sense of self-concept, and negative experiences with the campus community. In addition to encountering campus hostility at

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TWIs, African American students may also experience a great sense of alienation, frustration, and a lack of support (Watson & Kuh, 1996).

Like African American students, Latino students have also had very negative and hostile experiences at predominantly White colleges and universities (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). For example, Simmons (1995) found that 10% of Latino students reported receiving threats on their college campus and 13% of Latino students heard faculty at their institutions make inappropriate comments about minority students. Such harassment creates a situation that is detrimental to the educational attainment of students of color. Muñoz (1986) conducted a study in which he determined that Chicano students experienced greater stress at TWIs than their White counterparts. Specifically, he found that Chicano students experienced stress related to their academic performance, finances, and the health of family members.

Sense of Belonging

Related to campus climate, work on interconnectedness and sense of belonging also plays a role in framing the study and in students' experiences with cross-racial interaction. Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, Alverez, Inkelas, Rowan-Kenyon, and Longerbeam (2007) conducted a study in which they bridge this gap between campus climate and sense of belonging. Johnson et al. (2007) utilized Hurtado and Carter (1997) as a guide. Where Hurtado and Carter (1997) focused on the experiences of Latino college students, Johnson et al. (2007) investigated the experiences of African American, Latino, and Asian Pacific American first-year college students. Within their study Johnson et al. (2007) found that African American, Latino, and Asian Pacific American

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first-year college students did not have as strong sense of belonging compared to the sense of belonging reported by White/Caucasian students.

Research conducted about students' connectedness to their college has found that being connected to campus makes a difference in the collegiate experiences of students. Schlossberg's (1989) work on "mattering," highlighted students' need to feel that their presence on campus was recognized by others. Furthermore, Nora (2004) explored students' sense of "fitting in" on college campuses positing that students' have a fundamental desire to belong to a campus community.

When coming in contact with a new culture, individuals are faced with how to deal with a new set of expectations and norms. In this situation two tenets that must be negotiated are intercultural contact and cultural maintenance (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). Intercultural contact is the idea that the newcomer or immigrant would enter into a new setting and by doing so would engage with others who have a different culture than the one s/he came from (Ryder, et al., 2000). Cultural maintenance refers to the newcomer holding onto or maintaining her/his home culture and practices when coming into contact with the new culture. When students arrive at college they face a new culture and must negotiate the extent to which they will engage with others immersed in the new culture, college culture (intercultural contact). Students must also decide the extent to which they will hold onto the norms that were present prior to college, thereby engaging in cultural maintenance. The negotiation between these two cultures is described by Berry (2003) as the acculturation process. In his 2003 work Berry developed an acculturation model. Within the model there are different acculturation strategies individuals can use to respond to new cultural situations. The acculturative strategies of

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adaptation are: assimilation, integration (also known as biculturalism), marginalization, and separation. Berry maintains that assimilation occurs when the member of the non-dominant group seeks to adapt some of the dominant group's values into their own practices. Conversely, when the dominant group's norms are not sought after, separation ensues. Integration occurs when the practices of both the dominant and non-dominant group are combined and collectively practiced. Finally, marginalization occurs when there is little interest or knowledge of the non-dominant culture and little interest in the dominant culture, often due to experiences of discrimination. As findings presented in the following chapters demonstrate, students of color most often adapted using marginalization and separation due to experiences of discrimination. Findings also illustrate that some students at SWSU adapted assimilation, or the dominant group's values into their own practices at SWSU.

Expanding on Berry's (2003) research, Castillo's (2009) article discussed perceived marginalization and how this can impact adaptation methods Latino students adopt when they arrive at college. She stated, "group norms play an integral part in the social identity process" (p. 248). When Latino students enter college and attempt to understand their social identity within an environment of conflicting values, they look to others around them to help develop that identity. However, if the individual's identity differs from that of what Castillo calls the heritage group (Latino heritage in this case), the heritage group can distance themselves from the deviant member.

Microaggressions and Counterspaces

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) give voice to specific examples of racial tension students of color experience on college campus. They also discuss how students can help manage discomfort on a campus with incongruent values to one's home culture. Solórzano et al. (2000) built upon the work of psychologist Chester Pierce who studied racial microaggressions. Both Pierce and Solórzano et al. employed racial microaggressions to mean "subtle insults (verbal, non-verbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solórzano et al., 2000; p. 60). The research of Solórzano et al. (2000) involved analyzing focus group data with African American students on three elite predominantly White university campuses. Their findings determined that African American students experienced racial microaggressions in both academic and non-academic spaces, and that these microaggressions influenced the campus racial climate for African American students. Most notably, the racial microaggressions resulted in "African American students' struggles with feelings of self-doubt and frustration as well as isolation," and "made them feel like they could not perform academically" (p. 69). Racial microaggressions can cause stress to its victims, so much so that over time "racial battle fatigue" can develop (Smith, 2004;Yosso, Smith, Ceja, Solórzano, 2009). As a result of these negative feelings, African American students in their study created academic and social "counterspaces," sometimes with faculty, where a positive racial climate was fostered.

Counterspaces were described by Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) as "sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained" (p. 70). Such spaces emerged as a

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means for students to find a "safe haven," in collegiate environments in which students of color do not always feel comfortable. While at face value they may seem like the antithesis of multiculturalism, they are actually a response to an environment that does not fully embrace diversity. Counterspaces provide safe places for students of color to connect with one another and feel comfortable outside of spaces they describe as racially hostile academic and/or social environments.

Campus Climate, Sense of Belonging, and HSI Setting Summary

In addition to the studies discussed above, other studies have discussed campus climate without distinction between institutional types (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). More recent investigations have shown that, with regard to race, institutional type influences students' outcomes as well as their college experiences (Allen 1992, 1996, Hurtado, 1996, Fleming 1984). Thus far these studies have only assessed the benefits accrued by African American students who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) compared to TWIs, and the experiences students of color have on TWI campuses. While such studies expand the scope of understanding about students' experiences at various institutional types, the research still omits the experiences of students at HSIs. In contrast to previous research, the present study will contribute to the literature by providing information about students' experiences at an Emerging HSI.

Little is known about the experiences students have on HSI campuses. To date I have located only one study that discusses students' sense of belonging at an HSI. In their quantitative study Maestas, Vaquera, and Zehr (2007) found that at the HSI in their study, confronting diversity, socializing with diverse peers, and supporting affirmative action all

contribute to a student's increased sense of belonging. These findings are consistent with findings from other studies that determined many of the same factors are involved with students' sense of belonging on TWI campuses. All of these studies in the sections above contribute to the overall sense that the campus community and climate matters in college.

Prejudice Reduction Theory

Research on intergroup contact and prejudice reduction has changed significantly over time. While some research had been conducted in this area prior to the 1950's, Allport's 1954 work *The Nature of Prejudice* is viewed as one of the seminal pieces of literature on intergroup contact theory and prejudice reduction. Since his work was published, more contemporary researchers have revised his original theory and others have provided critiques. The following section provides a brief overview of Allport's theory and also briefly discusses additional works that have stemmed from his work.

In his 1954 book, Allport hypothesizes that four conditions must be met in order for there to be intergroup contact which reduces prejudice. The four conditions he deems necessary are: equal group status within the given setting, that the individuals have common goals, that intergroup cooperation occur, and that support exists from authorities. While his work supports these tenets, much has changed over the last 50 years and new research has found that prejudice can be reduced when some, but not all, of his conditions are present (Pettigrew, 1998).

Research conducted by Brewer and Miller (1984), Gaertner and Dovidio (2000), Taifel (1974), and Wilder (1981), suggests additional theories to explain intergroup contact. Such theories include decategorization, recategorization, and intergroup

solidarity. Both Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) as well as Wilder (1981), posit that

decategorization is a way to achieve intergroup harmony. Through decategorization

group members get to know members of the "outgroup" in more personal ways, and as

individuals rather than as members of a group with a salient group identity.

Decategorization, therefore lends saliency toward individual identities rather than group

identities. Furthermore, for those who subscribe to the decategorization framework the

converse is also true, wherein promoting shared group identities is believed to encourage

discrimination, intolerance, and partiality.

      Another model of prejudice reduction is *recategorization.* Recategorization

differs from decategorization in that the former acknowledges group identity; though, it

only gives credence to one group identity, the ingroup's group identity. Within this

approach outgroup members are encouraged to become members of the ingroup. Gaertner

and Dovidio (2000) refer to this as the *common ingroup identity model.* Gaertner and

Dovidio (2000) found that minimizing differences between members of the ingroup and

outgroup promotes greater understanding amongst people from different groups. One

way in which this can be accomplished is through the promotion of a common group

identity such as membership to a specific activity or racial group. In the present study,

students identified with their major, the professional associations with which they were

affiliated, Greek organizations, student activity groups, and/or their racial group.

Amongst SWSU students, what created the most tension between ingroup and outgroup

identity were Greek organizations, student organizations, and race.

While decategorization and recategorizarion have each proven to have positive effects on the reduction of prejudice, both models deemphasize group identities, particularly the out-group identity:

> so that members think about themselves only as individuals or as part of a newly formed deracialized in-group. Furthermore, neither model attends explicitly to power, privilege, or inequality. Therefore, while racial and ethnic diversity is represented among students, its salience is actively diminished (Gurin & Nagda, 2006, p. 21).

A third model which is promoted to support intergroup harmony is Taifel's (1974) intergroup solidarity model. In comparison to decategorization and recategorization, Tajfel's model places emphasis on identification with and belonging to a group, where as the other two models deemphasize group memberships. Tajfel explains that members of outgroups either leave their group to join another one (they "pass") or they modify their perception of their group membership. In this case members of an outgroup change negative perceptions of their groups into positive affirmations such as "Black is Beautiful." These positive affirmations then encourage intergroup harmony.

Pettigrew (1998) stated that other authors (i.e. Ben-Ari & Amir, 1986) place too many conditions on prejudice reduction. That is they indicate that a number of factors must occur simultaneously in order for prejudice to be reduced. Pettigrew (1998) agreed that prejudice reduction occurs when these conditions are present, but identified what other researchers failed to acknowledge was that these conditions may not be the underlying reasons for why prejudice is reduced. He stated, "the problem is that writers often confuse *facilitating* with *essential* conditions. Many factors suggested for optimal contact may not be essential but relate to the underlying mediating processes" (p. 70). Furthermore, Pettigrew stated that Allport's original hypothesis "says nothing about the

process by which contact changes attitudes and behavior. It predicts only *when* contact

will lead to positive change, not *how* and *why* the change occurs" (p. 70).

Through his research Pettigrew asserts that ingroup reappraisal is part of the

process. By this he means that in ideal situations contact with the outgroup provides

ingroup members with the knowledge that the ingroup's way of navigating the world is

not the only way to make sense of things. Through this realization ingroup members learn

not only about the outgroup, but also about the ingroup. [p.72]. Therefore, a part of the

process of reducing prejudice is "having less contact with the ingroup as a result of more

contact with the outgroup" (p.73). Both Pettigrew and Byrne (1971), purport that those

with similarities across class, principles, and past times tend to come together.

In his effort to extend and modify Allport's model, Pettigrew (1998) suggested a

fifth condition (in addition to Allport's four conditions) that must be present for "optimal

intergroup contact." (p.76). He stated,

> "*the contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to
> become friends.* Such opportunity implies close interaction that would
> make self-disclosure and other friendship-developing mechanisms
> possible. It also implies the potential for extensive and repeated contact in
> a variety of social contexts" (p.76).

Pettigrew's investigation is grounded in Allport's research, but incorporates the

theories and terminology of other theorists (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Gaertner & Dovidio,

2000; Wilder, 1981) in order to build a model through which we can understand the

contact necessary to promote positive intergroup relations. Pettigrew asserts that previous

research promotes too many facilitating factors that contribute to prejudice reduction, but

do not give credence to the essential factors that promote positive interactions.

Furthermore, previous research, notably Allport's investigation predicted only *when*

positive cross-racial interactions occur, not how or why they happen. Through this 1998 study Pettigrew detailed his differences from other researchers by laying out a model that describes the process through which contact is most effective in reducing prejudice. The essence of this model is that prejudice is reduced most effectively when contact occurs over a long and sustained period of time. More specifically, Pettigrew believes that positive intergroup contact emerges as a result of four phases, "learning about the outgroup, changing behavior, generating effective ties, and ingroup reappraisal" (p. 80).

In their 2006 study Gurin and Nagda determined that intergroup dialogue is an effective tool for reducing prejudice on college campuses and encouraging positive intergroup interactions. As such, intergroup dialogue courses provide environments in which students from different racial backgrounds have the opportunity to interact cross-racially in a way that promotes intensive dialogue and greater understanding across difference. In addition to intergroup dialogue courses, Gurin and Nagda (2006) also explain that racial/ethnic based student activities, clubs, orientation programs, living communities, and majors all provide opportunities for students to learn about others from diverse backgrounds and to foster intergroup harmony. They state,

> these solidarity enclaves for students of color, which rarely if ever encompass all of their daily interactions, help the students support each other and explore their cultural heritages. They help to increase retention and the campus influence of minority students, who on many campuses are otherwise subsumed under the hegemony of the dominant campus culture (p. 21).

Furthermore, within their article, Gurin and Nagda (2006) explore whether or not the above mentioned models are mutually exclusive, or if decategorization, recategorization, and intragroup solidarity can simultaneously co-exist within a university

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setting. This postulation is situated amongst Gaetner and Dovidio's (2000) conception of a *dual identity model* wherein members of a group can hold an identity within one group yet interact with others who are members of different groups. Gaetner and Dovidio's research determined that the utilization of a dual identity model can also be effective in fostering positive intergroup relations.

Student Interracial Interactions

In considering students' experiences during college it is important to delineate how they may be exposed to racial and ethnic diversity on college campuses, as their experiences may take a variety of forms. Several studies have examined the effect the number of students of color on a college campus has on students' college experiences (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005). This numerical representation of students of color is referred to as *compositional diversity*[5] and these studies have found that the more students of color present on a campus, the more likely students are to cross-racially interact. Despite this finding, Gurin et al. (2002) noted that while compositional diversity increases the likelihood that students will encounter peers of diverse backgrounds, it does not guarantee that the students will interact, or have meaningful intergroup interactions. While compositional diversity is one contributing factor to intergroup relations, many others are also involved. Research has been conducted on intergroup contact for decades and is rooted in a strong theoretical base (as described above). This research is particularly pertinent to the present study as I investigated the nature of interactions students had with diverse peers at SWSU.

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[5] Hurtado et al. (1999) use structural diversity to discuss the same concept, but Milem et al. (2005) determined that compositional diversity was a better descriptor for this concept.

Pre-College Cross-Racial Interactions

It is important to note that in addition to institutional factors that affect interracial interaction, background characteristics also play a significant role in determining whether or not students will interact across racial lines. Based on the research and recommendations of Gurin and Nagda (2006) students pre-college experiences with diversity becomes relevant and affects their experiences in college. Therefore pre-college diversity experiences are included within this study.

Wathington's (2004) dissertation examined the "relationship between pre-collegiate experiences, attitudes, and behaviors and the amount of interracial interaction students engage in before entering college" in four public research institutions (p. 11). Wathington determined that Black students were more likely to interact with other Black students and less likely to interact with students of different racial backgrounds. In addition, her study determined that the values students perceive other groups to have about them act as strong deterrents for cross-racial interaction.

In her 2005 study of African American and White students' intergroup contact in college, Chavous found that, "students' prior experiences influence their perceptions and interpretations in new settings…[however] their prior intergroup contact likely occurred under different conditions" (p. 250). Furthermore, White students whose home or high school settings were predominantly White and attended TWIs were less likely to interact with African Americans in college. Conversely, White students who interacted or were friends with African Americans prior to college were more likely to interact with African Americans during college.

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In addition, Pettigrew (1998) noted that prior attitudes influence whether or not individuals will interact cross-racially and if the outcomes of such interactions will be positive or negative. Orfield and his colleagues (Orfield, 2001; Orfield, & Eaton, 2003; Orfield Frankenberg, & Lee, 2003) found that pre-college living environments also matter in determining collegiate cross-racial interactions. Specifically, most students are coming to college from highly segregated communities and high schools. As a result, students from all racial backgrounds often experience their first interaction with diverse others upon entering college and have little or no prior experience interacting across racial lines.

Frequency, Quality, & Context of Student Interracial Interactions

As far back as the late 1960s scholars have been noting the importance of non-academic settings in the development of students during college (Chickering, 1969). Chickering (1969) in particular emphasized that in assessing the impact of students' academic and non-academic experiences in college, it is also important to examine not only the type of involvements (context), but also the extent of the involvement (frequency), and the nature of interactions (quality). In more recent years as research in the field of student affairs has broadened, more attention has been paid to the impact co-curricular as well as informal settings have on students' overall collegiate experiences (Kuh, 1993; Pascarella, 1985; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991).

Furthermore, additional research on diversity in higher education has shown that *frequency*, *quality,* and *context* are all important dimensions to examine when assessing the effects of interacting cross-racially (Antonio, 2001; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado, Dey, and

Trevino, 1994; Hurtado, et al., 2004; Milem, 1994). Most of the studies that have

examined these dimensions of cross-racial interaction have done so by looking at one or

two of these dimensions, rather than at all three. The one known exception is a 2004

study conducted by Hurtado and her colleagues in which students' experiences with

cultural awareness was examined and all three dimensions-quality, context, and

frequency were simultaneously examined. The specific studies that examine each of these

dimensions are discussed below.

Frequency

Astin (1993) measured interaction with diverse peers during college as the

frequency with which a student socialized with someone from a different race or

ethnicity. He found that when accounting for students' background characteristics and

different types of college environments, frequent interracial interaction was associated

with increases in cultural awareness and commitment to racial understanding. Hurtado et

al. (1994) also addressed the *frequency* dimension by defining interaction with diverse

peers as the frequency with which a student engages in a variety of activities with

someone of a different race or ethnicity than him- or herself. Additional research also

suggests that frequent interactions with peers from different racial and ethnic

backgrounds create openness to a variety of perspectives (Hurtado et al., 2003). Finally,

Hurtado et al. (2004) found that the frequency of interactions with diverse peers had a

significant effect on the development of cultural awareness among students during their

first two years of college. Greater understanding about the outcomes students obtain from

interacting with one another can be understood when other factors such as the quality and context of these interactions are considered.

Quality

In their 2003 study Hurtado, Engberg, and Ponjuan found that quality of interactions with diverse peers (positive or negative interactions) has an effect on the democratic, learning, and cognitive outcomes students receive from interacting cross-racially. In fact, they determined that the quality of these interactions had a greater influence on democratic outcomes than the change engendered by the *frequency* of interactions students had with diverse peers. Specifically, students who have interracial interactions that are personable, meaningful and honest, rather than guarded or tense, have more positive outcomes related to democratic learning and cognitive development. These same findings were confirmed by Hurtado et al. (2004). In the 2004 study Hurtado and her colleagues also determined that positive interactions have a significant impact on cultural awareness, where as negative interactions were not significant.

Previous research conducted independently by Allport (1954) and Pettigrew (1998) found that intimate and long term relationships are most effective in fostering positive intergroup interactions. Within his study Pettigrew asserted that in examining the components that contribute to prejudice reduction, Allport omitted a fifth condition of prejudice reduction—friendship potential. That is, in order for prejudice to be reduced, individuals must have the potential to become friends. Chavous (2005) also found that having more personal intergroup interactions resulted in African American and White students respecting one another's experiences. Therefore, the quality of interactions

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between individuals must be positive, personal, and lend itself toward creating long term friendships. Based on this previous research, the present study will explore the *quality* of interactions students have with diverse peers to assess how both positive and negative interactions influence their collegiate experiences.

Context

Literature on promoting positive cross-racial interaction within higher education has suggested that the context in which these interactions occur is important. On college campuses, students have opportunities to interact cross-racially in a variety of settings. These include *curricular*, *co-curricular,* and *informal* settings. Research about cross-racial interactions in these three areas is detailed below.

Curricular.

Opportunities for students to engage in discussions about diversity and for them to interact cross-racially in the classroom may be enhanced by their taking required diversity courses (AAC&U, 1995a; AAC&U, 1995b; Levine & Cureton, 1992). Milem (1994) suggested that certain classroom experiences, such as dialogue between students of different backgrounds and beliefs will encourage students to reflect more on issues of race and diversity.

Numerous studies have also examined how intergroup dialogue and service learning courses influence diversity related outcomes (Gurin, Peng, Lopez & Nagda, 1999; Lopez, Gurin, Nagda, 1998; Schoem, Hurtado, Sevig, Chesler, & Sumida, 2001; Vasquez Scalera, 1999; Zuniga & Nagda, 1993). Intergroup dialogue courses bring students together from diverse social identity groups (race, gender, sexual orientation) to

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facilitate discussion across differences, to practice constructive intergroup relations and coalition building, and to develop skills necessary for working and living in diverse environments (Schoem, et al., 2001; Vasquez Scalera, 1999; Zuniga & Nagda, 1993). Research that investigated the effects of intergroup dialogue has shown consistent, positive effects for both White students and students of color such as: greater commonality and less divisiveness among different groups, heightened racial awareness, more support for affirmative action and multicultural programs, and increased awareness of the structural causes of inequality (Gurin et al., 1999; Lopez, et al., 1998).

Co-curricular.

In his 2001 study Antonio discussed that the co-curricular (cultural awareness workshops, cultural organizations, etc.) and informal (dining, studying, partying, etc.) contexts of interaction with diverse peers are important. With regard to activities in college, Astin (1993b) and Pascarella, et al. (1996) indicated that the type of activities in which students are engaged influences the learning outcomes they obtain during college. Antonio (1998) found that involvement in co-curricular activities such as ethnic student organizations as well as racial and cultural awareness workshops were associated with gains in cultural knowledge and understanding for students. However, Antonio's (1998) results also demonstrate that frequency of interactions with diverse peers within these contexts may be more important in developing cultural understanding than the activities themselves. Furthermore, Saenz et al. (2007) found that White students who are involved with fraternities are less likely to have positive interactions across race.

Informal.

In addition to Antonio's (2001) study in which he deemed interactions with diverse peers in co-curricular and informal settings as important, Hurtado et al. (2002) also found that pre-college social activities such as studying with diverse peers were linked with several democratic outcomes such as perspective-taking, the belief that conflict enhances democracy, and the importance of social action engagement. Furthermore, a single institutional study conducted by Gurin et al. (2002), discovered that student's experiences with diverse peers was a significant predictor of students' views of compatibility with differences across all race groups. This study also found that these informal interactions influence students' perspective-taking and racial and cultural engagement. However, the findings from this study were only significant for White students and not for students of color.

Race Specific Outcomes for Cross-Racial Interaction

Where previous research discussed whether or not campuses provide the opportunities for cross-racial interactions Saenz et al. (2007) also "consider the nature of the interactions that take place" (p. 2). Within their study they wanted to determine how the quality of cross-racial interactions can be improved. Their research made distinctions between students from different racial backgrounds and discussed situations that promoted the most positive cross-racial interactions for students who

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are White, African American, Latino, and Asian.[6] Finally Saenz et al. (2007) discussed the conditions in which all students benefit from cross-racial interactions.

African American Students

Previous research (Hurtado et al., 2002) found that African American students are affected by pre-college experiences. The study conducted by Saenz et al. (2007) also determined the same to be true. Specifically, Saenz and his colleagues concluded that interacting frequently and studying with peers from a different racial/ethnic background contributed to African American students being more likely to interact across race after their second year in college. Also, if the pre-college environment African American students came from was predominantly White, they were also more likely to report more positive interactions across race during college. Conversely, if prior to college African American students felt anxiety about interacting across race, they were less likely to have positive interactions across race during college.

During college, African American students were more likely to report positive interactions with their diverse peers if they felt a faculty member had encouraged their development, if they spent many hours socializing, took "diversity coursework," or other classes that provided opportunities for intense dialogue in class. Moreover, African American students who perceived more racial tension and hostile campus climates, and those students who took diversity related courses that did not allow for intensive dialogue were less likely to have positive interracial interactions.

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[6] Because the experiences of Asian students at Southwestern State will not be able to be addressed within the context of this study, the findings Saenz et al. (2007) gleaned from this population will not be discussed here.

Latino Students

For Latino students Saenz et al. (2007) found that those who have higher SATs scores and those who are female are more likely to have positive interactions with diverse others. Furthermore, similarly to African American students, those who study with diverse others and frequently interact with diverse others prior to college are more likely to have positive interactions; as are those who express support for diversity education. While in college, Latinos who are involved with co-curricular activities, socialized a great deal, those who utilize academic support services, those who have opportunities for intensive dialogue with diverse others and took "diversity coursework" with intensive dialogue, reported having more positive interactions. (Saenz, et al. 2007).

White Students

Research suggests that it may be more difficult for White students to cross racial and ethnic boundary lines earlier on in college in comparison to students from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. While some of these challenges may be specific to racial background, Saenz et al. (2007) posit that this may be the fault of institutions that do not have the compositional diversity necessary to effectively interact across racial lines. Despite the difficulty White students who studied and interacted with diverse others prior to college are more likely to have positive cross-racial interactions during college. White students who are able to think complexly about others are more likely to have positive interaction during college.

Contrarily, those White students who had intergroup anxiety, come from racially segregated pre-college environments, and those who belong to Greek social organizations

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are less likely to have positive interactions across race. Saenz et al. (2007) also determined that White students who came from racially segregated environments and are prepared to engage with diverse others as a result of programs, services, or actions on behalf of the college campus are able to have positive interactions across race during their collegiate years. One such action is increasing the compositional diversity on college campuses. An increase in compositional diversity is associated with positive intergroup communication for White students in college. Moreover, participating in co-curricular activities related to diversity, having opportunities for intensive dialogue, participating in academic support services, having a faculty interested in their development, and socializing frequently during the week are all associated with positive intergroup interactions for White students. Finally, research supports that for White students, interventions in the classroom are particularly supportive in fostering positive interactions across race.

Finally, it should be noted that the research of Hurtado et al. (1999, 2002, 2003), Saenz et al. (2007), and others provide a wealth of information about students interacting across race, but these studies focus on students' experiences during their first two years of college. In this dissertation I interviewed juniors and seniors about their experiences throughout college, which represents a longer period of college exposure than previous studies. Nonetheless, the studies examined above are important to consider as they provide substantive information about benefits students receive as a result of interacting cross-racially in a variety of ways and settings. The literature discussed above provided a guide for what I expected to see at SWSU.

Conceptual Framework

The model presented below represents the conceptual framework for the experiences of African American, Latino, and White students at Southwestern State University. Each one of the concentric ovals as well as the adjoining circles within the model has been contextualized within the literature which was previously discussed. As such, the discussion within this section will summarize the varying segments of the model and relate them to one another within the context of the framework (see Figure 2.1). This model is a visual representation that combined concepts from Milem et al. (2005) and other research on students' cross-racial interaction.

Figure 2. 1 Conceptual Model of Students' Cross-Racial Interactions at SWSU

Socio-Political Higher Education Context of the Southwest

Students' Pre-College
Cross-Racial Interactions

Campus Climate

**Interactions with
Diverse Peers in College**

Frequency

Quality

Context
- Curric.
- Co-curric.
- Informal
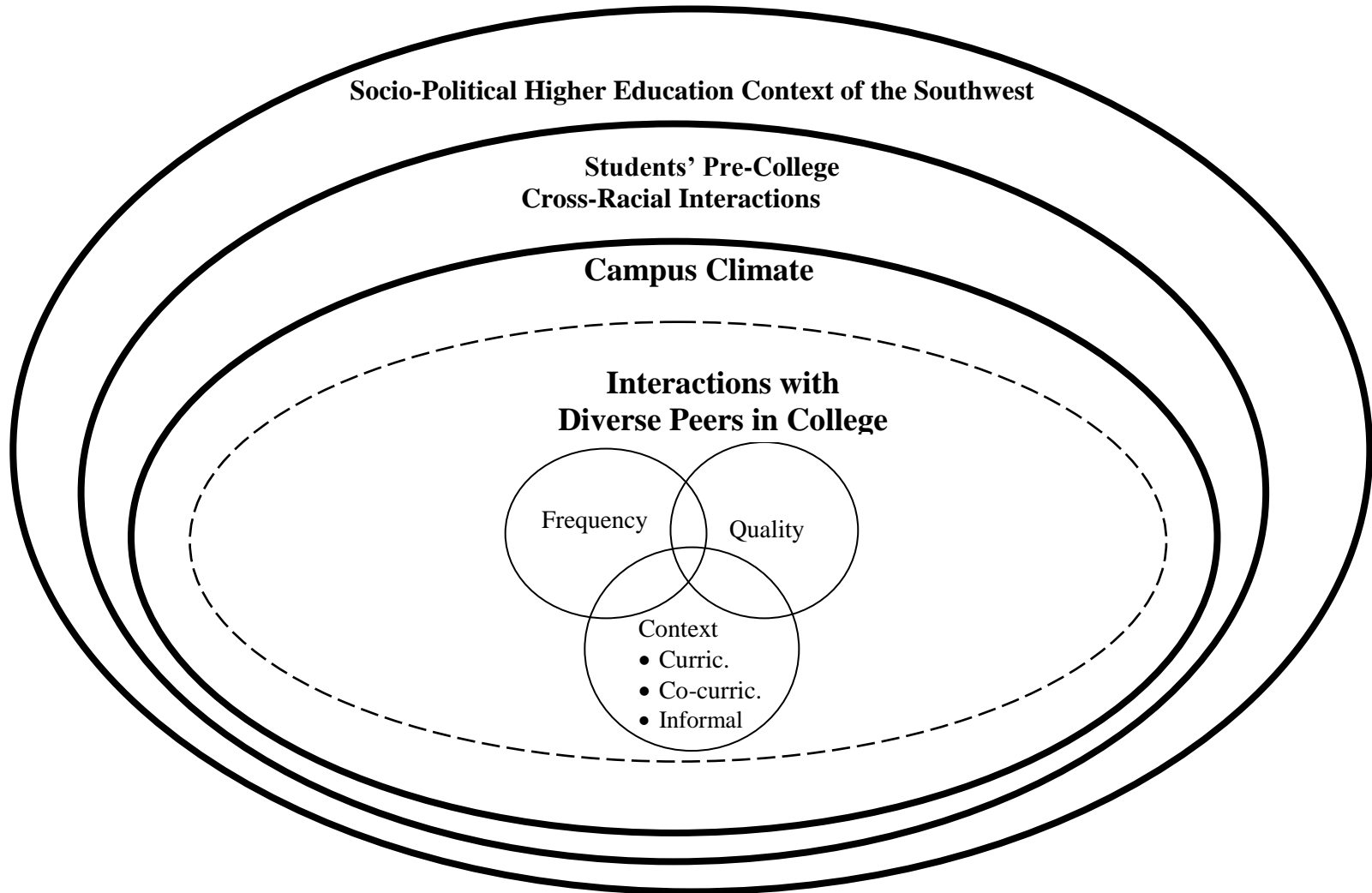
The outermost ring of my conceptual model represents the *current socio-political context of higher education*. The current socio-political climate is comprised of regional and national issues of affirmative action, discussions about immigration, and ethnic studies debates.

The oval labeled *students' precollege experiences* bridges the gap between the larger context and the specific focus of the study. The body of literature on this topic describes how students' pre-college experiences with cross-racial interaction play a role in their comfort and willingness to engage in cross-racial interactions during college. Previous research (Chavous, 2005; Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Hurtado, 2003; Orfield, 2001; Orfield, & Eaton, 2003; Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2003; Pascarella, et al., 1996; Pettigrew, 1998; Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007; Wathington, 2004) has found that pre-college characteristics affected the extent to which students interacted cross-racially in college. These researchers determined that gender, parents' education level, the degree of diversity in the pre-college neighborhood and school, as well as pre-college attitudes about and experiences with diversity all influence the extent to which students will interact cross-racially in college. As such, student participants were asked about their precollege experiences with diversity in their interviews and pre-college experiences were included in this model.

The next oval, the *campus climate* segment represents the current issues that are salient at SWSU. These components have not been detailed above because what made up the campus climate was discovered as a result of the data collection process. Campus climate is discussed in greater detail in the conclusion chapter where the revised framework is outlined.

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The inner most ring—*interactions with diverse peers in college* is the main focus of this study. Research on students' cross-racial interaction details that frequency, quality, and context (specifically curricular, co-curricular, and informal settings) all play a role in the types of cross-racial interactions students experience in college. In order to better understand the extent to which students interact cross-racially (if at all) at Southwestern State I used the related literature on student interracial interaction to inform my model. To be consistent with the literature which categorized cross-racial interactions in three main ways, I too divided students' cross-racial interactions into three groups – frequency, quality, and context of interactions (Antonio, 2001; Hurtado, 2003; Hurtado, et al., 2002; Hurtado, et al. 2004; Greene & Kamimura, 2003; Pascarella, et al., 1996; Saenz, et al., 2007). Additionally, as this literature further differentiated the context dimension into three sub-categories – curricular experiences, co-curricular experiences, and informal experiences – I too differentiated them in this way. As such, within my study I asked students about their experiences with diverse peers in each of these three contexts.

Within the interactions with diverse peers segment of the model, frequency, quality, and context are represented as intersecting circles. They have been presented in this way because while they all individually produce positive cross-racial interactions, the nexus point of these circles is the place at which optimal intergroup interaction occurs—frequent interaction with diverse others occurs, the interactions are positive, allow for intense and meaningful dialogue, the relationships have developed over time, and occur in (a) location(s) which foster and support positive cross-racial interactions.

Summary

Up to this point studies about diversity at HSIs have failed to keep pace with demographic shifts within the U.S. Given the limited research on students' experiences at HSIs, the growing number of HSIs, and the projected growth of students attending these institutions, additional investigations on this and closely related topics are not only warranted, but are long overdue. The literature discussed within this chapter provides the historical context in which this study is situated, and discusses additional research on the topics of diversity, campus climate, and cross-racial interaction at specific to this study at SWSU. Furthermore, this literature provided guidance for the development of a conceptual model of students' cross-racial interactions at SWSU. The following chapter will build upon this literature review and conceptual framework, by discussing the methodology that will be employed to undertake the study at hand.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter investigated the relevant literature within this study. Chapter III builds upon the previously discussed texts and their synthesis by explaining the methodology and research methods used to investigate students' cross-racial interactions at Southwestern State University. The study at hand investigated students' experiences with cross-racial interactions on their university campus. In this chapter I describe the study by stating the research questions, explaining the purpose, discussing the limitations, methodology, and research methods. Next, I outline the methods and procedures that were used in this investigation. This is followed by an explanation of related ethical issues and finally, the chapter concludes with a brief explanation of the pilot study.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this study was:

How do African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White students at Southwestern State University interact and/or have friends from racial and ethnic groups different from their own?

The sub-questions that this study addressed included:

1. How does campus climate at Southwestern State University affect African American, Latino, and White students' cross-racial interactions?

2. What are African American, Latino, and White students' impressions of students from racial backgrounds other than their own attending Southwestern State University?

<div align="center">**Procedures**</div>

Qualitative Research Strategy

My reasons for using qualitative research as a strategy for data collection are many and have been discussed by researchers such as Carspecken (1996), Corbin and Strauss (2008), Patton (1990), and Creswell (1998). These qualitative experts highlight that communication, acquiring a greater understanding of a phenomena, and limited theory are all reasons to employ qualitative methods. Carspecken (1996) stated, "communication structures go to the heart of every human experience capable of becoming knowledge imparting, even solitary ones" (p. 22). Carspecken's statement speaks to the benefit of interacting with research participants and the reason why I have chosen to employ qualitative research in this study. A qualitative investigation allowed me to gather the necessary data in order to explore students' cross-racial interactions at one specific institution, SWSU. By communicating directly with participants through interviews, I was able to capture their stories in a way that would not have been possible in a quantitative study.

According to Patton (1990), qualitative research is best utilized in circumstances that require a greater understanding of inner workings of people, organizations, relationships, or curriculum. Such was the case with my study. This dissertation was an investigation into students' experiences with cross-racial interactions at SWSU, an Emerging HSI. The Emerging HSI setting differs from a traditionally White institution

because HSIs have higher enrollments of Latino students than other institutions of higher education. Given the diverse racial demographics of SWSU, a look into students' cross-racial interactions at an HSI is quite different than looking at students' experiences at a TWI. Therefore, an in-depth look into the inner workings of SWSU was warranted. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology, and grounded theory in particular, allowed me to understand not just the dynamics of students' experiences at an HSI but also the HSI context in which they were situated.

Creswell (1998) stated qualitative methods are a useful tool when "the topic needs to be *explored*…variables cannot be easily identified, theories are not available to explain behavior of participants or their population of study, and theories need to be developed" (p. 17). The limited literature on diversity at HSIs and Emerging HSI has made it challenging to identify a single theory to guide this study. Therefore, employing qualitative methods, and specifically grounded theory, was an appropriate course of action for this study. Qualitative methodology allowed me to embrace the emic perspective, where the findings emerge directly from participants' voices. This assisted with more accurately understanding the language and meanings students associated with different groups on their campus (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw; 1995). Finally, I chose to conduct individual interviews with students at SWSU because this allowed me to engage in an in-depth analysis of the students' experiences and to explore the relationships between students, classes, student organizations, and the site itself.

Grounded theory is "a specific methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for the purpose of building theory from data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). Traditionally, grounded theory uses a constant comparative method of analysis whereby

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data and ideas are compared with other indicators to assist with understanding the original concept and its components (Schwandt, 2007). Typically, researchers also utilize axial coding, open coding and/or matrices to gain a deeper understanding of the data (Strauss, 1987). Following the methods outlined by previous researchers, I too employed these coding techniques as they provided clear guidelines for analysis.

Insider-Outsider Status

Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006) talk about the importance of researcher positionality as critical to understanding the lens used to interpret the data. They state,

> "The question of researcher positionality, or the connection between the researcher's socially constructed identities and those of participants is a complicated one because it necessarily illuminates issues associated with what constitutes a 'diverse sample' and researching within – or outside – the researcher's own community" (p. 79).

As Jones, et al. (2006) demonstrate, researchers play important roles in data collection as they bring with them their own backgrounds, identities, and points of view. As a researcher I brought my own set of characteristics with me when collecting data. My racial identity and the racial identity students perceived I had, influenced how they responded in their interviews. Some bi-racial students may have also assumed I have a bi-racial identity and felt there was a connection there. Others may have perceived me as African American or as Latina and felt comfortable disclosing more due to a perceived similar identity. Still White students, or those who perceived my identity to be different from their own, may have distanced themselves because they perceived me as having a different identity from them. My role as an outsider to SWSU also played a role in how participants viewed me and responded in their interviews. Knowing that I had not

attended SWSU nor had I worked there or in the region may have led students to be more

open or more reserved with me about their experiences. Conversely, students may have

also omitted some information assuming I may not understand because I was an outsider

to the community. Given my status as an outsider I approached my time at SWSU with

the knowledge that I was an outsider and the assumption that was how I was perceived.

As a guest in the SWSU community I did my best to be aware of my outsider status, by

listening and remaining open to receiving information. Specifically, I asked clarifying

questions, I asked students what acronyms stood for, and I probed more deeply to

understand the structures and relationships at SWSU.

Institutional Fit with this Study

As previously stated, little to no literature exists on students' cross-racial

interactions at HSIs. Given this gap in the literature, one of my main interests was to

research students' cross-racial interactions in a new context, the Emerging HSI context.

Originally, I was interested in investigating cross-racial interactions at an HSI, but as I

became more knowledgeable about Emerging HSIs, this institutional type seemed better

suited for this study. Administrators at Emerging HSIs are often very aware of their racial

demographics because of their efforts to achieve this new designation. While HSIs have

student populations that are at least 25% Latino, Emerging HSIs have Latino populations

that are between 15% and 24% and they are on the cusp of reaching the 25% threshold

required to become an HSI; therefore some monitor the changes in demographics closely.

This was the case with SWSU where the 2008 freshman class was 25% Hispanic; the

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percentage of transfer students in 2008 that were Hispanic was also 25%; and the percentage of Hispanic freshman entering in 2009 was 27%.

In order to conduct research on cross-racial interactions I needed a site that had a large enough population of students with different racial backgrounds. Therefore, in searching for a research site I was looking for an Emerging HSI where there was at least one other racial group that comprised at least 5% of the student population. At the time I conducted my research, SWSU had a Black/African American population of 5% which met my criteria. It was also important to me that I had a strong contact at the site that would be able to assist in the recruitment of participants. In the end, Southwestern State University was selected because of the strong contact I had on this campus, the institution's interest in the study, and their demonstration of working quickly through the access and approval (Institutional Review Board) process.

Philosophical and Epistemological Alignment

Milem et al. (2005) presented a multifaceted model in which they discuss five overarching areas within the institutional context that contribute to diverse learning environments on collegiate campuses: historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, compositional diversity, psychological dimension, behavioral dimension, and the organizational/structural dimension.[7] This model demonstrates how campus racial climate is not a linear concept that is easily measured, but rather, cross-racial interaction is complex and requires that attention is paid to multiple facets of campus life. By approaching this study with an emic orientation I was able to examine students'

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[7] The components of the Milem et al (2005) framework are delineated in Chapter 2.

experiences with cross-racial interaction on campus as well as the more subtle ways in which issues pertaining to race, ethnicity, and diversity were present within the overall Southwestern State community. Because this study examined cross-racial interaction and applied it to a new setting, no one theory exists which can be appropriately related to this research scenario. Therefore, a new framework was developed to guide this study.[8] This new framework includes many of the elements from the Milem et al. (2005) framework, and brings in concepts from the literature on cross-racial interaction.

Role of the Researcher

HSI Experience

As stated previously, because I did not attend SWSU and I did not have any affiliations with an HSI or an Emerging HSI, I was considered an outsider at SWSU. Although this was the case, I am knowledgeable about the national conversations regarding HSIs. In preparation for data collection I conducted a great deal of research on SWSU. I gathered this information through informal conversations with administrators and staff at Hispanic-Serving Institutions, by reading literature and research studies about HSIs, and from my participation on various research projects about Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), including a two-year research assistantship.[9] Through this assistantship I collaborated with approximately 80 MSI faculty and staff across 50 MSIs and three national organizations. In preparation for data collection I conducted a great deal of research on SWSU. I spent a lot of time reading documents published by SWSU,

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[8] This framework was described in detail in Chapter 2.
[9] Minority-serving institutions is an umbrella term for Tribal colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, and historically Black colleges and universities.

looking at multiple areas of their website, and speaking to individuals who were familiar with the university. My research experience qualified me to undertake this research study.

Identity and Researcher Reflectivity

As previously discussed, Jones et al. (2006) describe "the connection between the researcher's socially constructed identities and those of participants is a complicated one" (p. 79). Other researchers such as Creswell (2007) describe how the relationship between the researcher and the participants has changed. He stated, "no longer is it acceptable to be the omniscient, distanced qualitative writer" (p. 178). As such, I reflected on my own identities in relation to this study. Although I did not attend an HSI, I was able to connect with participants due to other experiences I have had. I vividly remember my experiences as a college student and what it was like to navigate a racially separated multi-racial and multi-ethnic large state institution. As a person of multiracial heritage (specifically African American and Irish American) heritage on a predominantly White swim team, I was constantly negotiating my relationships with people of different racial backgrounds. Many people made assumptions about my racial identity. Some assumed I was a light skinned Black person, some thought I was Latina, or biracial (African American and White), and some even thought I was White with a tan. Based on how students perceived my racial identity some students had strong opinions about the people with whom I should affiliate. Many African Americans, who assumed I was part or all African American, thought I should hang out exclusively with other African Americans. However, when I hung out with them I was not welcomed and therefore felt uncomfortable and like an outsider. I perceived the reasons I was not welcomed in this

circle was because as a person of African American heritage who was on the swim team I did not fit their essentialized or stereotypical image of what it meant to be African American. When hanging out with some of my White swim friends it felt like they did not always understand where I was coming from and why race and issues of justice were so important to me. It is these experiences that ground me within this study and help me understand the challenges participants faced with regard to cross-racial interaction on a diverse, but racially separate campus.

Carspecken (1996) described how assumptions and perceptions can impact the data collection process when he stated, "symbolic representations of events, always absolutely core to any social research project, are never just a matter of symbols corresponding to objective reality" (p. 9). Carspecken's statement demonstrates that there is not just one explicit meaning, but rather, assumptions are made based on participants' associations with symbols of all types. By viewing me, my race, the clothes I wore, and everything else I brought to the research setting as symbols, students may not have just been responding to me and the objects around us, but they may have also been responding the meanings they associated with those objects (Cooley, 1964; Mead 1999). Given Carspenken's words, and the role perceptions play in the Milem et al. (2005) framework that guides this study, I kept in mind that students' perceptions rather than the actual "reality" may have guided their responses to questions.

Weiss (1994) also reminded me of the role race plays with regard to perceptions and assumptions and data collection. He stated, "racial and ethnic differences, insofar as the respondent can infer these, may perhaps play a role in a respondent's initial reaction

to the interviewer" (Weiss, 1994, p. 139). Therefore, participants' perceptions of my racial and ethnic identity may have impacted the interviews I had with students.

Everyone I came in contact with responded to me in his or her own way and may have viewed me in a different light. Some may have seen me first in terms of my race, others first saw viewed me in terms of my age, the fact that I was pregnant, or still others may have viewed me as a graduate student first and foremost. As an educational researcher who attended college and graduate school, my speech, dress, socioeconomic standing, age, race (as well as participants' perceptions of these identifiers) affected the way I was viewed. I was aware that students perceived me in various ways and relied on their disclosure of their identities and activities as ways to connect with them. Just as participants responded to me based on their own experiences and unconscious assumptions, I may have done the same. However, I did my best to remain open and not make judgments.

Data Collection Procedures

The previous sections provided background information and the context for why this study was conducted and how I approached it. The next several sections describe the research setting of SWSU, how data was collected, who the research subjects were, the process of data collection, and topics the participants were engaged in during their interviews.

Setting

As previously discussed, Southwestern State University was selected as a site because of its status as an Emerging HSI and its diverse student population. SWSU is a

large public university serving the Southwest, particularly the residents of its state.[10]

Southwestern State University's institutional mission is as follows, "Southwestern State University is a public, student-centered, doctoral-granting institution dedicated to excellence in serving the educational needs of the diverse population of [name of state] and the world beyond.," (SWSU, 2009). SWSU values "A diversity of people and ideas, a spirit of inclusiveness, a global perspective, and a sense of community as essential conditions for campus life" (SWSU, 2009). Furthermore, the institution is guided by a value to have "thoughtful reflection, collaboration, planning and evaluation as essential for meeting the changing needs of those we serve" (SWSU, 2009). Among its goal statements SWSU aims to, "expand access to public university education and contribute to the economic and cultural development of [name of state]," and, "enrich our learning and working environment by attracting and supporting a more diverse faculty, staff, and student body," (SWSU, 2009).

Interviews were collected in the spring 2010 semester and demographic information on the institution was collected for 2008 and 2009.[11] As of the beginning of the fall 2009 term, the total enrollment was approximately 31,000 students. Of this total, approximately 26,000 were undergraduate students and 4,000 were enrolled graduate students. Southwestern State University has a main campus and two other branch campuses. I collected data at the main campus of Southwestern State University. The institution is ranked in the top 20 among U.S. universities for granting the largest number of degrees to Hispanic undergraduates. Among undergraduate students in 2008, 68%

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[10] As of fall 2009, 99% of undergraduate students were in-state residents (IPEDS, 2011).

[11] Demographic data at SWSU was available from IPEDS for the fall 2008 academic semester. More current fall 2009 data was available via the SWSU website.

were White, 24% were Hispanic, 5% were African American, and 3% were classified as other (IPEDS, 2009). The racial demographics totals for graduate and undergraduate students for fall 2009 are displayed in the chart below.

Table 3. 1 Racial Demographics of Undergraduate & Graduate Students at Southwestern State University, Fall 2009

Race	Black/ Non-Hispanic	White/ Non-Hispanic	Hispanic/ Latino	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Am. Indian or Alaskan Native	Inter-national	Unknown/ Other
Number	1,758	20,282	7,256	785	220	331	184
Percentage	5.7%	65.8%	23.5%	2.5%	>1%	1%	>1%

Source: Southwestern State University website

As is now the case with all federally and state funded institutions, desegregation requirements exist. As was previously mentioned (in Chapter II), many states within the Southwest have been involved in legal cases regarding race and affirmative action. Given that the Supreme Court is revisiting affirmative action in the *Fisher v. University of Texas* case there is a heightened awareness nationwide, and specifically within the Southwest regarding affirmative action policies. Colleges and universities are currently in a tenuous situation of trying to determine how they can factor racial diversity into admissions decisions. Under present law, public institutions of higher education are now placed in the precarious situation of attempting to increase Black and Hispanic enrollments while being unable to use race and ethnicity as factors in the admissions process. As a result of this pressure to diversify it is possible that much of SWSU's institutional commitment to

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diversity may in fact be driven by state mandates, rather than being a self-guided

institutional decision. This socio-political context adds a complex layer to the portrait of

diversity and cross-racial interaction at SWSU. These complexities also contribute to

students experiencing these contradictions in unique ways throughout their college

experiences.

Research Participants

Individual interviews were the main method of data collection for this study.

Within these interviews I spoke to students about their experiences at SWSU. I was

interested in the ways students experienced cross-racial interaction during their time at

Southwestern State. The initial intention of this study was to purposefully select research

participants. According to Merriam (1998) "Purposeful sampling is based on the

assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and

therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Because I

was interested in understanding students' experiences with cross-racial interaction, I

intended to only select research subjects who had attended SWSU for at least two years

and I believed would be *information-rich cases* (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, I

interviewed undergraduate students who were juniors and seniors at SWSU. I recruited

juniors and seniors who were African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White for the

study. In an attempt to delimit this study I only interviewed undergraduate students. This

decision was intentional as graduate students' experience with, and involvement in their

institution may be quite different than undergraduate students' experiences (Peters, 1997;

Agre, 2001).

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Upon entering into the study I intended to interview between 6 and 10 seniors from each of the above noted racial groups (18-30 interviews in total). This range was selected because it would provide me with enough cases to obtain rich description and detail on the topic, but it would not be so many cases that I will have an unmanageable amount of data. When recruiting students at SWSU I encountered more difficulty than I anticipated finding research participants. These challenges will be discussed in greater detail in the following section. Interviews lasted approximately one and one quarter hours (75 minutes) and were designed to elicit information from students about their experiences with cross-racial interaction, friendship groups, and curricular and out of class activities at SWSU (see Appendix for interview protocol).

Within this study I did not only investigate students' individual experiences, but also made cross-case comparisons between students of different racial backgrounds. Amongst some of the findings there were commonalities and trends that emerged among participants from the same racial backgrounds. While I planned to recruit students who specifically identified as belonging to one of the three above mentioned racial groups, I also interviewed several students who identified as bi-racial. Upon realizing students had parents from different racial groups I then asked them how they identified and used their personal way of identifying when reporting the findings. Although the way students identified did not always match the U. S. Census categories for reporting race and ethnicity (i.e. Hispanic White, or Hispanic non-Whites) I used students' self-identified race when describing their racial backgrounds.

Participant Recruitment

For this study, participants were identified through the Multicultural Student Affairs Office. The Director of Multicultural Student Affairs and her staff agreed to forward information about my dissertation study to students from varying racial backgrounds in order to assist me with gaining study participants. Students were recruited for the study primarily by e-mail, but also by in-person recruitment, and by referral by other students. E-mail messages were first sent out to students through the multicultural affairs office. This generated approximately eight participants. Subsequently e-mails were sent out to students in the ethnic studies minor, students majoring in sociology, anthropology, and social work. These e-mail correspondences generated another eight participants. One student informed me about a student organization (Interposes)[12] sponsored by the multicultural affairs office and I was able to attend one of their meetings where I recruited two more participants. I also attended an event hosted by the honors college and another lunchtime event hosted by the multicultural affairs office where I recruited four participants at each event. The remaining participants were referred by friends who were participants in the study or were recruited by me approaching people on campus with fliers about the study.

A total of 26 students were interviewed. Six students identified as African American/Black (four women and two men), seven students identified as White/Caucasian (six women and one man), and 13 students identified as Latino/Chicano/Hispanic (nine women and four men). Seven students were male and 19 were female. Extensive efforts were made to recruit more men to the study (especially

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[12] Interposes is a pseudonym.

African American and White men). Participants referred their male friends and staff from the Multicultural Affairs Office, which was one of my campus contacts, helped me recruit additional men. I had contact information and interview times set up with three additional participants, but the potential participants did not show for their interviews. Despite these efforts no additional participants emerged. While I would have liked to have more representation among men, I did reach saturation and began to hear similar accounts regarding, if, where, and how much cross-racial interaction occurred at SWSU.

Data Analysis and Validation Procedures

Qualitative research is an iterative process which requires responding and adjusting to the participants and findings within the study as they occur (Stake, 1995). As such, I expected that once data collection began, details of the specific processes of this research would alter slightly from the way I initially envisioned. In large part my data collection methods remained much the way I anticipated. What did change was my recruitment strategy because I was not able to obtain the racial diversity I initially anticipated. Specific methods that were employed included: collecting and analyzing data simultaneously, constant comparisons, member checks, triangulation, the use of disconfirming evidence and negative cases, grounded theory coding and managing data with qualitative software (ATLAS.ti), and using rich description to describe data.

Data from interviews was recorded using a digital recorder. Interviews were conducted and analyzed shortly thereafter so the analysis could inform additional collection. Memos were written after each interview to highlight my impressions of the interview, analyze salient points, and ponder ideas that were puzzling from interviews.

On several occasions these memos were revised and helped me understand phenomena about SWSU and students' experiences with cross-racial interaction. Writing memos also helped utilize the constant comparative method of comparing the data received from one student to that received from another (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Merriam, 1998). I engaged in member checks (Jones, et al., 2006); that is, I shared pieces of my analysis with the participants to elicit their feedback and ensure that I have accurately represented them. I also followed up with several participants to ask clarifying questions. On five occasions I reached out to interview participants for clarification and I received responses from three participants. Their clarifications were helpful and allowed me to move forward with my analysis knowing I understood their points of view more clearly. There were several students I was interested in contacting to ask follow-up questions, but I was unable to do so because I could not reach them. This was one drawback about using seniors for my study. After graduation I was unable to reach most of them.

I also used triangulation as a technique to verify data (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2002). Denzin (1970) distinguished four forms of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Within this study I utilized two types of triangulation: data triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation involves gathering data through sampling such that data is acquired from a variety of sources or from people in differing situations (also see Merriam, 1998). I utilized data triangulation by interviewing students from different racial backgrounds, who had different majors, and were involved in various activities at SWSU. By engaging in this process I obtained "persuasive evidence" from student participants which enabled me to confirm the occurrence of various

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phenomena at SWSU (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966, p. 3). I also applied

methodological triangulation, or the use of more than one method or source for

corroborating data (also see Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 1998). In addition to

interviewing students (i.e. data triangulation), I gathered data about SWSU and students

experiences at SWSU from printed materials published by the university, from the

Internet, the Integrated Post-Secondary Data System, and from the University newspaper.

In most cases utilizing triangulation allowed me to confirm phenomena at SWSU, but in

some situations it made the picture of cross-racial interactions at SWSU more complex.

This led me to assess disconfirming evidence which helped me understand how students

at SWSU experienced cross-racial interactions differently.

At the conclusion of my time in the field, data was comprehensively analyzed.

Recordings of interviews were duplicated and sent to a hired transcriptionist. Upon

completion of the transcriptions, I checked the accuracy of the transcriptions by listening

to the audio recording while reading the transcript. By engaging in this process I was able

to check my recollection of the interview as well as my notes from the interview with the

actual transcript. Occasional notes were added to indicate tonal inflections and other

thoughts I had about how I believed participants may have been feeling.

At this point data was analyzed based on the code list developed during the pilot

study and by creating open codes during the analysis process and using ATLAS.ti. This

original axial and open coding process was created following Corbin and Strauss's (2008)

grounded theory process. These codes led to the creation of larger more broad themes

that were detailed and then revised and redefined. I revised and reorganized themes at

first using ATLAS.ti, and then by creating charts, matrices, diagrams, and lists. Laying

data out in multiple formats allowed me to see patterns and make sense of the data. Ultimately, the themes that emerged from the data allowed me to revise the original model which guided this investigation.

Ethical Issues

The highest ethical standards were maintained throughout this study. This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Michigan and the IRB at Southwestern State University. The IRB offices at both institutions deemed my study exempt. In recruiting interview subjects for the study, all potential participants were informed about the nature of the study, that participation in this project was entirely voluntary, that they did not have to answer any of the questions if they did not want to, and that they could withdraw from it at any time. Each participant signed two consent forms: one that I kept and one that was given to them in case they had any follow-up questions regarding the study (see Appendix for consent form). All interviews with the exception of one were audio recorded. One participant, Audrey, did not wish to be audio recorded. For that interview I took notes and was able to follow up with the participant via e-mail with clarifying questions. Twenty-three of the 26 interviews were conducted in person. Three interviews were conducted by phone because a mutual meeting time was not able to be scheduled while I was visiting SWSU's campus. One of these participants, Erika, I met while I was on campus. The other two students, Audrey and Janelle, I was not able to meet face-to-face.[13] Finally, the privacy of

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[13] For phone interviews consent forms were e-mailed prior to the interviews, signed consent forms were e-mailed back to me and verbal consent was given by participants over the phone and was audio recorded. An audio recorded consent was not possible in Audrey's case, but she did provide verbal consent and a sign consent form.

the participants in the study has been protected through the use of pseudonyms and the nondisclosure of the institution and its specific location.

In addition to these analytic and data driven ethical standards that were maintained, my personal perspective and orientation toward this study was made apparent to the participants. To them I communicated my personal interest in this study—learning about the experiences of students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds at an Emerging HSI. Finally, I also disclosed information about my background, specifically the ways in which it was relevant to HSIs and answered any other questions students had about being a graduate student, and about the research. By engaging in this process I believe I developed a rapport with participants.

Pilot Study

The full research study described above took place at Southwestern State University and focused on the experience of students. Because Southwestern State was not the original site chosen for this study, pilot studies were not conducted with alumni of SWSU. Instead, two interviews were conducted with alumni of HSIs in the same state as SWSU and four pilot interviews were conducted with alumni of HBCUs. Three of the pilot participants were female and three were male. Two of the male participants were alumni of HSIs. Four of the participants identified as African American or Black and two identified as Latino. The HSI alumni were both Latino men. Additionally, three of the pilot interviews were conducted in person and two of the interviews occurred over the phone.

From these interviews I learned that for African American students at HBCUs belonging to or not belonging to a Greek organization shaped their experiences in college. While I was aware that Greek life differs campus to campus, asking students about their experiences with fraternities or sororities was added as a follow-up question to the interview protocol. Having information about the salience of Greek life helped prepare me for SWSU students discussing, at length, the role Greek life played on their campus. Additionally, all participants discussed their pre-college experiences and for those who participated in them, the importance of programs which assisted them with getting into college, such as bridge programs. As a result a sub-question was added to the protocol which asks participants about their pre-college experiences. While literature shows pre-college cross-racial interaction is a determiner for collegiate cross-racial interactions, when I asked students about their pre-college experiences they tended to provide a great deal of detail. As a result, questions about pre-college experiences were ones that required a great deal of finesse and this is where the constant comparison method proved useful. Revisiting my interviews, comparing them to one another, and beginning to analyze them while in the field all proved very useful. By employing these strategies I was able to hone in and ask appropriate questions to my interview subjects. These are the two main findings from the pilot interviews that have been incorporated into the interview protocol.

Delimitations & Limitations

As a result of this study I have a better understanding of students, from various racial backgrounds, and their experiences at an Emerging HSI. However, as in any

research project, limitations exist and delimitations were created to bracket this study. In order to create manageable parameters for this study I selected one site at which research was conducted. While HSIs and Emerging HSIs are different from one another, this single institution was selected as a place to *begin* to examine students' experiences with diverse peers within a Hispanic-serving context.

Due to its qualitative nature, and specifically because this is a study of one institution, this research project does not have the capacity to draw generalizations about other institutions, nor does it seek to do so. HSIs are a diverse collection of higher education establishments with a multitude of reasons for why they were founded. Hispanic-Serving Institutions are linked because of their designation and service to a student population that is at least 25% Hispanic. However, findings from this single institutional study may not be relevant, and in fact could be entirely inaccurate at other HSIs or Emerging HSIs. Due to this rich intra-institutional HSI diversity, this study does not seek to define and capture a portrait of diversity at all HSIs, or for all HSI students; rather, it outlines a place to begin future analyses. Although the intention of this dissertation was to understand the dynamics of cross-racial interaction at one HSI, its findings may be *compared* to other HSIs and even to traditionally and predominantly White institutions, but not applied.

Some may consider a limitation endemic to qualitative research to be its reliance on interpretation and subjectivity. However, Stake (1995) explained that in qualitative research, specifically, "we emphasize placing an interpreter in the field to observe the workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings"

(p. 9). Yet the background of researchers does affect the interpretations they draw and the objectivity of researchers is relative. The interpretations and conclusions I have drawn from the data may be different from determinations reached by other researchers. My perspectives and background informed how I interpreted the data and what I believed to be pertinent findings. As a result, within this study I attempted to be both as objective as possible while also declaring, whenever I was aware, the ways in which my background affected my interpretation. Furthermore, wherever it was feasible I have brought forth excerpts from the participants in the study through direct quotations so that their voices can be heard directly.

Finally, this research project draws on a sample from one institution and asks students to reflect on their experiences throughout their time in college. While I targeted the most appropriate interview subjects for this study I could find, I do believe there are some critical voices missing from this study—the voices of men. Specifically targeting men is one of my recommendations for future research. Nonetheless, having students retrospectively consider their college experiences is valuable.

CHAPTER IV

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS

Overview

The findings from this study are reported in three chapters; however, before reporting the results that emerged, I will introduce readers to the participants such that they can get a better understanding of the students that informed the findings. I conducted interviews with 26 participants. Six students identified as African American/Black (four women and two men), seven students identified as White/Caucasian (six women and one man), and 13 students identified as Latino/Chicano/Hispanic (nine women and four men). Seven students were male and 19 were female. As mentioned previously, extensive efforts were made to recruit more men to the study (especially African American and White men); however, no additional male participants emerged as a result of these efforts.

Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities (see Appendix G). Within this section, I have provided a brief description of each of the student interviewees to introduce them to the readers. By doing so, readers have a better understanding of who the participants are and how their stories give context to the findings. Please note that all participants were from the same state, the state in which SWSU is located.

African American/ Black Students

Orlando, a 21 year-old senior was a finance major, a member of a historically Black fraternity, and was very involved in campus life. Orlando was recognized by staff and students at SWSU as a campus leader. Through one of his leadership positions on campus (an ambassador type program) Orlando had met the Board of Regents and the University President. Orlando was raised by his single mother and chose to attend SWSU in order to play football. He walked-on to the team but after two semesters he realized he was not going to get any playing time and withdrew from the football team. He considered transferring, but decided to stay at SWSU because he was really involved in his fraternity and other aspects of student life. Orlando described his experience at SWSU as positive overall, but also discussed times when he felt frustrated and isolated as an African American male at SWSU.

Ama, a 20 year-old junior was an advertising and mass communication major. Ama identified as Black, but her mother is Filipina. Her father was in the Navy so she was born in the Philippines and lived in several other states before settling in the state in which SWSU was located. In high school and throughout college most of Ama's friends were Black. Because others saw her as Black, Ama also identified as Black. Ama considered going to a historically Black University outside of the state, but potential loan burdens kept her in state and led her to attend SWSU. At SWSU most of Ama's friends were also Black. Ama was also a resident assistant in one of the resident halls during her junior year and felt that her experience as a Black person at SWSU was distinctly different, and worse than the experiences of her White peers.

Sandy, a 22 year-old fifth-year senior was a special education major. Sandy identified as African American; however, her father was from Guyana and she recently began to embrace her Guyanese heritage. Sandy and her sister were raised by her mother who was in the military. She moved from place to place throughout her childhood and even spent time in Germany. Her mother settled in a city about an hour from SWSU where Sandy spent her high school years. Sandy attended a very diverse high school and had a racially diverse group of friends before attending SWSU. Once at SWSU, Sandy's first group of friends were mostly White, but after joining a historically Black sorority her group of friends became almost entirely African American. Sandy was also a campus leader and was a member of the same SWSU leadership/ambassador program as Orlando, and she too had met the Board of Regents and the University President.

Warren, a 22 year-old senior was a public relations major. He was from a small town on the other side of the state that was predominantly White. Part of Warren's interest in attending SWSU was because he believed it would have more diversity than his small home town. At SWSU he was very involved in his multicultural fraternity and believed that the diversity of the membership was a positive contribution to the fraternity and afforded the brothers networks they would not have otherwise had access to. Warren was more optimistic than other participants, especially more than other African Americans, about the benefits of cross-racial interaction; he did not express feelings of isolation as did the other African Americans participants at SWSU.

Julianne, a woman in her 40's was a junior and an occupational education major. Julianne was born and raised in Southwestern City, the same city in which SWSU is located. She spent her entire life in this city and described how the city and the university

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grew and changed over the years. She suffered from some health issues which resulted in starts and stops to her education at SWSU. Julianne was married, had two children, and was very involved in her local church. She felt fairly isolated as a student at SWSU and did not feel like she had many friends. Julianne attributed her lack of friends to being older and was surprised when some students asked to study with her. Julianne was not involved in Greek life but wished she was. She was interested in joining a historically Black sorority because of the networks and friendships she believed she would gain.

Audrey, a 21 year-old senior, was a social work major. Audrey's interview was conducted by phone and I was able to follow-up with her by e-mail following the interview. Audrey's high school was predominantly African American, but said there were people of all races in her school. In general, she felt connected to other African American students because she felt like they shared similar experiences; however, Audrey described her college friends as racially diverse. Audrey participated in a study abroad/missionary trip to Ghana with another university and expressed that this was one of the best experiences she had during college. Audrey was the only African American student in her social work classes. She was interested in attending graduate school for social work, and because there were not many African Americans in her social work program, she was interested in attending a program where there was a larger African American population.

Chicana/Hispanic/Latino/a Students

Isaac, a 48 year-old junior was a political science major. Isaac is legally blind. He was born with some vision and lost his vision completely as a child. Isaac is from a small town with a large Hispanic population, but had also lived in other parts of the state. He attended a residential high school for students who were blind which he described as being somewhat diverse. After high school he worked for a number of years in banking, customer service, and the telephone industry as a telemarketer. Isaac described his friend group as being fairly diverse, but recognized he was not always sure of the races of his friends. In distinguishing the race of different people Isaac primarily used auditory and linguistic cues to determine the race of people. Isaac was married with three children. He was not involved with many activities on campus, but did attend activities hosted by the Non Traditional Student Organization.[14]

Jordan, a 24 year-old senior was a sociology and Spanish major. Jordan was friends with Isaac and is visually impaired. Jordan had some vision and was able to distinguish color, but most of her vision appeared very blurry. Jordan was very active in the Non Traditional Student Organization, which is where she met Isaac, and they became friends. Jordan identified as Chicana and felt some connection to those of her same background. She spent a semester studying abroad in Spain and felt more connected to her heritage as a result of this experience.

Jordan described her friend group as being half Hispanic and half White and noted that her classes were racially separate.

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[14] The Non Traditional Student Organization was an organization for students that identified as non-traditional in any way. Typically students in this association were married, had children, were differently abled, and/or were older than 23 years old.

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Ishmael, a 22 year-old senior majored in geography and minored in geology. As a science major and minor Ishmael expressed that his classes were not very racially diverse. Ishmael decided to attend SWSU because of its good reputation for his major. During college, most of Ishmael's friends were Hispanic or Mexican American. He felt like he got along with Hispanics more than people of other racial groups because he had more in common with them. Ishmael was usually the only Hispanic student, and often the only non-White student in his classes. Ishmael became involved in several Latino organizations on campus such as the Latino Students Association because he felt like hanging out with other Latino students provided him with a sense of family.

Erika, a 20 year-old junior majored in geography and environmental studies. Erika identified as Hispanic, and on forms as Hispanic and White. She expressed that her mother's family is from Spain and is also Native American. She described her dad's family as very mixed; however, other than being Irish she was not very sure of his lineage. Erika was raised Catholic, but converted to Buddhism. Through her Buddhist practices she has traveled throughout the world taking classes from Buddhist teachers and doing meditations. She met a lot of her friends this way and said many of her friends were from outside the University. On campus Erika was a member of the Honors Program as well as the honor society for geography. She was also a member of the Poker Club, the Club Rugby team, and she attended various academic events hosted on campus. Erika said she never asked her friends where they were from or what their racial backgrounds were. She said race rarely came up in conversation, but she connected with most of her friends because of their mutual interests in Spanish culture or in Buddhism.

Heather, a 22 year-old senior was a social work major. Heather has one parent that is Hispanic and one that is White, and felt a particular connection to others who were biracial. Although very fair skinned and often assumed to be White, Heather identified as Hispanic. She was a member of the social work honor society and was also very involved in Interposes, a multi-racial antiracism group. Heather was also a member of a Christian sorority, but since joining Interposes and starting an internship for her major she was not involved in the sorority. Heather had friends of all backgrounds; however, most of her college friends were White. Heather said she made a lot of her college friends through her social work program and Interposes.

Megan, a 22 year-old senior was an art and women's studies major. Megan preferred not to be limited by racial categories and thought of herself as American. However, one of her parents was White (German and Spanish ancestry), and the other was from Mexico, and she at times referred to herself as bi-racial. Because Megan had a German last name many Hispanics did not always view her as Hispanic; she was called a "coconut"[15] growing up. Megan spoke fluent Spanish and visited her family in Mexico periodically. She was from a small town with a large Hispanic population. As a youth, most of Megan's friends were poor and Mexican American, but in high school and college more of her friends became White and better off financially. She attributed this switch in the racial composition of her friends to her educational trajectory. In the advanced classes she saw more White students. Megan met most of her friends at SWSU through her classes and her part-time job at a sandwich shop in town. She was a member

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[15] Attributing the word coconut to a person refers to someone who is brown on the outside, but White on the inside, or someone who "acts" White.

of the Honors Program, but was not involved in many activities on campus because she felt awkward in them.

Anna, a 22 year-old senior was a social work major. Anna identified as Hispanic and was from a largely Hispanic city about an hour away from SWSU. She attended SWSU because of its good reputation for its social work program. Anna met most of her friends through her major and said her closest friends were members of her same cohort. She was also involved in a service organization, the professional association for social work, and the social work honors society. She met many of her friends through these organizations. Most of Anna's friends were Hispanic and she felt connected to them because they came from similar family backgrounds. Anna had heard negative stories about sororities and it was because of this and because of the cost associated with sororities that she decided not to join one.

Daniel, a 21 year-old senior was a finance major. He identified as Latino and described his group of friends as mostly Latino. Daniel grew up in a prosperous town, where there were not many Latinos. Daniel felt the Latinos within his community could have been better served educationally. In high school most of his friends were White and African American. He described his upbringing as "not very traditional" Latino because he did not grow up speaking Spanish or knowing many of the Mexican customs. In college most of Daniel's friends were Latino. He met his college friends at a social event at the start of his freshman year and they all joined a Latino fraternity together. Daniel became very involved in the fraternity and his co-curricular and social activities occurred mostly with this group of young men. Daniel did not think students at SWSU interacted

very much across racial lines and attributed this to most people feeling very comfortable with others who looked like themselves.

Gabriel, a 21 year-old senior was a sociology major and identified as Latino. Gabriel was from a small town about four hours away from SWSU that was almost entirely Latino. When he arrived at SWSU he was a little intimidated. He was used to being in a community that was majority Latino and one where almost everyone spoke Spanish. Because he felt isolated he joined a Latino fraternity so he could connect with others who had a similar background to his own. In addition to his fraternity, Gabriel was a member of the campus activities team and played pick up tennis. Most of Gabriel's college friends were Latino, but he thought he should work on having a more diverse group of friends. He believed that a more diverse group of friends would help expand his learning about different cultural backgrounds and minimize the stereotypes he held about other people as well as stereotypes they held about him.

Maya, a 20 year-old junior was a mass communication major and identified as Hispanic. Maya was from a small town that was almost entirely Hispanic. Most of the young women Maya went to high school with did not go to college and many got pregnant during or shortly after high school. For Maya this was what it meant to be Hispanic—not go to college, and to have children at a young age. Maya described her mother as a social activist who really pushed her to go to college. Maya embraced her mother's urgings and went to SWSU which is five hours from her hometown. At SWSU Maya was involved in numerous campus activities. She was a member of four major campus organizations and was in leadership positions in each of them. Maya described the membership of organizations as mostly White and she met most of her college friends

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through these organizations; as such, most of her college friends were White. She did not think students at SWSU interacted much across race, but was okay with that because she thought it was a reflection of interactions in the real world.

Rosie, a 21 year-old senior was a sociology major. Rosie identified as Hispanic and, like Maya, was also from a small town that was almost entirely Hispanic. During her first year at SWSU Rosie was a member of the dance team. Her closest college friends were four young women who were on the dance team, three of whom were Hispanic and high school classmates of hers. She spoke to people of different races in various campus settings, but her closest friends were Hispanic. Rosie decided not to continue on the dance team after her first year because she and her friends from home were the only non-White dancers. They also could not afford the trips and other extras associated with the dance team and often felt like outsiders. During the rest of her time in college Rosie's involvement outside of class was to tutor other students and work on research projects with professors. Rosie was interested in applying to graduate schools for sociology and had attended a conference held at SWSU about Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Isabel, a 22 year-old senior was a psychology major. Isabel identified as Hispanic and was from a town on the other side of the state. She was not very knowledgeable about the college going process and decided to attend SWSU because she liked the campus. Looking back she described it as making a decision on a whim, but felt like it was a good decision and it ended up working out. Isabel's hometown was racially segregated and she attended schools that were mostly Mexican American. As a result, in high school, most of her friends were Hispanic. At SWSU Isabel was involved in the Catholic Students Services, a service organization, and the sign language club. She met

most of her friends through these organizations and said most of them are White. She explained that most of her friends were White because the majority of the student population at SWSU is White. Isabel described her classes as also mostly White with a few Hispanic students, but stated she rarely saw any African Americans on campus. Isabel did not know Spanish and did not feel the need to learn it because she is nearly fluent in American Sign Language. During college Isabel also worked approximately 20 hours/week in a child care center instructing a class of eleven two-year olds.

Tanny, a 21 year-old junior was a math education major and identified as Hispanic. She was from the same town in which SWSU is located and her extended family lived within the city. Tanny wanted to go away for college, but SWSU offered her the best financial package so she decided to stay. Tanny described her family as somewhat Mexican, but also somewhat American. Her family is Christian, but not Catholic, and Tanny can understand Spanish, but she cannot speak it fluently. Despite this, Tanny felt connected to others with her same racial and religious background because she believed their traditions were similar. In high school almost all of her friends were Hispanic, but Tanny said her college friends were from other racial backgrounds. Her friends were mostly Hispanic, but also had many friends that were White and a few friends of other racial backgrounds. At SWSU Tanny was a member of the honors society for education, the Honors Program, a Christian organization, and a service organization. She considered joining Pop Culture Senate, but thought she would have been uncomfortable as she believed the organization was entirely African American. For Tanny, seeing students who had a similar racial background as her own helped attract her to new settings, but once she was a part of a group race mattered less to her. She believed

that students at SWSU engaged in cross-racial interactions, but many of them were surface level interactions. Nonetheless, she believed this was more cross-racial interaction than students were engaging in during high school.

White/Caucasian Students

Josh, a 21 year-old senior majored in history. Josh identified as Caucasian, but also disclosed that he has grandparents who are Cuban and Puerto Rican. He was a member of the Honors Program and was inducted into the honors society for history. He was very involved with the programming in the Honors Program, frequently attending "fireside chats" and luncheons with guest speakers visiting the university. Topics for these luncheons and lectures were often on multicultural topics. His main extracurricular activity was the history club, of which he was the president. Josh was also accepted in a master's program in history at SWSU and planned to enroll in this program during the semester that followed our interview. Josh said he felt drawn to multi-racial groups; however, his friends were mostly White and the membership of the history club was also mostly White. Josh did a semester exchange program with a U.S. university in the mid-Atlantic region where he became involved with the LGBTQA center. He was interested in topics of diversity and felt comfortable in settings of difference, but his circles did not always reflect that diversity.

Janelle, a 61 year-old senior was a social work major. Janelle started college in 1966, but stopped shortly thereafter when she got married and had children. She was a stay-at-home mom for a number of years and then worked as a secretary. She was

looking for a new job and realized she needed more education in order to get one, so she decided to go back to college. She picked SWSU because her son attended and had a positive experience. Although Janelle grew up in the segregated Deep South she described her family as very tolerant. Her neighborhoods were racially segregated, but she did not hear disparaging comments from her family about people of different racial backgrounds. Throughout her life most of Janelle's friends have been White and the same was true during her years at SWSU. At SWSU Janelle was not involved in many extracurricular activities because she commuted; however, she was a member of the anti-racism group Interposes. Through Interposes Janelle learned about her own White privilege. During her interview whenever Janelle spoke about her White privilege and what others have been denied because they did not have privilege, she often became emotional and began to cry.

Leanne, a 33 year-old senior was a social work major. Leanne loved to travel and spent some time traveling before attending college. During this time Leanne met some social workers who did relief work and traveled from county to country. Seeing that these women were able to travel and do work that helped others convinced Leanne that she wanted to be a social worker. She attended SWSU because of its good social work program and because of her familiarity with the university. Leanne spent half of her high school years in Utah. Her high school in Utah had 27 people in it, and three were non-White. She spent the second half of her high school career at a large suburban high school approximately three hours from SWSU. She described this high school as predominantly White, but somewhat diverse. When Leanne came to SWSU her first two roommates where people of color and they got along well. Leanne's main co-curricular

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activity was Interposes, the anti-racism group on campus. She was very active in this organization and served in a leadership position in Interposes. Leanne was also a social work intern at the county office in town. Through her work in Interposes Leanne had done a lot of work exploring her own Whiteness and racial identity. As a result she learned a lot about herself, she began treating people differently, and advocated for social and racial justice on a daily basis.

Madelyn, a 20-year old senior was a public relations major. Madelyn was from a town at the far end of the state. Because her town bordered another state she felt that there were a lot of cultural traditions that were more similar to the neighboring state. Madelyn attended high school in a rural area and described her town as segregated. All of the African American students attended one school and all of the White students attended a different one. There were not many Latinos in her hometown. At SWSU Madelyn described her closest friends as White, but said that she had other friends from different backgrounds. Prior to our interview Madelyn had not thought much about the diversity of her peers. As a result of this interview she realized how many of her circles at SWSU were predominantly White. Madelyn was an active member of the public relations professional association, and was a member of the Honors Program where she worked part-time.

Mackenzie, a senior in her mid to late 20's was a social work major. Mackenzie moved around a lot as a child, but her family eventually settled in a city about an hour from SWSU. Mackenzie commuted from her hometown to SWSU and retained most of her friends from high school. She described her friends as mostly White, but said she did have friends of other racial backgrounds. Because she commuted and has a child she did

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not have an extensive group of friends at SWSU, nor was she involved in many organizations on campus. Mackenzie was focused on her major and was a member of the honor society for social work as well as a social work community service organization. Mackenzie interacted with other students in her social work classes who were White and Mexican American, but described those interactions as more surface level. She said that through her social work classes she discussed and became aware of White privilege and other inequities related to race, privilege, and socio-economic status. Mackenzie described the SWSU campus as very racially separate and thought racial separation was most apparent among the Greek organizations.

Holly, a 28 year-old senior was a social work major. Holly identified as Caucasian and grew up in a city about an hour from SWSU, but as an adult traveled and lived in South Dakota and Boston. Holly traveled trying to decide what she wanted to do for her career. She was engaged to a man who is deaf and as a result of their relationship she became very involved in the deaf community. She worked as a sign language interpreter and decided to pursue a social work degree in order to begin a career working with high school students who are deaf. Holly decided to come to SWSU because their social work program had a good reputation. Holly was a member of the anti-racism group Interposes, but was not able to attend meetings or events very often because she commuted an hour to SWSU. Holly described her friends as mostly White, but also felt uncomfortable as a member of the dominant group. She saw herself as an advocate to address racial inequities and other social justice initiatives and was frustrated that because of the color of her skin others judged her as a member of the dominant group. She

thought that students engaged in some cross-racial interaction at SWSU, but that cross-racial interaction could be encouraged more.

Sara, a 22 year-old senior was a mass communications major and identified as Caucasian. Sara's father was in the army and she lived in two different states in the Southwest growing up. In fifth grade her family settled in a mostly Hispanic city about an hour from SWSU. She attended very racially diverse schools growing up. She remembers her father having a conversation with her in middle school about the importance of diversity and learning to get along with people from different races. Sara has never felt uncomfortable in racially diverse settings; but conversely felt uncomfortable in racially homogenous settings. At SWSU Sara was involved in a communications organization, the honor society for communication majors, a mentoring program, and Pop Culture Senate. Sara was in a leadership position in the Pop Culture Senate, a student organization that came together because of their mutual interest in popular culture, specifically art, dance, and poetry present in hip hop. Sara also organized the community service component of Pop Culture Senate where students in this organization gave presentations to local school children who were mostly Latino, about the importance of excelling in school and staying away from violence. Sara described her friends as racially mixed, but mostly Hispanic. She thought that students in multi-racial organizations interacted across racial lines frequently, but that other organizations, especially Greek-letter organizations were not as diverse as they should be.

The foregoing descriptions of the interviewed students provide some initial insights and background into students' cross-racial interactions at Southwestern State University. These profiles demonstrate that students in this study were from different

types of pre-college communities. Almost all of the Hispanic/Latino and

White/Caucasian students came from communities where the majority of the population

was comprised of people of their same racial background. Students also had a variety of

experiences with cross-racial interaction prior to and while attending SWSU. In the

following chapters I discuss the findings that further elucidate the complexity of cross-

racial interactions among African American, Latino/Hispanic, and White students at

SWSU.

CHAPTER V

SETTINGS AND CROSS RACIAL INTERACTIONS

Overview

The findings from this study are reported in this and the following three chapters. A majority of the findings from this study center on students' experiences with cross-racial interactions. These findings were grouped into themes and discussed in separate chapters: Chapter V: settings where cross-racial interactions occur; Chapter VI: what inhibits cross-racial interactions; and Chapter VII: students' perceptions regarding cross-racial interactions. Chapter VIII differs from the other findings chapters in that it presents findings about how students viewed SWSU becoming an HSI. The focus then of Chapter VIII is not so much a discussion of students' cross-racial interactions as it is a discussion of their opinions about SWSU becoming an HSI. In the final chapter, Chapter IX, I provide an overview of the thematic findings and provide a revised conceptual framework to understand students' cross-racial interactions on racially diverse campuses.

In the present chapter, I describe the types of interactions in which students at SWSU were engaged and the campus settings in which these interactions take place. Previous literature discusses cross-racial interactions in terms of curricular, co-curricular, and informal settings (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem, et al., 2005; Saenz, et al., 2007; Schoem, et al., 2001). My study found that there was a great deal of overlap in the ways

students discussed co-curricular and informal settings. Therefore, I discuss students' experiences with cross-racial interactions within classes and outside of them. Another theme that emerged from the findings was the hesitancy students had initiating cross-racial interactions. The second part of this chapter delineates students' hesitancy and describes how their apprehension impacted their cross-racial interactions.

Curricular Settings

Within the curricular setting, students did not engage in many cross-racial interactions because their classes were not very compositionally diverse. The lack of compositional diversity was acute among the students who majored in finance, mass communications, and geography. Orlando, an African American finance major stated, "I'm in the [business college] so interaction is very limited…I'll tell you that I had an Accounting class with about 200 people and I was the only African American male in, that class." Ishmael, a Hispanic geography major had similar sentiments about the diversity in his geography classes:

> [they're] mostly White in my geography courses especially now I'm in the more higher, level courses, junior, senior level classes. Like probably my last three geology classes, I'm like probably the only [minority] or maybe just two, me and somebody else…it's mostly, predominantly, easily White.

When asked the same question "Do you think that your classes are diverse?" Daniel, a Latino senior who was a finance major, laughed in response and then said, "no, not at all." He continued on to say, "I think that's specifically just because of my major…with finance in particular, I guess diversification—even gender-wise there is mostly males in finance, all White males…I don't see that our classes are diverse at all."

I asked Isabel, a Hispanic social work major if her classes were racially diverse and she stated, "Not really, I mean the majority of the people are White. I hardly ever have any African-Americans and really any other [minorities]. I mean it is usually like— the majority of them are White and there are one or two Hispanic students." Madelyn, a White public relations major also said her major was not very diverse. She stated, "I guess nobody wants to be public relations major who are Black. I don't know. I never thought about that until now." Josh who is part Cuban, but identified as Caucasian stated that he was also surprised that there were not many students of color in his classes. He stated,

> I feel the history [major] is really high in Caucasians. The teachers talk about it but there's not that many minority students in there. We do have a few in our [history] club but not that many. I don't know why. I don't understand that.

The comments above demonstrate that students perceive their classes as lacking racial diversity. When discussing the compositional diversity within their classes some students were perplexed by the lack of compositional diversity. Tanny, Madelyn, and Josh all expressed that they either had not thought about compositional diversity before, or that they were surprised that there was not more racial diversity within their classes. The individual perspectives and experiences of these students may have contributed to them feeling perplexed by the lack of racial diversity of their classes.

Madelyn said she that prior to our interview she had not considered the racial diversity of her classes. As a White person and member of the dominant racial group, Madelyn had the privilege not to have to consider race as frequently as students of color. Madelyn's experiences align with McIntosh (1989), Yosso, et al. (2004) as well as other

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critical race theorists discuss White students' privilege not to have to consider races other than their own.

Josh and Tanny were both confused about the diversity of their classes. The answer to their confusion may be found in the distribution of students color across grade levels. SWSU was actively working to become an HSI in order to better represent the racial demographics of the region and the nation, and in order to gain eligibility for federal HSI funding. As such, additional efforts were focused on recruiting a more diverse entering class (SWSU, 2008). Therefore, the freshman and sophomores classes were more racially diverse than the junior and senior classes. Because I interviewed juniors and seniors, their classroom interactions were mostly with other juniors and seniors, rather than with the more racially diverse freshman and sophomore classes.[16]

In addition to noting how frequently students engaged in cross-racial interactions in classes, participants also noted the quality of cross-racial interactions. Ishmael, a Hispanic geography major found that the curricular relationships he had with his classmates entailed much more surface level interactions rather than deeper level friendships. He stated,

> I mean when we're in lab and stuff we're like lab partners and you've got a group of four people but honestly I'd say I've met a couple friends but not like, "Hey let's hang out." I mean I'll talk to them in class and we're cool, but I guess [we're] more of acquaintances.

Maya, a Hispanic junior majoring in mass communications, said the amount of interaction she had with diverse peers depended on the way the course was structured and also occurred because of happenstance. Maya stated,

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[16] Chapter VI more fully explores students' perceptions about the diversity of their classes.

It depends on the class. It depends on the teacher and the kind of assignments you are given because sometimes you have to get in groups, especially like in small classes, you're, not obligated to, but it's like hey, you're right next to me and we're sitting together all semester. It's like hey, what did you get on this and what did you get on that? My friends in the class, we talk to each other just because it's a hard class and it's like "what did you do?"

Through these comments, students from different racial backgrounds and majors conveyed several issues about cross-racial interactions. First, students said their classes were not compositionally diverse and because of the limited diversity there were not many opportunities to interact. However, this dialogue was further complicated when I examined cross-racial interactions by students' race. For White students there were not many opportunities to engage in cross-racial interactions because there were so few students of color in their classes. In order to engage in cross-racial interactions, White students needed to make concerted efforts to connect with students of color. For the few African American and Latino students in classes, almost all of their interactions were cross-racial. This was highlighted by Ishmael above when he said, "I've met a couple friends but not like, "Hey let's hang out"... I guess [we're] more of acquaintances." Although he interacted with White students in class, the relationship he had with these individuals ended there and was not carried outside of the classroom. Like Ishmael, a majority of students in Maya's classes were White, and therefore many of her interactions with other students were cross-racial. Similarly, her curricular cross-racial interactions were more about convenience (sitting next to the same person all semester) or for the purpose of finding success in the class ("it's a hard class").

Whether or not students interacted across racial lines in curricular settings often depended on the diversity of the specific class or cohort rather than the overall diversity

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of the major. Leanne said that there were more African American students in the School of Social Work, but there were not any others in her cohort, and thus not any others in her classes. Despite the diversity within her school, Leanne's cross-racial interactions were limited because of the racial composition of her cohort. These findings suggest that the impact of diversity efforts at SWSU are lessened if they are concentrated in a few majors or concentrated in certain cohorts. For students at SWSU to glean the benefits of interacting with diverse others, diversity must be a more deliberate feature of every classroom so that it can be a meaningful part of all students' collegiate experiences. Infusing diversity into all areas of campus life is a goal that SWSU can work toward.

I'm the Only One

Beyond the lack of diversity in classes, an emergent theme among participants was the idea of being "the only one" (i.e. the only person of color) in their classes. Sandy stated she was "the only one" in her education classes.

> I'm [majoring] in special education so all my classes are with the same people, you know. So there's no one that looks like me or anything. In my class, I was the only Black person for a long, long, like *long* time…I'm *the* [diversity in the] department.

Sandy was affected by the solo status in her classes because she did not feel comfortable talking to others about questions she had about the course topic or about issues of discrimination or race that came up in her classes. Within her major Sandy did not have other peers who looked like her and there was only one African American professor in her department. As a result of these racial demographics, Sandy's options of who she felt comfortable approaching about issues were very limited.

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Rosie, a Hispanic sociology senior, also noticed there were times when she was the only Hispanic female in her classes. She stated,

> Actually, I have noticed—that sometimes I am the only minority in my classrooms. The only Hispanic girl, or like me and a Black person. I *have* noticed that…I've looked around like a couple of times and I look to the other side, I'm like "Wow, I'm the only minority" *(laughs)*.

For Rosie noticing that sometimes she was "the only Hispanic girl" in her classes or "the only minority" made her feel intimidated in class. It didn't matter if it was just her or her and one other person of color, she felt uncomfortable and intimidated. As a result, Rosie did not want to talk in classes and instead was more of a passive learner. She listened to what the professor or other students had to say and did not contribute to class discussions.

For both Rosie and Sandy being the only one in their classes affected their educational experiences. Ishmael was also often the only one in his classes. He described how his experience of being "the only one" in his geography classes was an added pressure, but made him prideful. He stated,

> I just got to prove myself better…One of my courses, I remember I got the highest grade in the class and… I remember thinking, I even called my dad. I was telling him, so "Yeah, you know that was, I'm the only Hispanic in this class and I got a A, the highest grade in the class. And the teacher said it out loud," so I just kind of felt good…they [White students] already have their thoughts or about Hispanics and maybe they're not as good at school so yeah, I feel like I have something to prove to them…maybe they already have their thoughts or about Hispanics, that maybe they're not as good at school. So yeah, I feel like I have something to prove to them… I feel like I do have a little more to prove or a little more pressure on me.

Because he was "the only one" in his classes, Ishmael felt like he was a representative of his entire race. He felt added pressure to prove his legitimacy as a

student in class. His experiences were akin to Sekaquaptewa et al.'s (2003; 2007) work on solo status, stereotype threat, and performance where they found being the only member of one's race in a group led individuals to believe their performance would be linked to their race. Thus Orlando felt like it was his responsibility to disprove the White students' assumptions that Hispanics were "not as good at school." When Ishmael received the highest grade in the class he was particularly proud of his accomplishments because he showed his White classmates that he was smart and therefore that Hispanics were smart.

Ama, an African American and Filipino student, who identified as Black, was also often the only Black person in her classes. Like Ishmael she also felt the pressure of being the only person of her race in classes, but the pressure manifested itself in a different way. Where Ishmael felt that he had to combat assumptions that Hispanics were not strong students, Ama found that she was expected to have academic expertise on issues concerning her race. In some classes Ama felt she was supposed to know about African American history, and even know more than the course instructor. She said:

> I mean it's one particular thing that I hate…I feel, whenever I'm in history classes, and they're talking about, you know, Blacks and slaves and stuff, I almost feel like I'm obligated to know something, like everything about it and I should be an expert. And I feel like the White people think that I should know that, too. And it's like, I mean, I'm just a student just like ya'll. I mean I, I know my, I know my history but I don't, I'm not a history person I don't, I don't feel like I need a like, I don't think I should be the spokesperson for Black people in class. I never nominated myself to be that person…but I know some of my friends who have, where the teacher looked directly at them whenever they were talking about a specific subject that had to relate to Black and White people. I mean, I don't know, I just get uncomfortable. I get uncomfortable whenever we reach topics like that. I'm like, "dang it…can we go on to something else, please? Please?" But, I mean, life is race relations and that's how it is.

When they were singled out by instructors, Ama and her friends felt like they were no longer students and instead had to be the expert representatives for all Black experiences. Research has documented that the experience Ama described is not unique to her or to her friends. Rather, many students of color, and specifically African American students, have found themselves in classes in which they are expected to know and explain the "Black experience" to classmates (Person & Christensen, 1996).

Sandy, Rosie, Ishmael, and Ama all noticed they were the only non-White student, or one of only a handful of students of color in their classes. Although students can benefit tremendously from engaging in cross-racial interactions in classes, the experience of these students shows that when there is only one student of color in a class he or she is often the one who is expected to bear the brunt of educating White students about the experiences of non-Whites. As a result of being "the only one," or one of a few students of color in a class, several participants noted that they felt isolated, singled out, and pressured. The stressors they experienced as the only one of their racial group impacted their level of comfort in class. Steele (1997) named this pressure "stereotype threat" and defined it as:

> the event of a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs
> becoming self-relevant, usually as plausible interpretation for something
> one is doing, for an experience one is having, or for a situation one is in,
> that has relevance to one's self definition. (p. 618)

Steele also described that stereotype threat negatively affects students' educational outcomes. Steele and his colleagues have performed countless studies in which they determined that when individuals experience stereotype threat, they underperform academically and avoid leadership positions (Davies, Spencer, & Steele,

2005; Steele, 1995; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Ama and Ishmael experienced stereotype threat because of their racial identities. Although Ishmael had a moment in his class where he felt proud and successful, being "the only one" is a big burden to carry. Moreover, Steele and his colleagues' research have shown there are many negative outcomes associated with stereotype threat.

They're the Only One

Participants from all racial backgrounds noticed the lack of compositional diversity on campus, specifically in their classes. Isabel, a Hispanic social work student, stated, "Actually there is only one Asian in my class. She is the only person I've ever come across that is Asian." Holly, a White social work student, said that there was only one African American student in her social work classes. She described how the lack of compositional diversity impacted her own comfort and the depth of cross-racial interactions in which she engaged in classes. She stated,

> I don't necessarily feel comfortable going up to like my, my one African American classmate and saying, "So what is it like being an African American in our classes? What is it like?"

Not only did Holly recognize the lack of compositional diversity in her classes, but she also recognized that the lack of diversity singled out her lone African American classmate. She felt this made it difficult for honest and deep conversation across and about race to occur. In addition to students of color being negatively impacted by the lack of compositional diversity in their classrooms, White students were also impacted. Students who wanted to engage in cross-racial interactions on a more meaningful level felt uncomfortable discussing race with classmates who were the only ones from their

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racial group. While many of the White students believed all students would benefit from cross-racial interactions, research has shown that White students have greater gains than students of color in learning outcomes associated with cross-racial interaction such as perspective taking, and building racial and cultural competencies (Gurin, et al., 1999; Gurin, et al., 2002).

Benefits of Racial Diversity in Classrooms

Although many did not experience diversity in their classes, those who did, mentioned several benefits of having students from different racial backgrounds in their classes. For Sara, cross-racial interaction was important because it meant that she and her fellow students were gaining new understandings and new perspectives on a variety of topics. She stated that students,

> experience[s] would be a lot richer…they're [students] going to meet a lot more people and get different perspectives…perspectives that they hadn't seen before…I'm learning about different ideas and how other people think, it's beneficial to me whenever I'm making decisions.

Gabriel, who is Latino and majored in sociology, also saw the value of racial diversity in classes. He stated, "we're from different backgrounds…which made it a lot more interesting to know. It's not just a Latino thing but it's also a White thing, as it is a Black thing or an Asian thing." Anna also described how she learned about diversity from her classmates. She stated,

> definitely hearing other people's opinions and stories and how they see it—because then it makes you see things. You're like—I never thought of it that way. So I definitely think other people's experiences are neat to hear; and how they see it.

Julianne, who is Black and majored in occupational education, conveyed how she benefited from cross-racial interactions in classes differently from other students. As an older student, in her 40's, Julianne found that her age made it difficult to make friends with others at SWSU. For her, classes were one place in which she had the opportunity to engage with diverse others. She relayed several experiences where she studied with students from other races. She stated, "there's actually a girl in my Spanish class that wants to study with me and she's White." If not for curricular cross-racial interactions Julianne would not have many other opportunities to engage with diverse others during college.

These students' comments demonstrate some of the perceived benefits associated with having a diverse classroom. While having compositional diversity in classrooms does not ensure deep and meaningful interactions will occur in class, having more compositional diversity makes it more likely, and may allow students of color to feel more comfortable (Hurtado, et al., 1999). The comments above also align with the findings of Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin, and Milem (2004) who asserted that when students engage in discussions with racial minorities and with students who have different opinions from their own they develop their complex thinking skills.

Madelyn, a White public relations student, noticed a difference in the diversity and cross-racial interaction in her honors classes. She stated,

> They [classes] are extremely diverse; Hispanics, Blacks, foreign exchange students sometimes, all kinds of diversity. That's why I'm really glad I'm in the program because I don't think I would get that in just being in my major. It's interesting to see the different perspectives in classes because all of the honors classes are discussion based. So everyone has their own way of inputting what they want to say and relating it to something…there are all kinds of diversity in the program.

Although cross-racial interactions did not occur evenly in classes or majors across campus, Madelyn observed that cross-racial interactions were common in her honors classes. Because honors courses were discussion based, this may have contributed to the increase in cross-racial interaction.

In summary, students at SWSU did not frequently engage in cross-racial interactions in classes. Because of the lack of compositional diversity in classes students of color noticed when they were the only one, or one of a few students of color in a class. Moreover, at times some also felt singled out as representatives of their race in class. When cross-racial interactions did occur in classes these interactions were often not deliberate or intentional. In discussion based honors classes, cross-racial interaction was more likely to occur. While curricular cross-racial interactions were not often very deep or meaningful in classes at SWSU, Milem, et al. (2004; 2005) found, engaging in some cross-racial interaction regardless of depth was better than no interaction.

Same Race and Cross-Racial Interactions Outside of Class

When discussing where they engaged in cross-racial interactions, students indicated that they engaged in interaction with diverse others in a variety of settings: on campus in the student center, in their work-study jobs, catching the bus, and occasionally in class or study groups. Four significant areas emerged that were worth exploring in greater depth: the Quad, parties, Greek life, and multicultural organizations. The Quad, parties, and Greek life were all settings where there were limited cross-racial interactions. On the other hand, multicultural organizations were the only venues on campus where students did engage cross-racially, and work-study and other employment settings

emerged as potential settings that can engender cross-racial interactions. While students

mentioned their jobs as places where they engaged with diverse others, this study was

unable to glean in-depth information about students' experiences in these settings. Future

studies should investigate work-study and employment settings more deeply. The

following sections delineate the experiences students had in each of these settings.

Racial Separation in the Quad

The Quad at SWSU was a main throughway on campus that most students passed

through on their way to classes. Students described the Quad as a "hang out spot" on

campus where student organizations advertised their events. They described the Quad as

an area where they saw a lot of students interacting with others with their same racial

background. Josh, who identified as Caucasian stated, "I do see [racial groups] separate

in the Quad." Janelle, a White student, similarly stated, "You do see them [students] in

groups. You know the Blacks are in a group. The Hispanics are in a group. Whites are in

a group. You see them like that in the Quad."

Megan's comments about the high school cafeteria brought to mind Daniel-

Tatum's (1997) work where she found that adolescents, college students, and adults

congregate with same race peers to explore their own racial identity and find a

comfortable community. Megan, who is Mexican American, discussed the grouping by

race in the Quad when she stated:

> we were talking about the cliques in the Quad…and overwhelmingly, all
> of the groups of people are White. And it's just how it is…but there is this
> little section… there is a group of Black students that are always—toward
> where the History building bends—there is this clique of Black students
> that don't seem to talk to anybody or interact with anybody. And then

um…towards the Philosophy building there are the White, hip kids…And it's like a high-school cafeteria all over again.

Maya who is Hispanic also spoke about students congregating in same race groups and why she believed students hang out in same race groups. She stated:

if you were to walk by the Quad you'll see the Blacks on one area, you'll see the fraternities and over here in one area, then you'll see all the, all the tents in the middle and then you'll see the Hispanics maybe over here mingled in here and there. It's, you, you can see it but I guess it's just because they're more comfortable.

Maya spoke candidly in her interview, and while she did not invoke images of the high school cafeteria like Megan, she spoke directly to the portion of Daniel-Tatum's argument that students group together by race because they are comfortable doing such.

Heather, a bi-racial female who identified as Hispanic, stated, "In the Quad, I think [sighs] it's pretty segregated—based on what group you're in. Like a Hispanic fraternity—or a White sorority or whatever…I don't think it is really integrated."

A White student, Leanne, believed there was segregation on campus. She stated:

There's still a lot of segregation because if you walk through the Quad at any given time you'll see pockets of Latino students, and pockets of African American students, and pockets of Asian students, and it's not really mixed. It's pretty obvious. It's really sad. I think…we've kind of had the conversation in Interposes [an anti-racism student group] about why that is. And I used to think well it was, it's by choice. People are just more comfortable hanging out with people that they're used to hanging out with or people that look like them but now I don't think it's as much that way. I think that maybe certain students don't feel welcome in certain organizations.

Heather and Leanne, like other participants to whom I spoke, use the word "segregation" to denote how students seemed to have friendship groups that were homogenous by race and ethnicity. Using the term segregation as a synonym for separation rather than the actual definition of segregation—voluntary or forced separation

based on race, class, or other attributes—may signify how removed the students feel from the historical legacy of segregation practices.[17] Historically, African Americans (and Hispanics and Native Americans in the Southwest) were segregated from Whites and denied access to everyday opportunities that Whites accessed freely. This separation and dismissal from society was upheld by the law through de jure segregation. Today, de jure segregation is no longer legal, but de facto segregation, or segregation that happens in practice, but is not enforced by law, still exists throughout the United States. The de facto segregation may be what students at SWSU were referring to within their interviews. Separating racial groups from one another is not encouraged by SWSU, but it happens in various ways on campus. As described in the following sections some students group together because they felt more comfortable with people of their same race, and some students of color grouped together because they felt unwelcome in some predominantly White circles.

Interestingly, some students used "segregation" intentionally and understood the complex meaning of the word. Orlando also used the word segregation with intentionality, particularly when discussing Greek settings. Orlando experienced firsthand being excluded and called racially derogatory names when he attended a White fraternity party. While the use of this powerful word is notable and an investigation into students' uses and understanding about segregation could prove very interesting, this is not the focus of the present study. Briefly noting the use of this word is important, but greater discussion about this topic is warranted in a different investigation.

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[17] Segregation is defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary as: the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means (Merriam Webster, 2012)

White Parties, Black Parties, and Latino Parties

The lack of cross-racial interactions participants experienced at SWSU carried

over into the informal area of partying. Interviews also revealed that students from

different racial backgrounds partied in different ways and partied separately. The

differences in parties were noted only by students of color, and mostly by African

Americans in this study. Orlando stated, "instead of it being a party, it's like oh, the

Black party or the Hispanic party, White party, like it's not a real mix of social groups."

Ama was also aware that many parties were comprised of people from the same racial

group. She said, "there's Black parties, and there's White parties." According to Ama,

distinctions were made between the type of parties based on the race of the hosts, the

activities, and the types of drinks served. She stated:

> Some of my friends [will say], "oh, yeah, we're going to go to this White
> party tonight." At the White parties all you do is drink and get White boy
> wasted and stuff and you play beer pong and all that. And you go to a
> Black party, you don't really have that. You have a DJ, you have a lot of
> music, and you dance. And that's what you do—dance. I'm sure there
> may be some alcohol, but I mean we, I—you don't drink beer. Like White
> people drink beer and there's some Black people that do but I don't know
> any who do…you get some music and you dance and that's it.

Sandy, who is African American, also described how the White parties and Black

parties were different from one another. Where Ama identified that activities, the types of

drinks served, and music distinguished parties, Sandy expressed that there were

differences between how much people drank at the parties. She stated:

> I'm involved in a lot of organizations with White people…they're more
> like, "let's get drunk on the weekends" and then I'm more like, "hey, we
> can dance and then you have an occasional drink. Let's not just get drunk"
> And that's like all the people that are in my organization do is get drunk.

Similarly, Orlando also noted that there were differences between the ways in which different groups of students at SWSU partied. He commented on the differences between African American and Latino parties at SWSU. He stated:

> I think…the Hispanic culture and the African American culture, we party two separate ways, you know, you just see a trend of African Americans, when they have a party they need a DJ, they need, you know, bumping and grinding, just dancing and all types of outlandish dressing up. Like I guess it's gangsta or as slutty as possible sometimes. I'm just stereotyping a little bit…Hispanic culture, like they're cool, just having a, getting a house or a, or an apartment and plugging the iPod up and get some beers and having a good time mixin' and mingling. Where we [African Americans]…I think we're not as capable as them socially of just sitting. Have a drink and a conversation. We have to get to know somebody, we have to like bump and grind.

Students of different races tended to be interested in engaging in different activities at parties. These varying interests seemed to separate them at SWSU. However, Daniel talked about an experience of going to a party that actually brought people of different races together. Daniel went to a country line-dancing club with members of the Catholic Club he joined. He spoke about his experience going to this club:

> I went to a country club with them one time. That was a whole, other experience to me. I mean, I guess when I go out-I tend to go out and dance to music you hear on the radio. This was all country and line-dancing and square-dancing. It was interesting. They had a dance to every song. And then you see African Americans have dances to their songs. It's interesting to see the differences that they both have. I just found it interesting.

Prior to attending the line-dancing club Daniel was used to going to parties and clubs where they play "music you hear on the radio." By attending the line-dancing club, Daniel had a new experience where he was at a club and heard music with which he was unfamiliar, and he learned new dances. By interacting with diverse others, Daniel was gleaning some of the learning outcomes associated with cross-racial interactions;

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specifically cultural knowledge and perspective taking (Antonio, 1998; Gurin et al., 2002).

The White, African American, and Latino students Daniel used to attend parties and clubs with still preferred to attend clubs and parties where "radio music" was played. Although the two styles of partying were very different Daniel found he enjoyed experiencing both:

> At first it was uncomfortable. I looked around and saw White people and I felt like I was sticking out. But after a while, I got over it. I didn't feel like anybody was looking at me ever. But I just felt awkward like being in a new situation that I haven't been in. Now, I've gone back. I enjoy it. I've gone back a couple of times since then.

While the different ways in which students partied were distinctive, Daniel found that he was able to have a good time in a new setting once he overcame initial emotions of feeling out of place. Given that students from different racial groups at SWSU tended to socialize and party in different ways that often kept them separated from one another, fostering more social opportunities for cross-racial interaction could prove useful.

Greek Councils and Racial Separation

In keeping with previous research (Antonio, 2001) Greek organizations came up most often when students discussed the lack of cross-racial interactions. In fact, they were discussed as places in which there were not many cross-racial interactions, and instead there was a lot of racial separation. Many of the students in this study, especially those who were members of fraternities and sororities, stated that the organization of Greek councils contributed to the racial separation of groups on campus. At Southwestern State University more than 1,450 students (approximately 5.5% of undergraduates) were

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members of Greek organizations. The 34 Greek organizations at SWSU were overseen by four Greek councils. Students at SWSU explained the Greek organizations were divided up in the following ways: the 16 White fraternities belong to the Interfraternity Council (IFC), the six White sororities belong to the Panhellenic Council (PC), the six African American letter organizations belong to the National Pan-Hellenic Counsel (NPHC), and there are six organizations that belong to the Multicultural Greek Counsel (MGC) which houses most of the Hispanic/Latino letter organizations as well as other multicultural letter organizations.[18]

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[18] See Appendices for additional background information about the Greek organizations.

Figure 5.1 National Greek Governing Organizations by Race

IFC	PC	NPHC	MGC
16 White Fraternities	6 White Sororities	6 African American Greek orgs	6 Multi-cultural/ Latino Greek orgs

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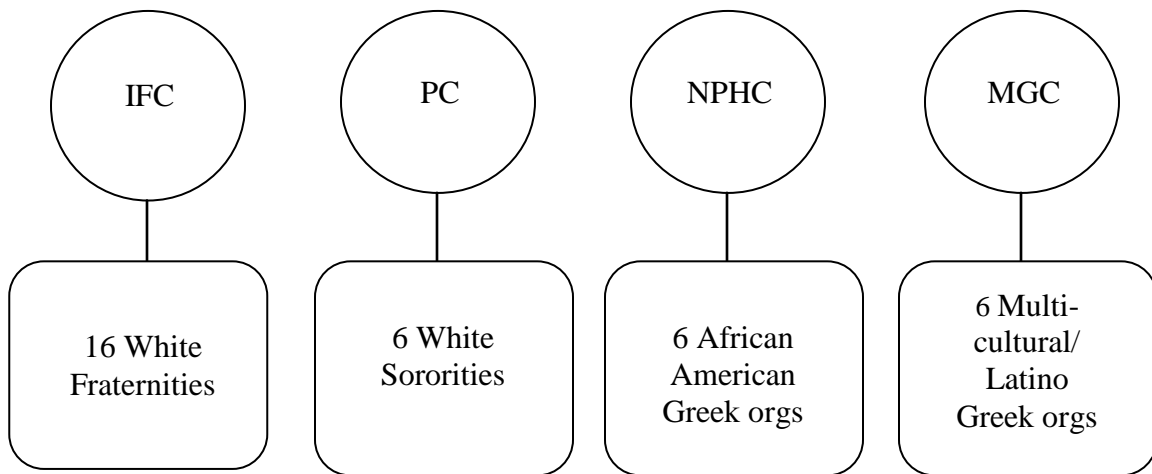
Sandy, Warren, Daniel, and Orlando all discussed how the structure of Greek organizations contributed to racial separation on campus. Sandy, an African American senior who was in a historically African American sorority stated:

> A lot of people are very segregated. And I mean, like, even the Greek community like you have your African American Greeks in the NPHC and then you have your IFC Greeks, which are the White fraternities and then you have Pan-Hellenic organizations and they're the White sororities and then you have MGC, which [are] the Multicultural Greek Council and they're the historically like Latina [sic] based.

To Sandy, it was evident that the governing councils played a role in the racially separate nature of Greek organizations. Warren who is also African American, but belonged to a multicultural fraternity that was overseen by the IFC described not only the racially separate nature of Greek councils, but also described how these councils and how they impacted students' cross-racial interactions. He stated:

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> There are different groups-different councils. The MGC would be the
> multi-cultural council…you're going to have your Hispanic fraternities
> and sororities and you'll have a council with the African-Americans.
> You'd have all your fraternity brothers who would be African-American,
> and sisters who would be African-American, also. And within those
> councils, they're not really forced, but they interact with each other
> because they're in the same council. So you get a lot of interaction
> between the same—African-American Greeks doing their thing with each
> other. And then, the Hispanics are doing things with each other. And the
> White groups are doing things with each other, too.

Warren saw that the councils allowed students to remain insular and primarily
interact with others that were of their same racial background. Daniel, a Latino senior
added to the description of the councils by saying that because there are different councils
and students primarily interact with others on their same council, students are "blinded by
whatever council you're sitting on."

Sandy, Warren, and Daniel all described how Greek students interacted mostly in
their councils and primarily interacted with other Greeks that have the same racial
background as themselves. Although he recognized the way councils were separated by
race, Warren thought that many Greeks wanted to engage in cross-racial interactions. He
stated:

> The thing about [the councils] is they interact a lot with each other, but
> they also want to branch out, so much. You have a lot of individuals that
> want to mix with the Hispanics fraternities or the White ones…it's
> actually a goal right now—I'm actually working on a project where I'm
> trying to work with more Hispanic groups, a lot of Caucasian groups and a
> lot of multi-cultural and African-American groups.

Orlando, who is also African American and a member of a fraternity in the NPHC
was less optimistic than Warren about cross-racial interactions between Greek
organizations. When asked if he thought the councils served to bring students together
Orlando responded:

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Um, not really. If, if we're going to be honest…we even had a retreat about this recently, you know, it's sad one of the comments was that people don't really care about the NPHC you know we are just going through the motions [of promoting cross-racial interactions] because we have to.

Overall students believed that Greek students stayed in racialized groups within their councils. However, students disagreed about the results yielded from the Greek retreat. As a result of the retreat Orlando learned that "people don't really care about the NPHC" and were engaging in cross-racial interactions because they felt obligated to do so. Conversely, Sandy described how the Greek retreat helped bridge some of the gaps between the groups. She stated:

> We went to a retreat for all different councils and it was very segregated. And then we did this exercise where we actually became vulnerable and we, kind of got a, got a chance to open up, you know, and then people started mixing and like, "Oh, okay, I feel more comfortable with you because besides these letters across our chests, we're kind of the same person because we have the same kind of background." And then after that, we had this 'Pass the Gavel' kind of thing where you get a chance to ask questions that you've probably never asked before. And that…was just an open dialogue…then people started pulling the race card. Well why can you all say the "N" word and we can't? And it was just dialogue that we needed. And at the end of the night, we were sharing, you know? We were teaching Panhellenic girls how to strut—how to step. And then, then all of a sudden, like the most racist group on campus, supposedly, they're not really the racist group, but that's like their stigma, they did an event with Alpha Phi Alpha on our campus. They raised money for Haiti at that, cooking hamburgers and hot dogs. And they actually did it, and so that, to me, is just like overwhelming, like we're actually trying to do what we said at that retreat—mixing and understanding each other's organizations and why we do the things that we do and so that we can actually like hang out. And they have hung out.

For Sandy, the retreat and specifically, the "Pass the Gavel" exercise was an effective way for Greeks to talk across difference and question one another about cultural practices and traditions. Sandy also believed the open forum and exchanges that occurred

at the retreat led to the collaboration of a traditionally White and a historically African

American fraternity to collaborate on a fundraiser for Haiti. Sandy believed, had it not

been for the retreat this collaboration would not have occurred. Although Sandy and

Orlando disagreed about the effectiveness of the Greek retreat, Orlando did agree that the

Haiti relief fundraiser was surprising, but was a positive step in building collaborations

between usually disparate communities. He said:

> Alpha Phi Alpha and Kappa Alpha Order, which is a Caucasian fraternity,
> got together and they barbequed and raised money for the Haiti relief.
> They did that together and I think that was a big, a big step toward, you
> know, mixing and mingling…that was kind of rare, like wow, it's the only
> instance I can think of [where cross-racial interaction occurred between
> Greek organizations]…people were real surprised… it's kind of one of
> those things like where, if you mentioned it, it might sound good, but
> everybody's like, "I don't know about that."

Orlando described Kappa Alpha as having a reputation on campus for being a

racist fraternity. Therefore it was a surprise to him that this fraternity would partner with

a historically African American fraternity and partner with them to raise money for

Haitians. Sandy and Orlando pointed to two events where Greek organizations engaged

cross-racially. While this is better than no events where Greeks are engaging cross-

racially it was certainly not convincing evidence that cross-racial interactions were

occurring frequently among Greeks at SWSU. Rather, student discourse made it clear this

was an anomaly.

Orlando and Sandy were the only two Greek participants able to point to instances

of collaboration and cross-racial interaction among Greek organizations.

Overwhelmingly, Greek students and non-Greek students had limited knowledge of, and

exposure to the collaborative work of Greek organizations. Moreover, both Greek and

Non-Greek students tended to view members of Greek letter organizations as being very insular and staying in circles with people of their same racial background.

"We're All Comfortable with Our Own People"

While none of the White students in my study were members of Greek organizations, several students of color did belong to historically Black, Latino, and multicultural sororities and fraternities. Like the non-Greek students, the Greek students of color also believed there were separations between Greeks of different racial groups. Warren, an African American senior said, "There are people who want to do it [interact with different groups], more often. They want to mix and collaborate with different people. But it hasn't been shown as much, as much as I would want it to be. But it's in progress." While Warren was hopeful about collaborations between different Greeks happening more frequently, Daniel, who is Latino and majored in finance found the separations between race-specific Greek organizations were more distinct, he stated:

> Greek-wise, no, I don't think so [students interact across race]. The White organizations—they tend to focus all their stuff towards them. And we focus all our stuff towards us. And African-Americans focus all their things towards them. And I just see that it's like segregated still, kind of the way we do our things… I feel like, it's comfortable. We're all comfortable with our own people. The way we grew up and the norms we grew up with.

As stated above, Sandy, an African American student in a historically Black sorority, believed students tended to join Greek organizations that aligned with their own racial identity. She stated, "a lot of people are very segregated…So, I mean, people gravitate to the people that look like them." Students in Greek organizations tended to group with others who were from their same racial backgrounds, but sometimes the

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groupings went beyond gravitating to others with whom you identified, and actually excluded those of different races. Orlando, an African American senior who belonged to an African American fraternity, recounted various situations when he and his fraternity brothers attended White fraternity parties and felt uncomfortable. He stated:

> When I was a freshman, I did [go to an all White Kappa Alpha party] and I felt uncomfortable and I felt as though I should not be there. Nobody talked to me. I got stares like "why are you here?" And even if I go to a party nowadays, if I'm the only African American guy then I'm that token Black guy.

The stares Orlando received were unspoken cues that as an African American, he was not welcome in that setting. Orlando also discussed a situation where he encountered more overt racism at a White fraternity party. He stated:

> I went with one of my guys in my fraternity to [a] predominately White fraternity's party and everybody's drinking and stuff and there [were] only two or three African American guys out of the entire group there. And you know some words got exchanged late in the night when people are drinking and my fraternity brother was called the "N" word.

Perhaps because of the negative experiences like Orlando's, students in this study repeatedly spoke about feeling uncomfortable in settings where they believed they would be different or part of the out-group. Maya, a Hispanic junior, described the impact racism and being a member of an out-group had on her. She said:

> We do have racist fraternities here. Like, KA is all White, predominately White and you have to be a legacy [to get in]. There are a lot of organizations that are, that are racist. They just won't accept you because of your color or because of the money you don't have. I started realizing some of these things and it kind of, it kind of made me scared to come back to Southwestern State…I knew I was coming back no matter what, but...the main reason of why I was scared was that I feared I wouldn't be accepted into organizations that struck my interest. If some organizations were racist and everyone knew about it, then which other ones would be like that? I didn't want to be held back because of my skin color and that's why I was intimidated.

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Because fraternities and sororities were the main organizations that were visible to Maya during her first year, hearing about some racist actions affected her opinion about the climate of all the student organizations on campus. As a result, she worried that she would be excluded from many of the student organizations on campus. Maya's impressions about Greek organizations were formed from White Greek letter organizations, not from Black, Latina/o, or other Greek organizations. Often, students viewed White Greek organizations differently than non-White Greek organizations.

Multicultural Greek Organizations

Most of my participants thought there was very little cross-racial interaction in Greek organizations. Of the six students in this study who were members of Greek organizations, only one, Warren, described his fraternity as multicultural. Sandy and Orlando both identified as African American and were members of historically African American Greek organizations. Heather who is Hispanic and White, but identified as Hispanic was a member of a Christian sorority, but was not active in her sorority during the time she was interviewed. Daniel and Gabriel both identified as Latino and belonged to Latino fraternities.

Table 5. 1 Participants Race and Greek Affiliation

Name	Race	Type of Greek Membership
Warren	African American	Multicultural Fraternity
Sandy	African American	African American Sorority
Orlando	African American	African American Fraternity
Heather	Hispanic	Christian Sorority
Daniel	Latino	Latino Fraternity
Gabriel	Latino	Latino Fraternity

Although the Greek organization Gabriel belonged to was primarily Latino, he

described it as being somewhat multicultural when he said:

> My fraternity, it is Latin based but it's not Latin limited. We don't
> exclude membership just to Latinos. We do have a different variety of
> other brothers that comes from different parts of the world or different
> backgrounds. They just associate with the fraternity because they believe
> the same values as the fraternity does…Even though it is majority-wise,
> Latino based. It's diverse but we're still Latino.

Gabriel felt a sense of camaraderie in his fraternity because it was "Latin based."

He also discussed feeling drawn to this fraternity because the members were Latino, but

were ethnically diverse. Gabriel is Guatemalan and Mexican and enjoyed connecting with

other brothers who had links to various countries in Latin America.

Warren, who is African American, said the following about his fraternity:

> Oh, well, we pride ourselves on being diverse. One culture, any race-is
> our motto. Predominantly, it is Hispanic. But we do have people of
> every, single race in there. We have Asians in there. It's great because
> we're smaller and you actually can see the diversity. We have White
> people in our fraternity, we have mixed—whatever—I think it is good.

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And people who are actually pledging in our fraternity right now, are very diverse. I was the recruitment chair this year. We have one of the biggest lines of just African Americans that have pledged in a while—or ever. We're working on the diversity, a lot.

Where Gabriel described his fraternity as being ethnically diverse, Warren described his fraternity as racially diverse. When asked why he thought diversity was important to his fraternity Warren said:

Diversity—I think it's because [pause] you have to realize that everybody is different. Everybody can bring different things to the table. Culture is a big thing and with race comes different cultures. When you blend all of those it makes your fraternity better. Not one culture is going to be better than another but when you blend those cultures together and the more diverse it gets, then it's going to make your fraternity better. It's going to make your networking better. Say that I'm working on a project or I need something done that's going to require um…something from an African-American background—I have all these African-American brothers who are willing to help me out. I have their backs and they have mine. The same with the Hispanic background, they want to help me out too. It's more than just race with that fraternity. It makes you better—you know? Let's say we put another fraternity out there where the majority would be White. They wouldn't be able to pool the diversity factor, as in having resources. What if they needed something to reach a broader audience, they couldn't do that because they have nobody to contact. They have no resources—other minorities or other people. I think it makes you better, all together.

For Warren, having diversity in his fraternity was important because it made them stronger and better able to help one another. Diversity enhanced their cultural capital and networking capacity, and allowed the fraternity to be a stronger organization. While Warren spoke about the benefits of interacting with his brothers that were from different backgrounds than himself, he noted that the benefits were more professional. For Warren, the diversity in his fraternity was a way for the brothers to network and seek out more professional opportunities. Warren also understood, and valued, the educational benefits

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of diversity and believed interacting with diverse others allowed people to learn about other parts of the world, cultural traditions, and perspectives.

Overall, participants stated that among traditionally White Greek letter organizations at SWSU, there was not enough compositional diversity for students to engage in cross-racial interactions. The one exception was Warren's multicultural fraternity where there was compositional diversity that provided opportunities for the fraternity brothers to interact across race. The diversity of the fraternity enhanced the brothers' professional opportunities because they were able to network among different racial and ethnic communities. The brothers from this fraternity gained from interacting with diverse others; however the benefits they discussed were more localized and focused on professional opportunities. On the other hand, students who were members of non-Greek multicultural student organizations (Interposes and Pop Culture Senate) reported different gains than those discussed by Warren. Participants who were members of Interposes and Pop Culture Senate spoke in depth about how having meaningful discussions with people of different racial backgrounds helped them understand new perspectives including the perspectives of those with different racial and cultural backgrounds from their own. When comparing students' experiences from these two types of multicultural organizations—Greek and non-Greek, students in non-Greek multicultural organizations seemed to glean more of the learning outcomes Antonio (1998) and Gurin et al. (2002) discuss as the critical benefits of cross-racial interaction.

Cross-Racial Interaction in Multicultural Organizations

While there was a lack of cross-racial interaction in many settings at SWSU, students did engage in meaningful cross-racial interaction in multicultural organizations. The cross-racial interactions that were occurring in multicultural organizations provided a sharp contrast to the racial separation that was deeply embedded in Greek organizations. At SWSU two organizations emerged as places where there was a lot of cross-racial interaction. Interposes, an anti-racism organization, and Pop Culture Senate had the greatest amount of cross-racial interaction. While these organizations focused on multicultural issues, the membership of these organizations was also racially diverse.

Several participants who were members of Interposes or Pop Culture Senate said that they were intentionally seeking out diversity within their co-curricular activities. Sara, Leanne, Heather, and Janelle, were all members of multiracial co-curricular organizations and discussed that they intentionally sought out diverse co-curricular settings. Sara was a member of the Pop Culture Senate while Leanne, Heather, and Janelle were all members of Interposes. Sara noted that the following attracted her to the Pop Culture Senate:

> Well, Pop Culture Senate, I saw them at my freshman orientation. They were giving a diversity presentation. And I was already like, "okay, cool, I think I'm going to like this, this group seems really down to earth"…I don't rap. I don't—you know draw or do anything hip-hop related—I just like the culture of it, and I like the music… I think I [am drawn to diverse organizations] because I was shocked walking around campus, I was just not used to this environment—I really wasn't. I went to a few of my friend's sorority things and I didn't really like it that much. I just wanted to be around a diverse group of people. That's really why I hung onto Pop Culture Senate.

In Pop Culture Senate, students of different racial backgrounds were brought together by a mutual interest in pop culture, specifically hip hop. In addition to meeting weekly as a group, students competed in musical and drawing competitions, and engaged in community service on a regular basis. For example, members performed skits at local schools about college going, test performance, bullying, and substance abuse.

The other multiracial student organization, Interposes, was started by White graduate students with the intention of being an anti-racism group primarily for Whites. The organization expanded and brought students from all racial backgrounds together who were interested in advocating for anti-racism. As with Pop Culture Senate, Interposes had an action component. Students in the group underwent intensive training in order lead peer-to-peer diversity workshops across campus.

Heather, who is White and Hispanic and a member of Interposes, intentionally joined the group because of its focus on diversity. She stated:

> Interposes was introduced to me by a professor I had. I got an e-mail. I'm interested in cultural diversity. I see that as being something you need to be a better social work practitioner—to have that culture awareness. Because if you don't, I feel that's going to seep in and maybe, negatively affect your practice.

Janelle, Leanne, and Heather all joined Interposes because of its focus on diversity, but the specific reasons why they were interested in diversity were different. Where Leanne and Janelle joined Interposes for larger social justice reasons, Heather viewed Interposes as an organization that would also make her a stronger professional, a stronger social worker.

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Leanne, a White woman who was very active in Interposes, discussed that as a result of her involvement in Interposes she became more intentional about seeking out diversity during college. She stated:

> I'm more personally focused on making sure that I have that diversity in my life because I'm very involved with Interposes, which is a multi-racial group. And I'm very passionate about being an anti-racist and working towards equity for all people.

Janelle, a White woman in her 60's said that she did not have many friends at SWSU because she was an older student and the few friends she did have were White. She expressed that Interposes gave her an opportunity to interact with other students from different racial backgrounds, and an opportunity to explore race and White privilege. She stated:

> I never had to consider that I was White. It didn't really impact me until I heard Tim Wise speak. And it was—WOW! It was such an epiphany. And I joined Interposes because I always considered myself not a racist…like I said I never considered my race. It [my race] was a non-issue from day one—just because I was the dominant race.

Janelle, spoke at length in her interview about how Interposes opened her mind to how she takes basic facts of life for granted because she is White. Her experiences at Interposes moved her so much that several times during our interview she broke down in tears. She stated:

> One time…when we first started Interposes—I was in at the very inception of it. And they passed out questionnaires—different things…one of them was Peggy Macintosh [Unpacking the Invisible] Knapsack … It is different questions like—I don't have to worry that my children will be accepted at school. I don't worry if I go get a greeting card that I can find one appropriate for my race. Little things like that-and I was putting four—four because none of them were an issue for me. And I looked over at my neighbor who was Hispanic. And she was putting ones. [Begins to cry] I'm sorry. I get very emotional. It just broke my heart how oblivious we are to the privilege of it. You know?

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For Janelle, her friends outside of Interposes were all White, the neighborhoods

she lived in were all White, and schools she attended for her entire life were all White.

Prior to joining Interposes she had only had one Black friend and this friendship was

forty years ago. If Janelle had not joined Interposes her social circles would have most

likely continued to be all White and she would have continued to be unaware of the plight

of many people of color. In addition to describing her own multicultural growth, Janelle

found that engaging in dialogue in Interposes also impacted the students of color in the

organization. She stated:

> When I sat there—when we started discussing it—I started crying. Here I
> go again [*started to cry*]. And the other people of different backgrounds—
> different ethnicity—they were so appreciative to know that we were just
> totally unaware. It wasn't anything we were doing but that it was just total
> ignorance. And they were happy to know that because that isn't what they
> were thinking…[They were thinking] that we knew we had all this
> privilege. I just didn't even have a clue. But then you know thinking about
> it, it's very blatant, all the privilege.

As Janelle stated, this interaction was one in which both White students and students of

color gained a new understanding of a situation by engaging across race. Because of the

personal intergroup interactions she engaged in as a result of Interposes, Janelle gained

greater respect and understanding for students of different racial backgrounds. Janelle's

growth and understanding as well as the understanding of the others in the group align

with what Cameron, Payne, Knobe (2010) found in their study. These researchers

determined that when biases are deemed to be unintentional and unconscious, others find

the person responsible for the biased act to be less morally responsible than if biases were

conscious. With this research in mind, the students of color in Interposes became aware

that Janelle was unconscious of her privilege and acting in response to her

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unconsciousness, they were more forgiving of her actions than if she was fully aware of her privilege.

Overall, within co-curricular settings, a small percentage of the total student population who were Greek (approximately 5.5%) had a big impact on campus, specifically related to deterring students' cross-racial interactions. The structure and separation of the four Greek councils effectively led to the separation of students by race. The one exception was Warren's fraternity, which was multiracial and had a deliberate multicultural focus. However, even within his Greek organization it was not clear if the brothers engaged in cross-racial interactions solely for professional benefits, or if they were engaging in deeper and more meaningful interactions.

Other co-curricular settings in which students were engaging in cross-racial interaction were multicultural organizations. In Interposes and Pop Culture Senate, students were engaged in cross-racial collaborations based on a common interest in fighting racism or an interest in cross-cultural pop culture. In Pop Culture Senate, students of different racial backgrounds also worked together on a series of intensive service projects. Participants who belonged to Interposes also worked together, in this case, to create an antiracism peer-teaching curriculum. At SWSU it seems that when organizations themselves were intentionally multi-racial, students did engage in more cross-racial interaction.

Work Settings

One unanticipated area in which students engaged in cross-racial interactions was work settings. Several students worked in addition to attending school, and at work they

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engaged in meaningful cross-racial interactions. Because I did not anticipate work settings as a place in which students would engage in cross-racial interactions, the dynamics within this setting were not fully investigated. Nonetheless, eight of the 26 students independently brought up cross-racial interactions in work settings. This pattern demonstrates the potential importance of work places in promoting student cross-racial interactions.

For example, Gabriel discussed that in his campus job he had the opportunity to interact with others from different racial backgrounds. Gabriel's co-workers were from different racial backgrounds and they talked about their upbringing and how their experiences were different growing up. He commented:

What have we talked about?... being disciplined, when you were younger. There's that saying that people of color or people that are Latino-that they've got whipped, or more discipline. I guess we talk about that. And um…different foods—Latino foods and—I don't know what Caucasian food is. I guess hamburgers. My friends talk about soul food and chicken. We talk about not serious issues but just something on a smaller scale.

Although Gabriel stated he and his co-workers discussed "smaller scale" topics like food, they did begin to broach a deeper conversation about difference when they discussed varying styles of discipline and the stereotypes associated with different groups. Gabriel believed he had opportunities to have these types of discussions and engage in cross-racial interaction at work because of his boss. He stated, "My past boss…he really was colorblind. He didn't care who you were."

Rosie who is Hispanic and worked as a tutor also discussed her experiences interactions with others at work. She said the following about her colleagues:

So they're mostly White…I guess I get along with them because I feel comfortable with them…at [SWSU] first I felt judged because I'm from

[name of region], [my coworkers] they knew I was from the [region]…but they don't make me feel like that. They actually learned how to embrace my ethnicity and they actually want to learn Spanish and, they ask me questions and I don't, I don't feel like an outcast.

Leanne who is White had an internship in the Department of Family Protective Services. In this position she reported to a Latina and a Black woman and served a diverse constituency. Leanne was mentored by these women and learned a lot from being a minority in her work setting. In describing her work environment she said:

My first task force meeting, which is really powerful, it's a very diverse group and actually for one of the first times in my life, I was in a room filled with people and I think that the White people were less, they were the minority in the demographics of the room, which hasn't really, I don't know if I've ever really come across that before…so I thought that was really interesting and cool.

Several students described their working environments and cross-racial interactions with some detail. Other students said their work settings were diverse, but did not describe them in much detail. Isabel who is Hispanic worked in a day care. Most of the teachers and the kids she worked with were White so her interactions at work were cross-racial. Maya who is also Hispanic, worked on campus and most of her coworkers were White as well. Sara who is White worked at Red Lobster and described her coworkers as racially diverse.

Through their interviews it was clear participants at SWSU were engaging in cross-racial interactions at work. However, to date, work settings have not been fully researched as settings in which student cross-racial interactions take place. One such exception can be found in Downing and Nichols' (2006) article on a multicultural peer tutoring program where the students described their employment as one of the few times

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they interacted with diverse others, and how valuable the experiences were to them. Chang, Astin, and Kim (2004) also discussed work settings as a factor in cross-racial interaction, but also determined more research needed to be conducted on this topic. As a result of limited studies on this topic, very little is known about cross-racial interactions in these settings. Future studies should investigate these settings in order to understand how the cross-racial interactions students have at work may be similar to or distinct from the interactions they are having in other areas of campus.

Summary of Findings

In large part, the amount of cross-racial interactions students engaged in depended on the setting and on the student's race. In curricular settings, White students did not often interact across race. Conversely, students of color did engage in cross-racial interactions frequently; not necessarily by choice, but because there were very few non-White students in their classes. Regardless of race, the cross-racial interactions in which students were engaging were in large part surface level. The one exception was honors classes. In the Honors College, classes were discussion-based and students learned about different perspectives and gained cultural competencies from their peers who were from different backgrounds.

Similarly, students discussed that there was not much cross-racial interaction in outside of class. This emerged in five distinct settings: (a) the Quad, (b) parties, (c) Greek life, (d) multicultural organizations, and (e) work. In the Quad there was a lot of separation and students tended to group together by race. Parties were also mostly mono-racial. One reason students of color believed that parties were race specific was because

racial groups had different ways of partying. The cultural norms that impacted who would attend which parties included: the type of music and how it was played, the kind of dancing, and the type and quantity of alcohol that was consumed, as well as perceptions of historical and current racism. Whether or not students experienced cross-racial interaction in co-curricular settings largely depended on the type of co-curricular organizations they belonged to. Both White and non-White Greek organizations were mostly mono-racial. This racial separation was also facilitated by the structure of Greek organizations' governance, which groups Greek organizations together by race. Within the Greek system there were a few examples in which cross-racial interaction occurred— the Greek retreat, the bake sale for Haiti relief, and one multi-racial fraternity. While there were three examples of cross-racial interaction occurring within Greek settings, it was unclear how deep, meaningful, or even how frequently these interactions were taking place.

The one area in which students engaged in regular, deep, and meaningful interactions with diverse others outside of class were in multi-racial organizations such as Interposes and Pop Culture Senate. Not only were these organizations multi-racial, but the topics and activities that were covered required that they collaborate with one another regularly. By engaging with diverse peers, students in Interposes and Pop Culture Senate were experiencing gains in perspective taking and racial and cultural engagement discussed in previous literature (Gurin, et al., 1999; Gurin, et al., 2002). Finally, work settings emerged as an unexpected place in which students engaged in cross-racial interactions; future studies should investigate this setting more deliberately.

Although some cross-racial interactions do occur in various settings at SWSU, in large part, students do not engage cross-racially very often. Given the diverse racial composition of SWSU, the casual cross-racial interactions in which students engage, and given what we know about the benefits of interacting with diverse others, it is curious and disappointing that students are not engaging more frequently or more fully in cross-racial interactions. The next chapter, Chapter VI, details why students at SWSU did not engage in more cross-racial interaction.

CHAPTER VI

THE LACK OF STUDENT CROSS-RACIAL INTERACTION

Within this chapter I review and discuss the findings from this study that explore why students at SWSU did not engage in more cross-racial interaction. Findings suggest that there are opportunities to engage in cross-racial interactions, that participants were interested in engaging in cross-racial interactions, but many were hesitant to initiate them. Students were hesitant to engage in cross-racial interactions because they did not want to feel uncomfortable in settings where they would be the only one, or only one of a few people from their racial background. Interviews also revealed that participants of different races felt uncomfortable for different reasons. These differences are discussed in this chapter.

Opportunities, but No Action toward Cross-Racial Interaction

Many study participants were not engaging in cross-racial interactions very frequently because many of the places where they spent time on campus lacked racial diversity. For White students, the scarcity of compositional diversity meant that in order to engage with people from different races, they had to intentionally seek out non-White people. Conversely, for students of color, most of their interactions were cross-racial, but many were surface level cross-racial interactions, such as asking a question in class, and having brief conversations waiting for the bus.

Although most students in this study did not engage in many cross-racial interactions, they *believed* there were many opportunities to engage with peers from different racial backgrounds. Only four of the 26 students in the study said that there were *not* many opportunities for interaction with diverse others. Despite their interest and the opportunities available, cross-racial interaction often did not occur. With these dynamics in place, the question then becomes, why weren't students engaging in cross-racial interaction at SWSU?

Within their interviews, students discussed some of the reasons they were not engaging in cross-racial interactions. The most common response as to why there was not more cross-racial interaction was because participants did not always feel comfortable or welcome in various settings. They were hesitant to enter into new situations because they were unfamiliar with how to interact with people who had backgrounds different from their own. Participants did not know how to initiate conversations, especially when they felt like they were in the minority.

Interest in Interacting with Diverse Peers

Although students at SWSU had a lot of interest in interacting with diverse others, they did not often act on their interests. Orlando, Audrey, Warren, Sandy, and Gabriel all discussed their interest in cross-racial interaction. Each of these students had different experiences with cross-racial interaction. Orlando and Warren were proactive about engaging in cross-racial interactions. Orlando expressed that he was not only interested in, but had frequently talked to, interacted with, and dated people of all different racial backgrounds. Warren acknowledged what he enjoyed about interacting with diverse

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others when he said, "you realize you like the same things. It's fun. In college you meet new people." Audrey found she also valued interacting with diverse others as a way to meet new people on campus and get out of her comfort zone. Sandy and Gabriel were interested in engaging with diverse others, but did not always do so. Sandy said, "I could interact more with different people. I just don't, and I don't initiate it." Gabriel stated,

> I try not to limit, but I do find myself doing it. It's not that I only want Latinos [in my fraternity]. I really want to know more information about different people because that's how we build to become better.

Although numerous participants expressed interest in engaging in interactions with diverse others, many did not actually engage in this interaction.

Hesitancy to Engage in Cross-Racial Interaction

Despite their interest, students were hesitant to engage in cross-racial interactions. For example, Tanny was interested in talking more in-depth with people of different backgrounds, but felt it was awkward to do so. She stated,

> I obviously know they're from, like, a different background and I automatically have something I want to ask them… maybe like jewelry or something that obviously has to do with their beliefs or their background, something along that line…it's just I'm not going to force myself into asking that person [about it].

Although some students, like Tanny, said they had an interest in cross-racial interaction, but they also stated they were unsure of how to approach others who had a different racial background from them. Holly was hesitant about interacting with students with different backgrounds. She stated, "people get really uncomfortable when you start talking about race and ethnicity. I mean even I do sometimes…it's a hard topic."

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Overwhelmingly, students from all racial backgrounds were interested in cross-racial interactions, but tended not to feel comfortable interacting across race. In fact, when asked if they felt a connection to others of their same race all but three students said "yes," they felt a connection with people of their same race. Mackenzie, a White woman, felt more connected to people of her same race, but had difficulty expressing exactly why that was. She stated with a sigh:

> I guess it would be dishonest to say no. I mean to say, well...Hmm...God, it would be dishonest to say completely no, because that just wouldn't be the reality. But I can't even specify what, if anything, I don't feel uncomfortable outside of that. And I don't necessarily feel more comfortable, but I guess there are some—almost like it's a lack of shared, or, yeah…It's like different ethnic groups, I've noticed, they have shared experiences…there are different things they face that I've never faced... there are certain things I can't relate to. I can be knowledgeable of and be aware of them, I haven't been there [in their shoes], you know?

While students discussed their connections to their own race, they also shared how they felt uncomfortable as well. Comfort played a big role in the hesitancy that hindered students' interactions with diverse peers. However, students from different racial background conveyed their discomfort in various ways.

Discomfort Engaging in Cross-Racial Interaction

White Students' Discomfort

Five of the seven White students conveyed that a lack of comfort was a reason why either they themselves or students at large did not interact more across race. Madelyn, who identified as White described why she thought students might not interact with diverse others when she said:

> Comfort probably. Being in the college setting and it being kind of like you're just kind of like thrown in and you have that comfort of probably

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you might have grown up with more of a certain ethnicity around you and you feel comfortable with them and you can relate to them better. So it's kind of like their safety net when you're in college instead of your parents being your safety net. That could be it.

While Madelyn said that comfort was the major reason that students did not interact across race. Mackenzie, a White social work major believed the lack of cross-racial interactions was, in part, about discomfort, but also thought that it was about fear. She stated:

Well I just think it's a lot of fear…I mean obviously the institutionalized aspect of segregation is just so intense, but I think to a lot of people don't think it exists anymore. They think people are now okay with accepting that we are no longer segregating because of inequal [sic] status, we're doing it because that's what we're more comfortable with and that's just the way things work….It's not anyone being racist or discriminatory. It's that it's more comfortable….Not to say that I agree with all that but it seems to be *(laughs)* that's what the trend is.

Mackenzie's experiences reflect a broader trend that not interacting across race is an avoidance response to a difficult situation or one in which they anticipate they will experience discrimination. Mackenzie went on to say:

I think a lot of White people just feel really uncomfortable in their own skin, because I tend to notice that sometimes they'll treat different races differently, almost to like, overcompensating...you're supposed to treat people differently *(laughs)*…every part of their life is so different and of course they're [people with different racial backgrounds] different, everybody has different experiences.

Mackenzie's comments reflect two different sentiments; first, her comment that White people feel "uncomfortable in their own skin" relates to cultural construction of Whiteness where Whites in particular are not taught that being White is a culture. McIntosh (1991) stated "our White students in the U.S.….do not see "Whiteness" as a racial identity" (p. 191). The lack of conversation we have in the U.S. about what it

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means to be White normalizes Whiteness, but also leads to White people being

unprepared and uncomfortable when they are finally called to talk about what it means to

be White. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) discuss "target" and "agent" identities. Target

identities are those social identities that contribute to people being limited or

disenfranchised (i.e. people of color, women, LGBTQI, differently abled, etc.). Agent

identities are those social identities that hold unearned privileged in society (i.e. White

people, men, Christians, heterosexuals, etc.). Hardiman and Jackson (1997) speak directly

to the privilege of Whiteness and the lack of conversation we have in the U.S. about

White privilege. They state "agents are frequently unaware that they are members of the

dominant group due to the privilege of being able to see themselves as persons rather

than as stereotypes" (p. 20).

Secondly, Mackenzie's comments also demonstrate that she understood that

people are different and cannot all be treated the same. She stated "you're supposed to

treat people differently…every part of their life is so different." Mackenzie had an

understanding that treating everyone the same (equally) does not necessarily mean people

are treated equitably. By understanding this nuance, Mackenzie exhibited more

knowledge and comfort with discussions about race and cross-racial interaction.

Like Mackenzie, Holly also found conversations about race and ethnicity difficult

to have. She stated:

> People get really uncomfortable when you start talking about race and
> ethnicity. I mean even I do sometimes…it's a hard topic. I think that
> that's totally a socially, constructed issue. It's become so taboo that you
> start bringing it up as a relevant issue, because it is, then people go "Oh,
> we're not supposed to talk about that" because we're all supposed to be
> equal, right? And we're so not, but I think that's probably the problem—
> we know we're supposed to be and it hasn't happened. And because in

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these classes, the majority of the students are Anglo, White, Caucasian, whatever, as are the professors, a lot of the time, you get into the issue and we all shrink and go, "Oh, we don't want to talk about this" because it brings to light all that stuff about the fact that we're privileged because of our skin color and because of our cultural backgrounds or ethnic backgrounds.

Josh, who is Caucasian related exposure to diversity to feeling more comfortable to join his main activity, the history club. He stated:

I think that it's important to learn about different cultures, different races, different backgrounds and things like that. That's really important to have in our lives. I think it is important to talk about it and be open about that because I want people to feel comfortable coming in to the [history] club. I think it's really important to effectively communicate that…It is one thing just being an open person but it's important to openly and effectively communicate that to others… I really do feel like education is the key to being more diverse and to understand diversity and people being more open minded and more comfortable.

Josh's statement demonstrates that he understood how inclusion and comfort with diversity were important components of extracurricular activities. He also noted that intentionality is an important part of promoting diversity, as is helping people feel more comfortable to engage with diversity. Although he understood these perspectives and had the ability to articulate them, the student membership of his main organization, the history club, was mostly Caucasian. He said, "I feel the history part is really high in Caucasians…We do have a few in our club, but not that many. I don't know why. I don't understand that." Although he had some level of awareness, Josh did not have the necessary tools or the deliberate opportunities to bridge the gap between what he wanted to do, and actually making it happen. This also illustrates the lack of institutional and societal support to help students enact their desires for more cross-cultural interactions.

Leanne spoke about *why* cross-racial interactions are linked to comfort and how the structure of society encourages separation based on race. She stated:

> I used to think, well, it's by choice. People are just more comfortable hanging out with people that they're used to hanging out with or people that look like them but now I don't think it's as much that way. I think that maybe certain student don't feel welcome in certain organizations… it's not blatant so if you asked anyone they, they probably wouldn't say, "Someone said I'm not welcome" but I would say that it's probably the undertones, I mean that's just basically how society works…I think that there are unspoken messages that we get just from our socialization in regards to racism, that there's instilled racial superiority and instilled race inferiority and people get those underlying messages without really knowing it unless you kind of stop and take a look at it and really try to understand it and see it…it's the whole false, racial superiority and inferiority that plays out in how we interact with people and I think that overtone of how our society is structured—separates us and dehumanizes us either one way or the other. And I think that—I think that's sad. I think we lose out on a lot of genuine human interaction just by that undertone of our society.

Where other students acknowledged that a lack of comfort was a reason why students did not cross-racially interact, Holly and Leanne went a step further and answered the question of why students were uncomfortable. Holly believed talking about race forced students and professors, especially those who are White, to face the uncomfortable reality they were not ready to admit—one where people are still unequal despite all of the efforts that have been made to provide equity. Leanne also believed students did not feel welcome in all settings and went beyond this to discuss the "undertones" of society, or the "unspoken messages that we get just from our socialization with regards to racism." Leanne viewed these undertones, or subtle messages people receive about race as the fundamental reasons why poor race relations exist in society. Research refers to what Leanne is describing as racial microaggressions, or the everyday small slights that minorities or people of color experience, that have a

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cumulative and marked impact on their experiences (Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Torino, 2008). Sue et al., (2008) posit that "POC [people of color] do not just occasionally experience racial microaggressions. Rather they are a constant, continuing, and cumulative experience" (p. 277) that remind people of color that they are not in positions of power in this country. These constant attacks on people of color, do, as Leann describes, "separates us and dehumanizes us…[and] we lose out on a lot of genuine human interaction."[19]

I found that in her interview, Leanne spoke about race and discrimination with an academic knowledge and personal conviction I did not hear from other students. Leanne attributed her knowledge about systems of oppression to her experiences in Interposes. In Interposes she learned about diversity, and it influenced the way she thought about race and White privilege. She stated:

> It's made me see how our societal structure has really, for me as a White person, being on the privileged end of the racial spectrum, how it's, how much it has still stripped from me in terms of having a cultural identity and being able to have real, authentic relationships with people of color, because there is that power dynamic. No matter what you do, even on a personal level, it still kind of has those influences and it kind of pisses me off *(chuckles)*. So I work really hard to try to be aware of my own stuff and to also be genuine and have authentic relationships with people that I really care about and respect and look up to.

Interposes, which provided the type of structured, deliberate, and supportive space that Gurin et al. (2004) refer to as being key to encouraging cross-cultural interaction, allowed Leanne to be reflective and contemplate race and race relations on a very deep

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[19] See Smith (2004), Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007), and Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano (2009) for more detailed information about how racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue impact the educational aspirations and experiences of people of color.

and highly personal level. As she described in her interview, her experience with this organization re-shaped who she was and how she related to non-White people.

While Holly did not convey as deep a transformation as Leanne, she was also reflective in her interview. She expressed that comfort around issues of race was not just about her own ability to feel comfortable and gain greater understanding. Rather, she understood that discussions about race at SWSU may make students of color feel uncomfortable, and be inappropriate if they do not happen in a thoughtful way. She said,

> I have a hard time just talking about [race and diversity] outside of class because it is such a taboo thing to talk about. I don't necessarily feel comfortable going up to, my one African American classmate and saying, "So what is it like being an African American in our classes? What is it like?"

Holly recognized how her own quest for greater understanding could make others feel uncomfortable. While it did not help her or her classmates gain any greater sense of understanding on this topic, she understood that the dynamics of race are complex and bigger than she. She understood that there is a time, a place, and a better way to have constructive conversations about race and difference. When comparing Josh's challenge of diversifying the history club with Holly gaining more knowledge about diversity, there is a recurring pattern of participants not having the tools, support, or structured opportunities to bridge the gap from recognition of the challenges, to action and gaining greater understanding.

Additionally, greater comfort with same race peers may have added to the challenge of students engaging in cross-racial interactions. When asked if she felt connections to people of her same race Madelyn stated,

I don't know, maybe I guess. But I do have some Hispanic friends that I will pretty much tell anything to…I don't know. That's difficult to think about.

When asked the same question Mackenzie said "I guess it would be dishonest to say no."

Janelle responded, "Yes…White privilege—I never even considered it. I never had to consider that I was White."

Although several White students understood that systems of oppression, the history of race relations, and White privilege are some of the reasons why they feel uncomfortable engaging in cross-racial interactions, several White students also articulated that they had a lot of comfort and felt strong connections with people of their same race. Feeling more comfortable with one's own race and less comfortable engaging in cross-racial interactions can make it less likely that cross-racial interactions will occur. Once again, researchers have found that we tend to avoid situations which are difficult and we could experience discrimination (Mallett & Swim, 2009; Plant & Butz, 2006).

Students of Color Discomfort with Interacting with Diverse Peers

Like White students, students of color also had discomfort about engaging in cross-racial interactions and, like White participants, participants of color felt more comfortable with people from their same racial background. However, White students spoke generally about how students at SWSU did not engage in many cross-racial interactions and only a few provided specific examples about instances when they felt uncomfortable. Moreover, White students spoke more about their discomfort initiating interactions, whereas students of color spoke about avoiding situations that would force

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them to engage in uncomfortable cross-racial interactions. The experiences of Latino/a

and African American students are discussed below.

Latino/Hispanic Students' Discomfort.

Several of the Latino students in the study said they felt a connection to others

who had their same racial and ethnic background. For example, Daniel stated:

> I think so [felt more comfortable with similar others]. I'm not as
> traditional. I don't speak Spanish. I didn't grow up like a lot of Latinos. I
> grew up Catholic. Even if they don't go to church—if you ask them-they
> all say they're Catholic. We all have that connection. We all grew up the
> same way. We have our parents and grandparents. We all grew up with
> the same teachings and the way we grew up. And the close-knit family,
> like I grew up with-stay with your family. Stay close. Always stay
> connected. I mean, I think we all do.

Although Daniel did not describe himself as "traditional[ly]" Latino, he believed

that there were some common characteristics that Latinos shared such as going to church

and having a close family. For Daniel, these common attributes made him feel connected

to other Latinos. Anna had a similar response to Daniel and felt connected to others with

her same background because there were similarities amongst their families. She stated:

> I've noticed a lot of my girlfriends are Hispanic—a majority of them are
> Hispanic. And I think a lot of times that helps a lot because my mother is
> kind of controlling. A lot of their mothers are—not so much controlling
> but in terms of the culture—it's very like, in the family…A lot of my
> girlfriends' moms have the same characteristics of my mother. So it's
> funny that we can all talk about that and be like-your mother…blah-blah-
> blah. So I think that helps a lot. The fact that most of them—three-
> fourths of them—are Hispanic-now that I think about it—my close
> girlfriends are, although my best friend is White and my boyfriend is
> White [laughs].

While Daniel and Anna discussed the familial commonalities they had with other

Latinos, Gabriel added that the level of comfort he felt influenced his decisions about

which organizations he chose to join. Gabriel sought out settings that had other Latinos because he believed he would feel more comfortable there. He stated, "Definitely, I felt more comfortable. I joined a fraternity that was just Latino-based." Gabriel joined his fraternity his freshman year and spent a majority of his time out of class with his fraternity brothers. Therefore, by joining a Latino fraternity Gabriel limited his cross-racial interactions.

The racial composition of student organizations also influenced Tanny's decision about which organizations she was willing to join. Tanny also felt more comfortable, at least initially, in organizations where she saw other Hispanic students. She stated,

> One of the things I was concerned about was if I was going to be able to feel comfortable in the organization [co-ed service fraternity]. And it turns out that the president that year was Hispanic and I saw a bunch of Hispanic people and there was good diversity in general so I felt comfortable with that. If it was more predominately of another race, I don't think I would have felt comfortable.

Gabriel and Tanny, both of whom felt very connected to their race, wanted to feel comfortable in student organizations. What made them feel comfortable in organizations was seeing others of their same race; therefore they looked for organizations that had other Latinos and based their membership, at least in part, on the racial composition of the group. Although race initially mattered to Tanny when she was selecting a co-curricular organization to join, she also spoke about how racial differences didn't seem to matter as much after a while. She stated,

> For that [co-ed service] organization, when I was first interested in it, one of the things I did look at was different backgrounds race-wise. And then after a while, it was just like whatever…I think after a while, you just don't pay attention to it any more.

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For Tanny, having a common background attracted her to a particular service organization and made her more comfortable initially, but once she became a part of the organization and began engaging with others who were not Hispanic, race didn't matter to her as much. Seeing other Hispanic members drew her to the organization, and if it was not for seeing others from her same background, she may not have joined this organization and later had the opportunity to engage with others from different backgrounds as a result.

Beyond feeling comfortable with others of one's same racial group interacting with others of one's own race was also a way that students believed they were able to avoid discord. Ishmael added that the commonalities he shared with other Latinos also made it easier to get along with people. He said, "I just feel it's a lot easier to get along with them [other Hispanics]." Implied in his statement is that it is more difficult to get along with others who do not share his same racial background. As such, for Ishmael, interacting with others of his same race was a way to avoid disagreements.

On the other hand, Isaac and Maya did not feel as connected to other Latinos. Isaac stated, "Well, I do and I don't [feel connected]. Culturally, yes, but it just depends on the crowd and the situation." While the connection Isaac felt to others depended on the situation, he still understood the connection other Hispanics have to one another. He stated, "You have to have a united front or united agenda [with other Hispanics]."

Initially, Maya also said that she did not feel much connection to others who were Hispanic, but, like Isaac, she understood that there was a strong connection for others. However, as she spoke about her experiences, she realized that she did feel a connection. In fact, she also relayed that she made an attempt to reach out to other prospective

Hispanic students and connected with them using Spanish to make them feel more

welcome at SWSU. She stated,

> I'm a manager of incoming students so a lot of them are from [name of
> region in the state] and a lot of them just talk Spanish so I approach them
> just because of the way they look. And I know it's like really
> stereotypical but it does work, by the way they look, by the way they dress
> and how they act, I will approach them, I feel like yeah, there is a
> connection because it makes them comfortable knowing that there is
> someone else here to talk to. So yeah [there's a connection].

Although Maya talked about a connection, like Isaac, she felt that connecting with

similar others was more important to other Hispanics than it was to her. She made these

connections for the benefit of others, not for her own benefit. Despite not feeling strongly

connected to others of her same background, Maya also said that she encountered racist

situations from people who did not share her same background. These encounters made

her consider leaving the university. She stated:

> I've had a racist remark. I've been in a racist situation. It's been
> uncomfortable. It's been weird, but it's just, I laugh it off…I'm used to
> it…That's how it's going to be in the real world. You go into a job,
> certain people are going to be friends over here, and certain people over
> there so it's just like, I'm not offended by it.

Maya ultimately decided to stay at SWSU, but the racist incidents made her feel

uncomfortable. She was caught feeling different from, and less connected to members of

her own racial group, but also excluded by people from different racial backgrounds. As a

result, Maya distanced herself from the situations where she felt excluded and explained

the racist incidents as learning experiences and microcosms of the "real world."

When asked if she felt connections with others with her same racial background

Jordan stated,

Yes and no…I know that I am personally pretty ignorant when it comes to why Cinco de Mayo is more than a holiday…but I grew up in [region of the state] where I heard Spanish around me everywhere. But because my parents grew up in a generation where if they did not completely assimilate and speak nothing but English, they were severely punished. So they never taught me Spanish. And I never actually learned what words meant in Spanish, other than just basic, hello and good-bye, until I started college. And I started to really appreciate the fact that I was learning more language and with the language of Spanish, I was learning more about culture. And so I feel connected that way because I know I identify in that sense. And with a few other companions and friends that I made here at the university who were from my area in [the state]…they speak, Spanglish, Tex-Mex. And I know that's how I know somebody is from that area. And so I can identify in that sense.

For Maya and Jordan language was a way to identify and connect with other Latinos. However, unlike Maya's experiences, language was often an important way for Jordan to connect with others from her same racial background. Because Jordan did not grow up learning Spanish or the history of her ancestors she felt disconnected from her cultural background. Learning to speak Spanish as an adult was a way for Jordan to reclaim her heritage and the heritage her parents were taught to reject. Jordan felt proud and experienced a sense of accomplishment by being able to speak Spanish. In addition to acquiring the language of her family, Jordan also appreciated learning about the cultural traditions that were a part of her heritage. Due to her separation from her language and her culture, Jordan had a deeper appreciation for the Spanish language and the various cultural traditions of Spanish speakers than Maya. Because Maya grew up speaking Spanish and learning about cultural traditions, she took much of it for granted. As such, Maya saw the language as a means of communication and as a way to identify where someone might be from.

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For Isabel, the connection she felt with others with her same background

depended on the setting. She remarked,

> I really didn't think I did [have a connection with other Hispanics] until I
> started studying different types of literature…But I realized how
> connected I am with, like tradition in the Hispanic culture. So I guess I
> feel pretty connected with Hispanics. Depending on the location of where
> they're from.

Although Isabel felt a connection to others who identified as Hispanic, and in high

school many of her friends were Hispanic, in college many of Isabel's friends were White

"because that's the majority of the demographic here." She described her home town as

"kind of segregated, mostly because the school districts are by where you live…most of

the schools I went to the majority [of students] were Mexican." For Isabel who she

interacted with was based on who happened to be around her. Because most of her

college friends were not of her same race, Isabel was engaging in cross-racial interactions

frequently with her friends at SWSU.

Megan who is Mexican American and German American felt more of a

connection with others who had the same class background rather than with those who

had the same racial background as her. She specified that growing up, her neighborhoods

were separated by income and race:

> So we lived in the area where there was predominantly a lot of poverty but
> we just happened to have a nice house in a nice area and a little nice
> neighborhood… I went to elementary and middle school in these less
> affluent areas…so I grew up feeling—I guess—I don't know how to
> describe it. I had Mexican friends and they were all not financially stable.
> I guess they were all kind of poor…As I got older I started to make friends
> with more White people and that became something too because then I
> was the coconut [laughing]. Which was another term for, you are brown
> on the outside and white on the inside. And as I got older I had more
> White friends and I…I guess I had this stigma of what was and wasn't
> White. And so when I came to [SWSU] I will say that predominantly

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most of my friends are White now…So most of my friends are White and I mean, I have Mexican or Hispanic friends…but it seems like my closest friends are White. [Pause] I guess the more reliant things became about money-the more it seemed like I had White friends…

For Megan, the intersection of race and class impacted how she connected with others. Because her family had more money than some of her Mexican friends in her neighborhood, she did not feel as connected with them. At SWSU many of her friends were White and she believed she connected well with them because they had the same class background.

Heather who is biracial and very fair skinned, identified as Hispanic. She has one parent who is White and one who is Hispanic and felt connections with both people who are White and people who are Hispanic:

I think I kind of identify with both. If someone says they're White. I get it because that's kind of where people would most likely classify me if they didn't know. They just pick me-okay, if they had a line-up of people-they'd classify based on appearance. They'd put me on a White side. But I can identify with people who are Hispanic too because of culture and stuff like that…I've noticed that people who are Hispanic and have grandparents, they're very into Hispanic culture. It seems like more than their parents are. Like my grandma speaks mostly, Spanish. And she speaks English. But I remember being with my grandma at a young age-sometimes by myself, without my dad…And she would speak Spanish. And I guess it would make me feel really uncomfortable. It would make me feel bad because-is she talking about me? I think I always had that feeling in the back of my head.

Heather was able to identify with both races for different reasons. She identified with Whites because she looked White and most people assumed she was White and not Hispanic. Heather connected with her Hispanic heritage because of the Hispanic cultural traditions practiced by her family, and because of the cultural commonality she had with other Hispanic students of having strong connections with their grandparents. However,

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she also felt somewhat disconnected to being Hispanic because she did not speak

Spanish. Although she could identify with both groups, Heather felt most connected with

others who had the same racial mix as her:

> I remember in high school that there was a girl. We were the same. Her
> mom was Hispanic and her dad was White—the opposite of me. And we
> used to laugh and stuff and call each other, "mutts"…just joking…And so
> we were really similar…We were friends but that was more of a
> commonality that we had. I kind of got excited-we were half breeds,
> together.

Heather who had friends from many different racial backgrounds spoke not only

about her own experiences with being comfortable around people of different races, but

also about comfort and how it may be keeping others from engaging in cross-racial

interactions. She stated:

> If you don't think that race is something that is an issue, if you think that's
> back in the past, then, I mean, what motivation do you have to get out of
> your comfort zone? Because I think some people—I'm not saying just
> White people or just Hispanics—some people just want to stay where they
> feel comfortable. And that's fine…but in my opinion, I want to get out of
> that and I want to mix racial relationships with people—to learn about
> different cultures and backgrounds.

Several Hispanic students felt connected to others who also identified as Hispanic

or Latino; and some participants affirmed that most of their friends were also Hispanic

and they remained in circles with others with their same background. Hispanic

participants felt connected with other Hispanics because there was often a cultural,

familial, religious, and language connection with others who identified as Hispanic. For

some students, such as Gabriel, Tanny, and Ishmael, the connection with others who were

Hispanic influenced their behavior and interactions. For example, these students joined a

fraternity because it was historically Latino, joined a service organization because it had a

large Hispanic membership, and limited interactions outside of classes with White classmates because they felt more comfortable with other Latinos.

Latino students who did not speak Spanish or who were not as familiar with some cultural traditions or Latino history expressed that their lack of knowledge about these areas kept them from feeling connected to others who were Latino. Participants who did not have as much knowledge about these cultural traditions were also the ones who tended to have a mix of White and Hispanic friends and were therefore engaging in more cross-racial interactions. Although some Latino students stated they had friends who were Latino and White, few had friends who were other races. This begs the question: do some Latino students at SWSU feel more comfortable with Latinos and White students, and not people from other racial backgrounds? This question was not the focus of this research study; however, it may have bearing on the cross-racial dynamics at SWSU and should be examined in future studies.

African American Students & Comfort.

Like some White and Latino students, some African American students also felt strong connections to others from their same racial backgrounds. Specifically, Orlando and Ama discussed the connection they felt with other African Americans. In talking about his same-race relationships, Orlando said,

> Yeah. I think I have more in common. I can honestly say that it's just how you get raised with you know, Black people, and everybody's family. You're all going to stick together, especially on this campus…[Black students] it's just a small percentage, but I feel that…when you see a Black person or, if I see an African American person and we're, you know, standing in the elevator, just me and that other person, they'll strike up a conversation. I feel like we owe that to each other.

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Similar to the Latino students who felt that family was one of the elements that made them feel more connected to other Latinos, Orlando also believed family traditions were one way he felt connected to other African Americans. He believed that there were certain characteristics and experiences that African Americans shared which connected them together. Ama also felt connected to other African Americans, but for her the connections she felt were the result of physical attributes and appearance. She stated:

> "I'm a mix. I'm half Filipino and half Black. And there's this thing like, and it's all in history books, you know if you have any Black in you, you're Black. And that's how it is. And with my skin color, I mean I connect better with people of my skin color. I, the majority of my friends, most, all of my friends are Black; honestly…what I connected was what you see on the outside. So it's like, there's the Black people. I'm going to go to the Black people.

In addition to discussing some of the reasons why students felt comfortable with others from their own racial background, students also discussed the things that dissuaded them from wanting to engage in cross-racial interactions. For Sandy, it was the treatment she received from her White friends. Early on in college, Sandy had a diverse group of friends, but in her second year in college she joined an African American sorority and her group of friends changed, and became less diverse. She recalled,

> [At] orientation, I found a friend from camp that I used to work with and we like clung to each other…[he was] Hispanic and all [of my other] my friends were White, some of them were like from like Podunk, Texas, places that you would never have heard of, like they were very small towns…people actually said, "You're probably the first Black person I've ever talked to before." So it was kind of like oh, this is a little weird. So, me telling them I joined this historically African American sorority, they're not getting it at all.

She continued on to say,

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Whenever I was going through my process [pledging her sorority], I was so busy all the time that I really couldn't like hang out with my friends…so then after I got into the organization, I was like "hey, I'm in this organization now." But they didn't understand me because a lot of them were White people and White people don't really understand the sorority thing. They were like, "Oh, you just left us to Black friends", and I was like, "No, I really didn't." So they kind of dropped me like a bad habit.

Although Sandy was open to engaging with diverse others, they were not always willing to engage with her. Consequently, Sandy had to choose between her White friends or her Black friends, and she was not able to maintain both friendship groups. Ama's reluctance to engage in cross-racial interactions arose from the discomfort she felt being the sole person of color in various settings. Echoing the documented effects of solo status (Sekaquaptewa et al., 2003; 2007) Ama didn't feel like she could relate to White students. She stated,

most of the time here on this campus you feel alone whenever you go to a class because…I'm pretty sure, it's like I'm one of the two minority students…You look around for people who look like you. Like you walk in and say I don't see nobody. You don't see nobody. You see a whole bunch of Caucasians and it is, I don't know, it's, it's just different. It, it's just different. It is a little bit intimidating…it's just uncomfortable; it's uncomfortable just because you just want to look for somebody that you relate to and you just don't relate to these people.

Once again, for Ama, having connections to others who looked like her and had similar racial backgrounds was really important. These connections were so important to her that they kept her from joining the Advertising Club. She stated,

You know I'm always hesitant because the majority of those [Advertising Club] meetings are made up of Caucasian, White people and you know, you're always looking to connect with somebody and you walk in there and it's uncomfortable. It's like "oh." Because honestly, I would just be uncomfortable. I just would be, because I'd be sitting there, okay…I would feel more comfortable, if one of my friends went with me…I told her like, "hey if you want to join the Ad club, we'll go together"…as long

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as I had at least one person, at least one person, I'll be fine…So I don't know when we're going to the meeting, but I'm not going alone…I'm not scared, I just don't like feeling uncomfortable.

Ama believed that the Advertising Club would be a good organization to join because it would help build her professional network and prepare her for getting a job. However, she chose to forgo these benefits because as she stated, "I just don't like feeling uncomfortable."

From Sandy and Ama we see that the lack of comfort influenced the choices they made about their group of friends in curricular settings, and their choice of co-curricular organizations. Similarly, Audrey was often the only African American in her social work classes and did not always feel comfortable as a result. Because there were not many African Americans in her social work classes, Audrey was interested in attending a social work graduate program that had more African American students.

Although Orlando experienced several racist incidents at SWSU (i.e. being called the n-word at a party and not being invited into group projects) he was still interested in engaging with people of different backgrounds. His criterion for engaging with others was not based on race, but rather was based on the experiences he had with people as individuals.

> I don't have any problem interacting with people. I will say that I have a three chance rule…if I meet a person, the next time I see them, I'm like, "Hey!" and if they don't respond to it and the second time I see them, "How you doing?" Like oh, you don't know me, but you do know me because we had a full conversation a week ago and if it happens again like, "Hey, what's going on? How are you today? What's going on?" They're like, "Hey", and he walks [away], okay. I'm going to stop because I'm just being awkward now.

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Whereas other African American participants used previous experiences with people to inform how they would interact with others in the future, Orlando made decisions about future cross-racial interactions based on individual experiences. Orlando gave each individual three chances to engage, whereas Ama made general assumptions about White students—that she would feel uncomfortable in all settings with White students, and would not be able to relate to them.

Like Orlando, Warren was interested in interacting with others from different racial backgrounds. Warren felt very comfortable and did engage with diverse others regularly in his multiracial fraternity. He stated,

> You can't really learn somebody else's culture just by looking at them or just by seeing them. You actually have to interact…[in my fraternity] we pride ourselves on being diverse. *One Culture, Any Race* is our motto. Predominantly, it is Hispanic. But we do have people of every, single race in there.

The six African American participants in this study all had different levels of comfort regarding cross-racial interaction and each approached it differently. Ama felt the strongest that she did not want to engage with others of different backgrounds, especially groups of White students because she felt uncomfortable and singled out. Conversely, Warren felt the most comfortable and engaged in cross-racial interactions regularly within his fraternity and outside of it. Ama and Warren's experiences represent the two ends of the spectrum related to comfort with cross-racial interaction. The four other African American students in this study were interested in and/or comfortable with engaging with others from different backgrounds, and did so to varying degrees. However, what stifled cross-racial interactions was the perception that the other party was unwilling to engage, as was the case with Sandy once she joined her African

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American sorority, and with Orlando when people he knew would ignore him when he saw them walking on campus.

Summary of the Findings

While most students were interested in interacting with peers from different racial backgrounds from themselves, some were uncomfortable doing so. Despite their interest, students, especially White students, felt uncomfortable initiating cross-racial interactions and not entirely sure how to go about it. Although students did not engage in many cross-racial interactions at SWSU, many of them were engaging more across race than they did prior to coming to college. Research shows, that before coming to college students have few opportunities to interact cross-racially because most U.S. neighborhoods and schools are homogenous (McArdle, Osypuk, Acevedo-García, 2010; Orfield, & Eaton, 2003; Orfield, et al., 2003). Given their limited pre-college opportunities, once at SWSU, students struggled to take the first step in getting to know others from different racial backgrounds. Moreover, students also struggled to enter new and different situations in which they may be racial minorities or feel uncomfortable.

While it has been shown that students of all racial backgrounds benefit from cross-racial interactions White students have more to gain and less to lose than students of color (Gurin et al., 1999; Lopez, et al., 1998),. White students tend to have greater gains in perspective taking and racial and cultural engagement than students of color (Gurin et al., 1999; Lopez, et al., 1998). Furthermore, for the most part at SWSU, White students have a choice about whether or not they will engage in cross-racial interactions. Because there are many more White students than students of color, Whites must be more

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intentional about seeking out non-Whites and engaging in cross-racial interactions. Conversely, students of color see White students everywhere at SWSU and have less of a choice about whether or not they engage in cross-racial interactions with Whites. Co-curricular organizations were places where students of color had a choice and could avoid Whites if they chose. However, by avoiding co-curricular settings that were dominated by White students, they could be losing out on valuable opportunities to develop skills gained by engaging in cross-racial interaction and professional development opportunities that would serve them well in the future; such was the case with Ama.

The comfort or lack of comfort students felt had an influence on their curricular and co-curricular involvement. We see that both Black and Latino students made choices about which organizations they would or would not join because they did not always feel comfortable. When coupled with the experiences students had in the classrooms we see being the only one, or one of a few students of color leaves students of color feeling uncomfortable and impacted the relationships they formed as well as their engagement during college.

Although the vast majority of students in classes were White and co-curricular organizations were predominantly mono-racial, participants still indicated that there were opportunities at SWSU to engage in cross-racial interactions. However, many were hesitant to take advantage of such situations. When considering the students who had the strongest reservations about cross-racial interaction and examining the organizations to which they belonged, students who were the most hesitant belonged to mono-racial student organizations. Therefore, these students also had very little practice engaging with diverse others. Participants' lack of experience may have also led to their feelings of

discomfort. Additionally worth noting was that most of the participants were forming their closest friendships with other members of their co-curricular organizations. Because many of the organizations were mono-racial, students did not have the opportunity to engage with others from different backgrounds despite the fact that they believed there were opportunities to engage cross-racially. From everything we know about how business and society look to higher education to instill multicultural and global competencies in college students (Bikson & Law, 1994; Bok, 1986; Bowen, 1980; Business Higher Education Forum, 2002), the lack of deliberate and structured opportunities for students at SWSU to comfortably engage across difference is disappointing.

Finally, from this chapter we see that both Latino and African American participants only referred to feeling uncomfortable engaging in cross-racial interactions with Whites. They did not explicitly discuss what cross-racial interactions were like or would be like with other students of color (i.e. Latinos interacting with African American students). This leads me to believe that when most of the Latino and African American study participants heard the phrase, cross-racial interaction, they understood it to mean interaction with Whites. This also leads me to question students' perceptions about race and cross-racial interaction overall. While the data presented in this chapter analyzes students' own experiences with (and without) cross-racial interaction, the next chapter addresses students' perceptions about cross-racial interactions.

CHAPTER VII

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CROSS-RACIAL INTERACTION

Overview

This chapter discusses students' perceptions of cross-racial interactions in various campus settings. The findings about perceptions emerged from students discussing which settings were conducive to cross-racial interaction. Previous literature discussed the relevance of perceptions in cross-racial interactions, but has addressed it relative to campus racial and ethnic tension. Data from the present study reveal that students at SWSU perceive organizations and classes as either welcoming or unwelcoming to members of their racial or ethnic group which in turn influences whether or not cross-racial interactions will occur. Students' perceptions of these settings also influenced their behavior and their decisions about whether or not they would join particular student organizations. Findings from this study demonstrate how qualitative data about perceptions can provide a more nuanced understanding of perceptions related to cross-racial interaction. Moreover, these findings about perceptions also inform theoretical models and frameworks about cross-racial interaction and campus racial climate.

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Curricular Perceptions

In addition to recognizing that students are not interacting much across race in classes, students are making assumptions about the racial composition of their classes as a whole and they are making assumptions about their peers in their classes. Despite the fact that students easily acknowledged that social settings seems quite homogenous on campus, students often perceived that their classes had a lot of diversity. When students initially thought about the racial composition within their classes they judged them to be racially diverse. However, after further consideration students often realized that their classes were not as diverse as they once thought. Students' perceptions often were reevaluated after some discussion in their interviews and in some instances their perceptions were contradicted by other participants' experiences.

For example, Jordan, a Hispanic woman majoring in sociology and Spanish, initially believed her classes were racially diverse. When asked if her classes were racially diverse she said, "Yes, yes!" But after thinking about it a little more she stated,

> Actually—huh-maybe not…I kind of live this double-life. I have the Spanish major life and then I have the sociology major life. And a lot of people who are in my sociology classes are White. I would think the majority are White. And you know Asian what's the other one I'm looking for-Asian or Oriental or Middle Eastern—those type of minorities are not real popular. African Americans, there are more of and the Hispanics, there are more of…now that I think about it. Oh, crap! And in the Spanish class, it's the opposite. There are more Hispanics. There are only a handful of White people in each of the classes. And I haven't seen very many, if any, African Americans or any other ethnicities or races in my Spanish classes. I hadn't really thought about that.

Jordan's comments demonstrate the ways students' assumptions about their classes were reevaluated once they deliberately considered the racial composition of their classes. Before being asked about the racial diversity of her classes Jordan assumed her

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classes were all racially diverse and she was previously unaware of the difference in the racial composition of her Spanish and sociology classes. Once she was asked to consider the races of her classmates Jordan was surprised upon realizing the composition depended on the type of class.

Jordan's comments become even more meaningful when considering she is legally blind. Jordan does have some vision, which she used to distinguish skin color, but most of what she saw appeared blurry. In addition to using what vision she has, Jordan used auditory cues to determine race. Previous literature on perceptions related to cross-racial interactions primarily focuses on racial and ethnic tension (Hurtado et al., 1998; Milem et al. 2005). Jordan's comments force us to examine more closely the different ways perceptions manifest themselves relative to cross-racial interactions and campus climate. Jordan's use of auditory cues in determining race highlights the role our senses play in forming perceptions about race and creating distinctions between races. Moreover, from Jordan we also learn that racial distinction is palpable at SWSU and it manifests itself in multiple ways that stretch beyond visual identification.

While exploring the specific ways in which visually impaired people perceive and interpret race is beyond the scope of this dissertation, Jordan's use of auditory cues prompted me to question what cues other students used to determine race and how they were constructing the race of their peer using auditory cues. Students that have full vision may not be aware of the auditory cues and other senses they are using to assess others' race, but may still be relying on them. Thomas and Reaser (2004) conducted a study where people were asked to identify the race of speakers as either African American or European American by only hearing voices. They found that listeners were able to

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identify race with a high degree of accuracy. This research, as well as other studies, (i.e.: Walton and Orlikoff, 1994) demonstrate how we all may be unconsciously using auditory cues to make racial distinctions.

Jordan's comments illustrate how some students reevaluated the diversity of their classes; however, other students' discussion of the racial diversity of their classes revealed how perceptions of classroom diversity were contradicted by other participants' experiences. For example, Sandy, an education student, was the only African American in her program, but stated that "for business, or communications, there is a whole different array. There's a spectrum of people in there." Orlando, an African American business major, had a different perception of business classes than Sandy. Orlando found that the business major was not very diverse and he was often the only African American male in his classes and only one of a few students of color.

Sara, a White student in communications, had a similar perception of her major as Sandy—that it was racially diverse. However, Madelyn's perception of the racial diversity in communication differed from the others. Madelyn, who is White, stated,

> I feel like that's kind of a bad thing, but I honestly just don't see any of them. I never see anybody that is Black or anything like that in any of my organizations…the majority of them are White…I guess nobody [Black] wants to be a public relations major.

In this statement Madelyn discussed the diversity of two settings: her classes and her professional associations affiliated with her major. Unlike Sandy and Sara, Madelyn did not believe her major was diverse. However, Madelyn also introduced professional associations as another setting in which compositional diversity could be assessed. She realized that in her professional association there was also very little diversity; again she

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stated, "I never see anybody that is Black or anything like that in any of my organizations."

Within their interviews students described professional associations as valuable organizations that provided networking and job training skills that they could use to obtain employment and grow as professionals. Students of all races from various majors (business, communication, public relations, and accounting) described the value of belonging to professional organizations; however some also noted that the organizations lacked racial diversity. As stated above, Madelyn was one such student.

Ama, who identified as Black, recognized the professional benefits of joining the professional association associated with her major—the Advertising Club, but she was hesitant to join because of the racial demographics. She stated,

> I know I need to join my, those organizations, you know those
> organizations dedicated towards your major, but you know I'm always
> hesitant because the majority of those meetings are made up of Caucasian,
> White people, and you know, you're always looking to connect with
> somebody and you walk in there and it's uncomfortable.

For Ama, the lack of diversity prevented her from joining an organization she believed would help her professionally. Ama's perceptions that the "Ad Club" was all White, that she would feel uncomfortable, and would not connect with other members prevented her from joining the organization. For Ama, not joining the Advertising Club and missing out on professional opportunities was a better decision for her than going to the meetings by herself and feeling uncomfortable and unconnected as the only person of color in the organization. Ama's experiences also demonstrate why Madelyn may not have seen African Americans in her professional associations.

The lack of diversity of the professional associations also influenced other students. While it did not dissuade them from joining, the lack of diversity within the professional associations made Daniel, for example, unaware of the professional associations affiliated with his major. Daniel stated that he was not involved in the organizations associated with his business major. He did not belong to the professional organization because he was very involved with his Latino fraternity. Daniel chose involvement in his fraternity over becoming active in other organizations including the professional organization within his major. He said:

> There're a bunch of clubs in Business School. I never got a part of them—honestly because I just took up most of my time, fraternity-wise. Had I known, I would have because I feel a bunch of the organizations help you get ready for your career, outside of college. And I know that now and it is my last semester, I don't feel like it is worth it to pay and join.

Although for different reasons than Ama, Daniel also missed out on some professional development opportunities. Instead of becoming involved with the professional association affiliated with his major, Daniel focused his attention on his fraternity which had a cultural focus. He described that the focus his fraternity had on Latino culture was what drew him to Greek life and kept him involved. Therefore, the perceived lack of cultural focus in the business organizations kept Daniel from becoming more involved with business professional associations that might have helped him prepare for his chosen profession.

In contrast, Warren, an African American student majoring in public relations was a member of the public relations professional association. He described the association as somewhat diverse, but also thought the association could be more diverse. He stated, "I

know there are more public relations people that are minorities and it would benefit them a lot to be a part of it. It's not anybody's fault. It's [the association] promoted a lot." Although Warren himself participated in his professional association he recognized that other students of color did not join the organization. While this could be for a number of reasons the fact remained that there were not as many non-White students in the organization. By saying "it is not anybody's fault" that there was not much racial diversity in the organization Warren demonstrated that he did not hold animosity or blame anyone for the lack of diversity, yet he still recognized the broader issue that his professional association needed more diversity.

From participants' experiences we see that students perceived others' classes and majors as racially diverse, but not their own. This may indeed be the case. Students of color may be clustered in certain majors. Previous research supports this idea and has found that there are fewer students of color in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields (Hurtado, et al., 2010; NSF, 2007; Perna, et al., 2010). As a result, we would expect students, such as Ishmael, in majoring in science and math to report that their classes were not very racially diverse. Another possible reason that participants did not perceive as much diversity in their classes was because they were juniors and seniors. While officials at SWSU focused on increasing compositional diversity, they focused on diversifying the entering class. Therefore, freshman and sophomore classes may have been more diverse than upper level classes in which junior and senior participants were enrolled. In 2010 SWSU had a lower retention rate for students of color than for White students which may also explain why participants found their classes less diverse (see Table 7.1).

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Nationally, students of color have lower persistence and graduation rates than White students (Horn & Berger, 2004; IPEDS, 2011). This pattern also holds true at SWSU. In 2010, 6-year graduation rates were lower for students of color than for White students.

Table 7. 1 SWSU Undergraduate 6-Year Graduation Rates by Race, 2010

Race	White	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Hispanic / Latino	Black/ African American	Asian/ Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Race/ Ethnicity Unknown	Non-Resident Alien
Graduation Rate	56%	53%	53%	51%	48%	60%	67%

Source: NCES http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator

Given that students of color graduate from SWSU at rates lower than Whites it may not be surprising that students like Ishmael (a geography major and geology minor) found his classes were "mostly White…especially now I'm in the more higher level courses—junior, senior level classes."

While students' perceptions of the racial diversity of others' classes and majors were not always accurate, they consistently discussed that their classes and professional organizations were not very racially diverse. Institutional data about the racial demographics of SWSU and the retention of students of color by race suggests that there may be institutional factors affecting the composition of classes, students' perceptions, and students' ability to engage with diverse others.

Out of Class Cross-Racial Interactions

In previous quantitative studies, co-curricular and informal interactions have been discussed as separate and distinct categories. In this study, students talked about how their experiences in co-curricular settings overlapped with the experiences they had in informal settings. As such, findings about students' perceptions of cross-racial interactions in informal settings will be discussed in conjunction with students' perceptions of cross-racial interactions in co-curricular settings. However, students discussed Greek life in ways that were distinct from how they discussed other co-curricular settings. Specifically, Greek life was identified as a setting in which there was a lot of racial separation and limited cross-racial interaction. Therefore, students' perceptions about Greek life will be discussed separately in the following section.

Greek Life

Greek organizations at SWSU provided students with opportunities to meet others, develop professional and social networks, and engage in community service. These are the reasons participants gave for joining Greek organizations. However, students affiliated and those not affiliated with these organizations described them as largely mono-racial organizations. Greek life provided another venue to consider perceptions as they relate to cross-racial interactions. While only 5% of SWSU's student body participated, Greek life had a large presence on the campus. Students who were Greek and those who were not, both expressed the prominence of sororities and fraternities on the Quad (the main walk on campus) as well as in the social and party scene. In fact, when asked if students at SWSU interacted cross-racially, 19 of the 26

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participants mentioned the prominence of Greek organizations. Moreover, Greek

organizations were identified as prime examples of mono-racial organizations and spaces

that hampered cross-racial interaction.

Three White students, Janelle, Mackenzie, and Holly none of whom were

members of Greek organizations, noted the prominence of racial separation among Greek

organizations at SWSU. Janelle stated,

> You do see them in groups. You know the Blacks are in a group. The
> Hispanics are in a group. Whites are in a group. You see them like that in
> the Quad. And the sororities-you know and fraternities-White-White-
> White.

Mackenzie, also saw this type of racial separation in the Quad amongst sororities,

fraternities, and other organizations. She stated:

> They'll set up like a tent for you know, X sorority, and then too it'll be
> another one for Y fraternity, and other organizations too, like business
> organizations—just all kinds of student organizations. And within those
> organizations, it seems to be very divided. You know, this one will be all
> White, and this one will be all African American and you know.   So I do
> notice that most definitely. It's almost kind of striking maybe because it's
> just like right in front of you and you know, put on display.

Participants called attention to the racial divide among fraternities and sororities.

To Greek and non-Greek students the predominance of Whites in Greek organizations

was tangible. However, even more compelling was that White students, in addition to

students of color, noticed the distinct racial separation on campus. As members of a

privileged majority group White students were positioned such that they did not always

have to consider how race affected their lives (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; McInsosh,

1991). Recognition of the racial separation on campus demonstrated that either these

White students were particularly attuned to racial dynamics on campus or that racial separation was very apparent at SWSU.

Madelyn, who is also Caucasian discussed the racial separation of Greek, but added that the racial separation of Greeks puzzled her. She stated:

> I think they do tend to group a lot more than you would think because we do have the multicultural fraternities and sororities. So there are the Hispanic fraternities and sororities and the Black fraternities and sororities and then there is the IFC which the majority of them are White fraternities and sororities. So I do think it's like they group together… a lot of people stick to their race a lot more, which is odd.

Madelyn's comment that students staying with people of their same race is "odd" demonstrates that she had some questions about why students "stick to their own race" especially in fraternities and sororities. For Madelyn, talking and thinking about cross-racial interactions in different settings was not something she had given much consideration to prior to this interview so her analysis about some of her conversations was limited.

When I asked Megan who is bi-racial but identified as being Mexican, Spanish, and American, if she thought students interacted across race said:

> No. We were laughing about this because we were talking about how Southwestern State has this high school way about it. But we were talking about how stupid it was. How stupid it is to still feel like you're in this- this isn't high-school part two. But we were talking about the cliques in the Quad. And man, it was like-like I said because the Quad gets super, jam-packed especially at the beginning of the semester because of all the fraternities and sororities with their, giant, stupid letters. And overwhelmingly, all of the group people are White. And it's just how it is.

Throughout her interview Megan repeatedly used the word "stupid" to convey her feelings about Greeks and how they tended to separate into groups. Clearly she did not like the way these groupings occurred, but she also expressed a sense of helplessness

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when she said, "it's just how it is." By responding in this way Megan accepted that racial

separation was a reality at SWSU. Her sentiments could be construed as unwillingness to

take ownership for the lack of cross-racial interactions, or complacency. Nonetheless, as

Megan and other students stated, they were interested in engaging in cross-racial

interactions, but were unwilling to risk upsetting the status quo and enacting change.

In addition to the racial separation noted by these White students, students of

color also observed racial separation among Greek organizations. Students of color

discussed their observations and experiences with Greek organizations in the Quad. Many

Greek organizations advertised events and "hung out" in the Quad. Because the Quad

was a main throughway and "hang out spot" on campus students noticed organizations,

specifically fraternities and sororities, grouping by race in the Quad. In addition, students

described the Quad as the prime location on campus where fraternities and sororities

announced their events and handed out fliers. However, sometimes fliers were only

distributed to certain people. Ama and Gabriel noted that fliers were handed to people

with racial backgrounds that matched those passing out the fliers. Ama stated:

> I remember specifically they [sorority members] were passing out these
> fliers for something…"come join this organization," or "come to our
> mixer," or one of those. They were handing it to every Caucasian person
> and then when I walked by, I was like, "hey, I was expecting to get one"
> and they didn't even bother to hand it to me. So I was like, "okay? What if
> I wanted to join? I can't join? Why can't I join?" You know? ...So I just
> wonder, do you want a Black person in y'all's sorority?

Gabriel who identified as Latino and was in a predominantly Latino fraternity

discussed a situation similar to Ama saying he saw "pockets" or "separations" based on

race. Gabriel also realized that he contributed to the problem of racial separation. He

stated:

> In the Quad…the Inter-fraternal Council…when they're handing things—I could even say I'm guilty. We've done the same thing. We only hand the information to people of our same background. I feel more comfortable. I'm only speaking for myself but I've seen that. I know I've felt more comfortable passing the information to a Latino.

Gabriel stated that he was interested in seeing more cross-racial interaction and revealed that he personally was interested in engaging in more cross-racial interactions; however, only handing fliers out to those with his same background suggests otherwise. Despite his interest in engaging cross-racially, his lack of comfort kept him from approaching non-Latino students about joining his fraternity.

Beyond seeing sorority or fraternity members grouped together by race, students also felt that Greek organizations were intentionally recruiting and limiting their membership to others who looked liked them. Anna, a Hispanic female social work student stated, "I feel like the fraternities and sororities are all one group and they're looking for a certain type of people. And they stay in that realm—in that circle." Anna's comments are consistent with the experiences of Ama and Gabriel; however she extends the argument to say that students are recruiting others like them into their particular Greek organizations. Anna believed that by recruiting others from their same racial background, students' "circles," or those with whom they interacted were limited. Thus, students primarily interacted with those who had their same racial background, rather than with individuals who have different racial backgrounds. Whether intentional or not, the implications of Anna's comments are that sorority and fraternity members are taking active steps to limit the diversity of their circles.

In addition to noticing the racial separation in Greek organizations, and recognizing that the organizations searched for new members who were like them, some

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students also discussed that they would not feel comfortable in Greek organizations because of their mono-racial nature. Mackenzie, a White student made it clear she was not at all interested in Greek life because it was so racially separate. She stated, "I'm not part of *any* of that…I don't know what their mission is all the time [sic]." As a social work student Mackenzie was interested in organizations and professional activities that helped her learn about different racial backgrounds. She viewed Greek organizations as racially homogenous and did not see their relevance in her quest for knowledge about diversity; therefore she was largely uninterested in them. Sara, who is Caucasian and grew up in a very racially diverse community acknowledged the discomfort she believed she would experience in a sorority:

> I don't think I would ever feel comfortable being in that setting. I've never been around a whole bunch of girls and a whole bunch of Caucasian girls. I don't think I'd be able to relate to them as I would with the multicultural groups.

Janelle, a White student was frustrated with the racial separation among Greek organizations. She did not discuss personally wanting to join a sorority, but did talk about others who were interested in joining Greek organization, but were prevented from doing so. She declared,

> the sororities—you know and fraternities—White-White-White. [Sighs] It's racism—I don't know if it is purposeful but they just exclude anybody but the Whites…I know about the Whites excluding the Blacks, for sure. Dr. Anthony[20] was telling me about that—the Greek organizations were against them and the Blacks had to start their own. Which is what she did, she started a Black sorority.

Janelle's comment demonstrates that students grouping together by race does not occur by happenstance at SWSU. Janelle used the word racism to explain why groups are

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[20] Dr. Anthony is pseudonym.

separated by race suggesting that discrimination based on race has an impact on the separation. Citing Dr. Anthony's story of starting her own sorority shows that some of the separation is actually segregation— "the separation or isolation of a race [by]…discriminatory means" (Merriam Webster, 2012). The examples of separation or segregation students at SWSU provided, show that there was some racial hostility on campus, and especially in relation to Greek organizations. Research on campus racial climate has found that if students perceive there to be a hostile racial climate there is likely to be a negative impact on their sense of belonging in college settings (Hurtado & Carter, 1998, White, 2000).

Rosie, who identified as Hispanic, discussed how cross-racial interactions at SWSU affected students' perceptions about equality and diversity at SWSU. She relayed the following:

> I was actually reading an article in the Southwestern State University newspaper, and that one gentleman was expressing his opinion on how, you know there's all these clubs and like Greek sororities and fraternities and they're all like the Black community, the Latino community, the White community. And even though they're like open to, you know, a minority you can try out, but we all know there's like boundaries or, not boundaries, but like, you're going to hang out with your friends, which are more likely to be your same ethnicity, minority, or race. And he said that, Southwestern State is always promoting equality and diversity but in reality, it's not, because of all these organizations are all separate.

Like Janelle, Rosie talked about students grouping together by race as systematic. Janelle and Rosie both pointed out that exclusion occurred with the Greek system and that there were "boundaries" for minorities, specifically African Americans, which prevented them from joining White Greek organizations. The perceptions of these two women were confirmed by Orlando's experiences (discussed in an earlier chapter), where

he described being called the "N-word" at White Greek parties. Moreover, many participants, regardless of race and Greek affiliation, believed the racially separate structure of the Greek councils contributed to the racial separation between Greek letter organizations. They also believed this structure facilitated same race grouping among Greek organizations throughout campus.[21]

Regardless of race, students acknowledged similar phenomena about the lack of cross-racial interaction in Greek organizations. Students who were involved with Greek organizations as well as those who were not pointed to these organizations as spaces on campus that were emblematic of the lack of cross-racial interaction. Greek organizations were not the only locations on campus students perceived as lacking cross-racial interaction, but fraternities and sororities provided the most salient examples of racial separation at SWSU.

Though some students suggested that racial separation was intentional within Greek organizations others abstained from making a judgment. If the racial separation was intentional it brings up questions about the extent of racism that may have existed at SWSU. If the racial separation was unintentional this suggests that without trying to be racist, students created racially separate spaces. Because Greek councils are structured in a way that fraternities and sororities are grouped by race, the structure may in fact be a strong contributing factor to the racial separation among Greek organizations. Therefore, rather than considering racial separation among Greek organizations as unintentional or intentional on the individual level it may be that the separation is occurring because of intentional or unintentional separation on the organizational /governance level. Whether

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[21] See Appendix for more information about the structure of Greek Letter Organizations.

the separation is intentional or unintentional, the fact remains that the overwhelming perception of participants in this study was that Greek organizations were racially separate and inhibited cross-racial interactions at SWSU.

Social Identity and Co-Curricular Sense of Belonging

In addition to settings where Greek life was dominant, there were other locations on campus where students perceived a lack of cross-racial interaction, primarily student organizations with a racial and ethnic focus. It also came to light that students' perceptions of race and ethnically themed organizations were tied to students' own racial identity. In many cases how students viewed organizations had as much to do with their perception of being accepted in these organizations as it had to do with the organizations themselves.

Several participants said that their actual ancestral race was different than the way they identified. For example, Ama, Heather, and Megan all identified as bi-racial, but also identified with one race more than another. An in depth study of multi-racial identity is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is worth noting that how students identified racially was largely informed by the ways others saw them. Negotiating identity is particularly complex when considering these students have multi-racial backgrounds that are translated into uni-racial identities by others. Students found that their skin color or whether or not they spoke Spanish served as markers of racial identity for others. These attributes were used by their peers to categorize them and determine if they fit the mold of what it meant to belong to particular racial groups. Peers "essentialized" racial identity and attributed stereotypical traits to students of certain racial backgrounds. By

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essentializing racial identity the assumption is made that everyone knows what it means to be a member of that race (Bonnett, 1997; Eichstedt, 2001; Hughey, 2011). Making generalizations about people of different racial backgrounds constructs a mono-racial identity which people are measured against. The essentialized identity supposes that all people with that same racial background have the same attributes, thoughts, and experiences. When individuals do not fit that mold they are left feeling like outsiders within their own racial group.

Same Race Co-curricular Organizations

Similar to observations about fraternities and sororities, students noticed that many non-Greek organizations at SWSU were also racially separate. Several students did not understand why there were race specific organizations on campus. Isabel who is Hispanic pointed out, "even if you look at the organizations on campus…they have a Hispanic Business Association or primarily Black fraternities." Rosie, a Hispanic female expressed a similar sentiment when she said, "why do they need to always come up with a Latino group or a Black group if we're promoting diversity?...Why are those students doing that if, in reality, we're open to any ethnicity?"

While Isabel noticed student organizations existed to support the specific interests of students with certain racial backgrounds, Rosie noted the prevalence of these organizations and found it contradictory that the university supported pluralism, but also supported racial and ethnic specific organizations. Studies on counterspaces provide a context for participants' confusion. Counterspaces are described by Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) as "sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and

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where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained" (p. 70). Such spaces emerged as a means for students to find a "safe haven," in collegiate environments where students of color do not always feel comfortable. Without understanding the context of how they emerged, counterspaces may seem like the antithesis of multiculturalism; however, they are actually a response to an environment that does not fully embrace diversity. At SWSU counterspaces provide safe places for students of color to connect with one another and feel comfortable outside of academic and social spaces they have described as uncomfortable, and sometime hostile. Therefore, counterspaces are important for students of color at SWSU to have a place of their own on this predominantly White campus.

Research on counterspaces provides some clarity for Rosie's confusion. By viewing the Hispanic Business Association and Black Greek organizations through the lens of counterspaces, we see that these organizations exist to support students of color rather than exclude them from activities at the university. Same race organizations work effectively as counterspaces for some students, particularly students who come from homogenous pre-college environments; however, counterspaces are not effective for all students. Students of color who were from racially diverse settings or from predominantly White pre-college environments did not feel comfortable or fit into mono-racial organizations at SWSU. As a result, many chose not to join such organizations. These students did not feel Latino enough to join the Latino Students Association, or didn't think they fit the mold of what it meant to be Black in the Black Students Association.

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While some students at SWSU intentionally sought out cross-racial interactions within their co-curricular activities, other students in this study did not. Many organizations at SWSU were separated by race which did not encourage students to engage in cross-racial interactions in co-curricular organizations. In order for cross-racial interactions to occur within many co-curricular settings, students would have had to be very intentional about seeking out diverse settings that promoted cross-racial interaction. As we will see, students' racial identities influenced what organizations they chose to join.

"Are you half-White? You're not very Mexican"

When discussing why they chose to become involved in certain organizations on campus and not in others, several students who identified as Hispanic or Latino described that they did not feel comfortable or welcome in some of the Hispanic organizations. Juntos Conectado (J.C.)[22] was the prominent Latina organization on campus students most often referred to. The membership of this organization was primarily, if not entirely, comprised of women of Hispanic origin. Many Latina participants believed that the women in J. C. had common backgrounds that stretched beyond race and gender. Participants stated that many of the women in J.C. were from the same region of the state and spoke Spanish at the J.C. meetings. Moreover, participants said that this common background was what defined what it meant to be Hispanic. By attaching these attributes to Latina identity, students were essentializing what it meant to be Latina. To lack

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[22] Juntos Conectado is a pseudonym.

characteristics of the essentialized identity meant that students were not Latina enough. Isabel who identified as Hispanic explained her experience with Juntos Conectado:

> I felt like I wasn't Mexican enough to join it…I don't speak Spanish…I thought about [joining] it and I mean why not? I am a part of that [racial group]—I could be, but I just felt like I wouldn't have enough in common with just thinking about it racially.

Isabel was interested in joining Juntos Conectado, but felt as though she would not have enough in common with the group members to be accepted. For Isabel, having the same racial identity was not enough for her to feel connected with others in J.C. She continued on to describe how previous encounters influenced her decision not to join the organization:

> [P]eople always say, "Are you half-White? You're not very Mexican." Maybe on the spectrum of Mexican—I'm on the lower part. I'm finding language has a lot to do with it. Because it's such a large part of the heritage and so, I guess that's a big part.

In Isabel's experience what it meant to be Mexican was to speak Spanish. Because she did not speak Spanish she was often asked if she was half-White giving her the impression that she was not very Mexican. Because her racial identity was frequently questioned, Isabel avoided situations where she believed she would not fit in. In the case of J.C. Isabel did not join the organizations because she assumed by not speaking Spanish she would not have much in common with the other J.C. members.

Megan, who has one parent of European ancestry and one parent who is Mexican also talked about her experience with J.C. She stated:

> I was invited to be part of Juntos Conectado. And it was that thing where it was like [pause] my last name is [German]. They [the J.C. members] were all from [one region in the state]. And I remember at the meeting, everyone was really nice, but it takes a lot for me to feel comfortable.

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Although Megan was from the same area as a majority of the J.C. members, and spoke Spanish fluently, she was still conscious that her German last name cast her as an outsider and made her not feel as comfortable at the J.C. meeting. She continued on to say:

> I was invited by my friend Alexis[23]…we go and it was just kind of funny because we had to explain why we were there. And it was just kind of like—being put on the spot…and feeling like the intruders or the White girls or whatever. And Alexis was totally cool with it. But I guess I was a little—not too aware—but insecure—making something out of nothing, possibly. And so I didn't go back to the meeting.

Where race was not enough to make Isabel feel comfortable in J.C., race along with being from the same hometown and being able to speak Spanish was not enough for Megan to feel comfortable in J.C. The fact that these similarities were not enough to make Megan or other students feel comfortable at the J.C. meetings tells us that there are more dynamics at work. Megan described her sense of the membership when she said:

> They seemed like nice girls. I remember they were inter-mixing Spanish with everything they were saying. And I guess it just felt like [pause] I don't know if that was segregation. It was that idea that they were all close friends and they started this group. They knew what they were talking about. And I didn't know what they were talking about. Not to say that I didn't understand their Spanish. At the same time I don't intermix Spanish, most of the time. Is what I'm saying—is that snobby? I just didn't feel that comfortable. I guess because nobody was super, super friendly either.

Megan's style of communication was different than the way the women in J.C. communicated with one another. This difference, the fact that the other girls already knew each other, and her perception that her German last name made others view her and her friend as "the intruders or the White girls" made Megan feel uncomfortable in J.C.

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[23] Alexis is a pseudonym.

Through Megan and Isabel's comments, the idea of the essentialized Hispanic comes to light again. These young women did not fit the essentialized ideal and therefore felt like outsiders; they felt like others saw them as White, and they felt like they were not Hispanic enough to join this organization.

Heather, who said she is half White and half Hispanic, but identified more as Hispanic also discussed other Latino student organizations she thought about joining and stated,

> Yeah. I thought about joining certain, Latino groups or Hispanic groups. But I guess I'm a little afraid—not afraid but I feel like I'll get the same response that I usually get, "you're not Hispanic" or "you don't look Hispanic." I don't know. It's crossed my mind but…I don't know. I guess I'd feel uncomfortable. I just don't want to deal with it.

Heather, a fair skinned young woman who is not fluent in Spanish described receiving this type reaction from both Whites and Latinos throughout her life. She spoke at length about her experiences where her legitimacy as Hispanic was questioned. She described in more detail an experience she had in high school:

> A substitute I had in high school was taking roll. And she was saying my last name-[omitted]. It's a pretty Hispanic last name. [Laughs] I mean you can't mistake it for anything else, really. I raise my hand and she looks at me. And just the look she had on her face. I don't want to say it made me feel bad, but it kind of disqualified me, you know. Well, she said "that's not your last name-you're gringa."

Situations like this one constantly happened to Heather. Because Heather's identity was often questioned and her experiences were not validated, Heather wanted to avoid situations where she felt uncomfortable and had to explain herself and her identity. What she said about this high school situation was "I mean it did offend me, I'm not going to lie. It bothered me."

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Students such as Heather, Megan, and Isabel are in difficult situations. Because they do not have the characteristics of the essentialized Hispanic, they sometimes have difficulty finding their place amongst members of their same race. By applying Berry's (2003) model of acculturation strategies to Heather, Megan, and Isabel, he would describe that they all adopted marginalization in order to cope with the college acculturation process. As Berry described, marginalization occurs where there is little knowledge of the non-dominant culture and little interest in adopting the norms of the dominant culture. Often marginalization occurs because members of the non-dominant culture have been discriminated against. In the examples of Heather, Megan, and Isabel being called White, having different modes of communication, having fair-skin, or a non-Hispanic last name left these young women feeling marginalized.

When Castillo, et al.'s (2004) perspective is added to Berry's, a more complex understanding of racial and in-group and out-group dynamics takes shape. Castillo, et al. (2004) described that by virtue of simply entering college, Latino students have to straddle two cultures—Latino and college culture—which often hold incongruent values. When analyzing Heather, Megan, and Isabel's experiences through this lens we see that these young women were not only left straddling Latino and college cultures, but were also struggling with what it meant to be Latina amongst other Latinas at SWSU. However, having to choose one identity over another, or having it chosen for you highlights the incongruence of students' home cultures and college culture in a different way than Castillo et al. (2004) describe. What it meant for Megan to be Latina before college was different than what it meant for Heather and Isabel to be Latina. While these young women felt that they were not Mexican enough for some Latino/a organizations at

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SWSU the following section highlights how one student felt that students could also be "too Mexican" to fit in.

Too Mexican

In contrast to "not being very Mexican," Maya expressed that she did not want to appear to be too Mexican, or too Hispanic. Because of her race Maya felt like she had to overcome the negative stereotypes associated with being Hispanic and prove her capabilities. Maya felt a connection to other Hispanics, and especially with Hispanics who speak Spanish. However, a lot of her friends were White. From her experiences growing up in her largely Hispanic hometown, Maya believed it was difficult to be successful if you are "Hispanic oriented." In talking about her hometown she stated, "it's very very Hispanic oriented. You stay there, have kids, you get married, just stereotypical what Mexicans do…not do anything with themselves." For Maya, being Hispanic oriented meant also not being a leader.

In an attempt to make a different life for herself, Maya went to SWSU because, "I'm one of the few people who actually wants to do something on my own, I'm independent." She became very active in the SWSU community and took on many leadership positions in a variety of student organizations. Within these leadership positions Maya found that most of the other campus leaders were White and she became friends with many of them. She stated,

> a lot of my friends, they're White because I mean, they're all leaders and
> they all want to do something. They all want to be someone and I guess
> that's just the majority here of the leaders on campus are White. So I just
> fit in…I just randomly fit into it and I'm just one of the few minorities that
> actually follows along with that kind of society.

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While it may be coincidence that Maya is friends with other student leaders who happen to be White, in her statements she is implying that White students at SWSU are leaders because they want to do something with their lives, and Hispanics and others minorities do not. Maya's comments are complex and multi-layered. Although her circle of campus leaders may have been comprised of mostly White students there were numerous students of color who were campus leaders at SWSU. A number of explanations are possible to explain Maya's perceptions about student leaders. First, she did not come in contact with other non-White student leaders. Second, the organizations the students of color were leading were not legitimated by Maya as important. Third, she had misperceptions about the racial demographics of student leadership at SWSU, or fourth, she may have been uninformed. The students of color she knew may have been interested in taking on leadership roles but were unable to assume such positions because of the systematic and institutional racism that could have been at work and prevented students from becoming leaders on campus. For example, these students might have been interested in serving in leadership positions, but because they were perceived as being "too Black," or "too Mexican," or "not Black or Mexican enough" they may not have been selected into some leadership positions.

As I got to know Maya through her interview and through follow-up correspondence, I understood that many of the perceptions she held had a lot to do with her pre-college experiences and the lack of cross-racial interaction she had prior to college. Maya described her journey from her small town to SWSU and I saw the initial components of Gaertner and Dovidio's (2000) *common ingroup identity model* at work. As she summarized her experiences, I saw Maya in the recategorization process wherein

different group identities are acknowledged, but credence is only being given to the ingroup's identity; in this case the identity of the White student leaders. Because this was an interview of a single individual, I am not privy to know how members of the ingroup (White student leaders) viewed Maya—whether they considered her a member of an outgroup, or not. However, from interviewing students at SWSU it became clear that there were stigmas and negative stereotypes attached to being from Maya's hometown and the surrounding region. What was particularly interesting about Maya's story is that she herself validated the goals of the ingroup and sought to be among them, while at the same time making it clear that she did not embody the values of the outgroup—Hispanics from her hometown. In essence, Maya saw that the way for her to become successful was to assimilate and embody more of the dominant group's characteristics.

By utilizing Berry's (2003) acculturation model to understand Maya's comments, it appears that Maya adapted assimilation as a method of acculturative adaptation and as a way to cope with the all White environment and distance herself from the negative stereotypes of Hispanics. She did not want others to place the same negative stereotypes she had of Hispanics from her hometown on her; therefore, she distanced herself from this identity. For Maya it was difficult to reconcile how to be successful and maintain her racial and ethnic identities. However, Maya was not the only student in the study who had difficulty reconciling identity and associations with others. Several African American students articulated similar difficulties.

Not Black Enough

Similar to what the Latino students discussed above, Sandy, Ama, and Orlando discussed perceptions of African American and Black racial identity at SWSU. Sandy and Orlando both had experiences at SWSU where their African American racial identity was questioned. Ama, who is Filipina and Black, but identified more as Black also discussed her own racial identity, but did so in a way that differed from Sandy and Orlando's experiences. Prior to attending SWSU Sandy, an African American senior, had a very diverse group of friends, but once she started at SWSU she had an either-or choice when it came to race and friendships. In her first year, most of Sandy's friends were White, and she had one Hispanic friend. During her interview, she talked about wanting to go to a meeting of an organization comprised of all African American women during her freshman year, but she felt a little uncomfortable. She stated,

> I went to a Black Connections[24] meeting and I was so scared, it was not like a culture shock, because I'd been around Black people before but I mean I was always thinking they're judging me because I don't hang out with that many Black people.

For Sandy, joining Black Connections meant she might be judged by this group of Black women as not being Black enough. As such, she believed she might not fit in with this group. Based on the reactions she received from others, Sandy's experiences told her that Black racial identity was about who you hung out with.

Another African American student, Orlando, had similar experiences to Sandy's. Orlando believed that being Black was about whom you hung out with, but it is also about those people being your family. He stated, "you just get raised with you know,

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[24] Black Connections is a pseudonym.

Black people, and everybody's family, you're all going to stick together, you know." In

Orlando's experience being raised Black was about the community becoming your

family; however, he believed being Black meant something different to younger people at

SWSU. He said, "it's so easy to act hard and try to be a gangster, and wear your pants

down on your ass…and all that. All that stuff just gives us a negative image." Orlando

found that for many of the younger African American men on campus being Black meant

"acting hard" or being "gangster." He also believed that young Black men were

persuaded by the media's depiction of what it means to be Black, rather than by the

familial values he was raised with. He stated, it's about "playing sports…I'm a thug, you

can't mess with me." He admitted that as a high school student he subscribed to the

media's images of Blackness, wearing his pants low and trying to "act hard." As a

college student he came to believe that if he wanted to be taken seriously he needed to

change his look and how he carried himself. As a result, he described that it was a

conscious decision to start to wear pants pulled up and his shirts tucked in. Because

Orlando's dress and demeanor did not fit the mainstream image of Black men, on campus

he sometimes experienced:

> backlash, like I hear rumors and comments like "aw, he's going to be
> uppity" and you know, "he thinks he too good," and this is coming from
> the brother that's in the Quad with his pants down to his knees wearing a
> wife beater.

Orlando's behavior and dress is consistent with Cooper's (2005) work on Black

masculinities in which he discusses the "bipolar" mentality that exists for Black men.

Cooper posits that popular depictions of Black men show them only as the criminal "Bad

Black Man" or as the "Good Black Man" who distances himself from his race. Because

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Orlando did not dress the same way some of the other younger Black students did, he was

not legitimated by them as Black. Berry (2003) might say that Orlando engaged in

separation by distancing himself from the normative way in which African American

men at SWSU dressed. Although he differed in this way from the essentialized or

dominant African American identity, he also had a counterspace on which he could rely,

his Black fraternity. While he seemed troubled by the "backlash" he experienced,

Orlando took solace in his mentors and in his fraternity. His fraternity brothers had a

similar mindset and he described how the brothers dressed similarly to him, with their

shirts tucked in and pants pulled up. Although he wasn't "Black enough" for some at

SWSU, his fraternity did serve as a counterspace from White college life as well as a

counterspace from Black dominant culture. His fraternity became a place where he could

be himself and separate, but not be completely marginalized (Berry, 2003).

Like Sandy and Orlando, Ama also discussed the idea of not being Black enough.

However, unlike the other two she did not discuss her experiences as directly. Ama who

identified as Black, but is also half Filipina described how students judged others based

on race and group membership. She stated:

> Black people do join the White sororities and fraternities…I know a lot of
> guys who are Black and join white fraternities…But it's like the Black
> guys that join the White fraternities, you, you call him the White Black
> boy. He's a White Black boy. And it's like they're the type, oh, yeah,
> they don't talk to Black girls. This one guy was really cute and I was like,
> "Oh, who is he?" Oh, yeah, he only talks to White girls.

Ama explained that students believed there was a certain profile of Black men

who joined White fraternities. She said that these men did not date Black women and

these young men were even given a name by others in their same racial group—"White

Black boys." There has been a long history of power being associated with names which dates back to Greek mythology (Gasque, 1999) and contemporary works such as LaDuke's (2005) contextualize the power of naming with the United States. LaDuke (2005) stated:

> There is power in naming, in renaming. That power is widely abused in the United States. Many communities struggle with names given to them by others, and deconstructing of the categories and borders placed on identity. (p.132)

By naming the Black young men in the White fraternities, "White Black boys" some power has been taken from them. Moreover, calling these young men "boys" also stripped them of the power and prominence they had as young men. The tone and demeanor Ama took at this point in her interview demonstrated her disapproval that these young men dated White women and joined a White fraternity. By capturing some of this power Ama helped to establish norms about what it meant to have a Black racial identity at SWSU. For Ama, identity was not just what your race appeared to be on the outside, but it was also about who you associated and hung out with.

Ama's categorization of "White Black boys" is striking because she is biracial. While she is Filipino and Black, Ama based her own identity on how others saw her, as Black. She stated:

> You see…I'm a mix. I'm half Filipino and half Black, and there's this thing and it's all in history books, you know if you have any Black in you, you're Black. And that's how it is. And with my skin color, I mean I connect better with people of my skin color…most, all of my friends are Black, honestly.

Moreover, Ama also described how her Black father pushed her to embrace her Filipino identity:

My Asian side of my family, I mean I don't want to say I'm out casted, but almost…with my dad, he always asks me…"Oh, are you going to join the Asian Student Alliance too?" I'm like, "No, I mean, you know they're going to look at me crazy if I go in there." Okay, not crazy, but I mean, growing up, it was just, I mean, I just always gravitated towards what I connected with and that's what you see on the outside. So it's like there's the Black people. I'm going to go to the Black people.

Ama believed that people saw her skin color before anything else and therefore others labeled her as Black. For her, the way others saw her impacted how she saw and identified herself. Because she believed others viewed her as Black she hung out with others with her same skin tone. Ama also labeled Black males in White fraternities "White Black boys" based on who they hung out with. Essentially, Ama was using the way she was labeled to label others. When paired with Sandy's comments, a picture begins to form where we can see that the messages these women were receiving was that Black identity is at least in part defined by hanging out with others who identified as Black; and that association with others who were Black legitimates one's Blackness.

In revisiting Sandy's experience, she believed that she would receive criticism from the women in Black Connections for not hanging out with "that many Black people," but she also experienced criticism from her White friends once she joined a historically African American sorority as a sophomore. Once she joined this Greek organization her friends became almost entirely African American, and it was difficult for her to maintain friendships with her White friends. She stated:

I joined [name of sorority] in my sophomore year…people [my friends from freshman year] were moving in apartments, so we were all split up. So it was hard to regain our friendship… after I got into the organization [sorority], I was like "hey, I'm in this organization now." But they didn't understand me because a lot of them were White people and White people don't really understand the sorority thing. They were like, "Oh, you just

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left us for Black friends", and I was like, "No, I really didn't." So they kind of dropped me like a bad habit.

Sandy's experience illustrates that even when students are interested in maintaining a racially diverse group of friends it can be difficult to do. When she joined her predominantly Black sorority Sandy had to choose friend groups—either she hung out with her White friends from her freshman year, or she hung out with her Black friends who were Greek. Based on the cues she was receiving from both Black and White peer groups Sandy did not believe that she had any options to maintain both groups of friends. Rather, her perceptions led her to believe she could not maintain two groups of friends simultaneously. Sandy's experience demonstrates the challenges students can have maintaining two racially distinct groups of friends. If it was this difficult for her to maintain these two groups of friends, amongst some groups at SWSU it would be very challenging to promote cross-racial interaction.

Summary

Students at SWSU made many assumptions based on their perceptions about race and cross-racial interactions at SWSU. Regardless of whether their assumptions were correct or incorrect students were using them to make decisions about others, and about whether or not they would engage with others of diverse backgrounds. Students made decisions about what organizations to join, and which, if any professional associations they should belong to according to their perceptions about how others saw them.

By not engaging in cross-racial interactions students were missing out on opportunities. Several students of color did not join the professional associations

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affiliated with their majors because they did not feel comfortable or because they were already involved in cultural organizations where they felt comfortable. Participants described that their initial discomfort in these co-curricular settings hinged on compositional diversity. They described that some professional clubs and organizations at SWSU were not very compositionally diverse and the lack of diversity impacted whether or not they decided to join. Daniel, a Latino student, said that the comfort he experienced in his same race fraternity kept him involved in Greek life such that he did not invest time in joining any of the predominantly White professional associations associated with his business major. By remaining outside of these professional associations students of color did not gain access to professional networks or build industry specific skills and competencies.

Greek organizations housed under the Panhellenic Council and the Interfraternity Council seemed to be primarily mono-racial and did not promote cross-racial interaction; in fact they seemed to stifle cross-racial interactions. Greek organizations at SWSU epitomized students' perceptions of organizations being mono-racial and epitomized perceptions of racial separation at SWSU. Because Greek organizations had this reputation, cross-racial interactions were stymied by students' perceptions of them as mono-racial and exclusionary. Black and Latino Greek organizations were perceived by African American and Latino participants as safe spaces at SWSU; yet White Greek organizations were perceived as exclusionary by students of all racial backgrounds.

Black and Latino Greek organizations survived the criticism of students far better than White Greek organizations. Black Greek organizations were implicated upon occasion as being racially separate, but it appeared that there was far less blame placed

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upon them for initiating racial separation. In fact, Janelle's explanation that Black Greek organizations formed because African Americans were excluded from White Greek organizations provided justification for the existence of Black Greek organizations on campus. While they are mono-racial organizations, Black & Latino Greek organizations, Juntos Conectado and Black Connections were discussed as counterspaces for some students of color. These organizations were effective counterspaces for some students and allowed them a place of respite on their predominately White campus.

Yet, the same organizations were not perceived as safe spaces for all students. In fact, they served as sources of anxiety and agitation for students of color who did not fit the essentialized identity represented within them. On a campus that is predominantly White and where students of color experience racial hostility, it is important for students of color to have safe spaces, or counterspaces, where they can find respite.

The formation of counterspaces coupled with the existence of racially homogenous Greek organizations may have deleterious effects on the overall campus racial climate at SWSU, as both types of organizations may inadvertently separate the campus by race. These separate spaces lead to students experiencing difficulty when expressing racial identities that differ from the essentialized norms. Additionally, biracial students had to choose one racial identity over another, and students of all racial backgrounds experienced difficulty maintaining interracial groups of friends.

Race is such a powerful social construct that it defines how we negotiate racially diverse spaces. Therefore, even when students come to college and are members of the same SWSU community with opportunities to engage interracially, their opportunities are constricted by the larger context and power of race and what it means to be racialized.

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Although participants in this study have the mutual setting of SWSU in common, the conceptions of racialized identity they brought with them to college still affected them three and four years after arriving on campus. The experiences students are having with race and cross-racial interaction at SWSU have larger implications for all of higher education. This broader context will be addressed in the conclusion, Chapter IX.

CHAPTER VIII

EMERGING AS A HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTION

Overview

The findings about students' impressions of their institution becoming an HSI were varied. Overall, students at SWSU valued cross-racial interaction and believed that increasing diversity at SWSU was important. They believed the university should recruit more students of color to help diversify the student body; however, there were some interesting nuances that suggested some students did not think becoming an HSI was good for students from all racial backgrounds. Other students believed that diversity was important, but thought it should be initiated for altruistic reasons rather than to obtain additional funding through a Title V grant.

Before discussing findings about students' impressions of SWSU becoming an HSI, I want to briefly remind readers about the Title V funding associated with becoming an HSI. Several students discussed that the funding associated with SWSU becoming an HSI played a role in their opinion about SWSU becoming an HSI. These findings will be discussed later in this chapter.

HSIs are institutions that have at least 25% or more of their full-time equivalent students identifying as Hispanic. In addition, at least 50% of the total student population must be low-income; however, institutions can request a waiver for this requirement.

Once institutions are designated as HSIs, they may become eligible to receive Title V

funding through a competitive grant process (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). HSIs

were placed under Title V, also known as the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Program, of the Higher Education Act because Congress determined that Hispanics are

less likely to enroll in and graduate from college, especially when compared to Whites.

HSIs educate a disproportionate number of Hispanic students compared with other post-

secondary institutions, and HSIs receive substantially less money from the state and local

governments compared with other higher education institutions (U.S. Department of

Education, 2009). Under Title V, HSIs receive federal dollars to:

> Expand and enhance the academic offerings, program quality, and institutional
> stability of colleges and universities that are educating the majority of Hispanic
> college students and helping large number of Hispanic students and other low-
> income individuals complete postsecondary degrees. (U.S. Department of
> Education, 2009, p. 1)

This context, especially the financial component, is important contextual information as

several students noted that they did not believe SWSU should become an HSI for the sole

purpose of receiving grant money.

Salience of the Emerging HSI Setting

While this study focuses on students' cross-racial interactions during college, the

college they are attending is an Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution. When discussing

cross-racial interactions, institutional context has salience and influences whether or not

students engage in cross-racial interactions and what these interactions are like. If there is

little or no compositional diversity at an institution, students have fewer opportunities for

interactions across race (Milem, et al., 2005). Therefore, institutional context matters. As

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an Emerging HSI with 24% of its students identifying as Latino/Hispanic and another 8% of the student population identifying as African American, Asian, or Native American, SWSU had a sizeable non-White population. Given this diverse setting, I wanted to know what students thought about the institution becoming an HSI and how they thought this change in designation would influence their cross-racial interactions, if at all.

Although Emerging HSIs have a sizable Latino population, some of these institutions are also still predominantly and traditionally White institutions. SWSU is one such institution. While 32% of SWSU students identified as students of color, 68% of students identified as White. Despite having a majority White student population, Emerging HSIs can be decidedly distinct from predominantly White institutions. The research findings of Santiago & Andrade (2010) explain this distinction when they state, "some Emerging HSIs had already adapted their educational practices and policies to better serve their Latino students" (p. 3). Emerging HSIs' specific emphasis on Latino students is unlike traditionally White institutions that may not necessarily focus on Latino students. Margarita Benitez highlighted the importance of service to Latinos in defining institutional culture when she stated, "You don't have to wait to reach 25 percent to ask yourself what you can do for Hispanic students," (Hernandez, 2010).

Although Benitez (2010) and Santiago and Andrade (2010) assert that service to Latinos at an HSI does not have to be contingent on enrollment, based on the findings of my study, SWSU was not overtly engaged in service to Latinos. That is, students did not report seeing signs that as an Emerging HSI, SWSU was specifically serving Latinos. Rather, those that were aware that SWSU was becoming an HSI believed it had more to do with enrollment than with service.

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Varied Knowledge of HSIs

Ideas about what it means to be an HSI and an Emerging HSI are still developing (Santiago & Andrade, 2010). Many institutions are grappling with what the HSI designation implies and how, or if, they should promote this designation publicly in a meaningful way. Given that the term Hispanic-Serving Institution is fairly new and is continually evolving, I did not anticipate many, if any, participants would have heard of this designation. To my surprise, many SWSU students had heard of the HSI designation. However, they had varying degrees of knowledge about HSIs. In total 15 of the 26 participants had some knowledge of what an HSI was and that SWSU was attempting to reach this designation. Eleven of the 26 students did not know anything about HSIs, and had not heard the term Hispanic-Serving Institution. Of the students who had heard of HSIs the knowledge they had was varied. Several students learned about SWSU's HSI designation through more formal means of communication, such as formal meetings with university officials and published university documents. Other students learned about HSIs in more informal ways—through friends or roommates. Still others had heard of HSIs, but had misinformation about them.

Sandy and Orlando both knew SWSU was trying to become an HSI and learned about this designation from a leadership organization to which they both belonged. Within this organization, Sandy and Orlando had met the President of SWSU and attended Trustee's meetings where SWSU's status as an Emerging HSI had been discussed. While they did not fully understand all of the complexities around the designation, they did have a general understanding of what it meant to become an HSI.

Erika learned about the HSI designation by reading a brochure published by

SWSU, a few days prior to our interview. Although she had read what was published in

the brochure she did not feel terribly knowledgeable about the topic. Megan learned that

SWSU was becoming an HSI from the website and other marketing materials, but did not

think that there was "super-hyper marketing" about it. Rosie learned about HSIs by

attending a symposium on campus about HSIs where there were various professors

visiting campus to speak about the topic. Ishmael learned about SWSU becoming an HSI

from another student leader who was in the Latino Students Association with him.

Madelyn, Ama, and Sara also had some knowledge of HSIs, but learned about

SWSU becoming an HSI through more informal processes. The information these

students had about this designation was much more limited than that of Sandy and

Orlando. Madelyn learned about HSIs from her roommate who made a presentation about

HSIs for one of her classes and did a practice presentation in front of Madelyn. Ama and

Sara had heard the term "Hispanic-Serving Institution," but could not remember where

they learned of it, and their knowledge about HSIs was more limited than the others

discussed above.

Isabel, Daniel, and Gabriel had heard of HSIs, but had an erroneous sense of what

they were. Isabel had heard about HSIs, but when I asked her for more about what she

knew, Isabel described HSIs to be intuitions that were actively recruiting Hispanic

students and believed there were only a couple HSIs, one of which was in Utah.

Recruiting Hispanic students is one component of what it means to be an HSI, but service

to Latinos is another component she was not aware of. Additionally, in contrast to

Isabel's believe that there were only a few HSIs, there are more than 230 HSIs, or by

some counts more than 250 HSIs, and there are not any HSIs in Utah. Daniel had heard

about HSIs, but equated them almost entirely with recruitment of Latino students. Gabriel

learned about SWSU becoming an HSI in his statistics class, but he actually used the

term Hispanic-Serving *Institute*, rather than a Hispanic-Serving *Institution*. The

information students had about HSIs was partially accurate, but also demonstrates the

lack of information they had about these institutions and the misinformation that students

communicated to one another.

Heather was not familiar with the term Hispanic-Serving Institution, but she was

aware that there was an initiative at SWSU to have more Hispanic students attend and

graduate. She understood this initiative was created in order to better serve the Hispanic

population within the region. Julianne had not heard of HSIs, but once I explained what

HSIs were, she was not surprised the SWSU was becoming an HSI, based on the high

proportion of Hispanics in the region.

More than half of the students in this study (23) had some knowledge of the

designation which demonstrates that SWSU was getting the word out, to some degree,

about its intentions to become an HSI and more accurately represent the racial

demographics of the region. An article from the university's newspaper described the

president of SWSU's excitement about the university becoming an HSI because it meant

that the institution would be more representative of the demographics of the region. The

president stated,

> Southwestern State University is a school that is deliberately a diverse
> university…We have very high graduation rates that are high across all
> ethnic groups. What this says to Hispanic students, or any student, is
> you're going to be successful and we want you to come to Southwestern
> State to be successful. (Citation withheld for anonymity, 2010)

Continuing to get the word out publicly, through the campus paper and other venues, that SWSU has become an HSI will enhance current and potential students' knowledge of what HSIs are, and what it means that SWSU is an HSI. Present findings suggest that students have limited information about HSIs or misunderstand what HSIs are. Of the students who were familiar with the HSI designation, most of them understood HSIs to be institutions that focused on the recruitment of Latinos. Keeping in mind the comments of Benitez that institutions do not have to "wait to reach 25% [Latino] to ask yourself what you can do for Hispanic students" (Hernandez, 2010) thus far, students understand the HSI designation at SWSU to mean that the institution will enroll more Hispanic students, not necessarily to serve the students once they arrive on campus. As demonstrated in the sections below, students have varying opinions about whether or not the HSI designation would be positive for SWSU and they had varying opinions of how they believe the HSI designation should be operationalized at SWSU.

Understanding the HSI designation

As previously stated, students brought different levels of knowledge about HSIs to their interviews and had different ideas about whether or not SWSU becoming an HSI was positive or negative. Their impressions and opinions fell into different categories:

- becoming an HSI is positive because it promotes diversity;
- becoming an HSI is a kind of community service;
- becoming an HSI promotes college access;
- is becoming an HSI good for all or just good for some?;
- the impact of becoming an HSI has on non-Latino students; and

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- SWSU is becoming an HSI to get money.

Each of these different perspectives is described below.

Becoming an HSI Promotes Diversity

Eleven of the 26 participants believed that SWSU becoming an HSI as positive.

Overwhelmingly, students wanted to see more diversity at SWSU and believed that

becoming an HSI was a way to increase diversity. Students also thought that becoming an

HSI was a way to promote understanding about differences. Madelyn, a White senior

expressed that SWSU becoming an HSI would have a positive effect on students across

the campus, in terms of understanding differences. She said:

> I think it helps it, but I don't know. I think at Southwestern State it helps
> it a lot because of our location. Having more Hispanic students might
> prompt other ethnic backgrounds or different race groups to learn Spanish
> and to learn a foreign language to be able to communicate with somebody
> in their native tongue. It frustrates me when people say "you're in
> America so speak English because English is our top language."

For Madelyn, increasing language acquisition was a possible positive outcome of

SWSU becoming an HSI. For her, increasing the prevalence of Spanish speakers at

SWSU might encourage others at SWSU to also learn Spanish thereby increasing

communication between people and fostering a shared sense of understanding. In

addition to speaking about the benefits of Spanish at SWSU, Madelyn also spoke about

how non-Hispanic students would be affected by SWSU becoming an HSI. She said:

> I don't think it [becoming an HSI] should be an issue. I think they should
> welcome more students. Every school wants to grow in some way and
> having more students here gives more options for students and it will grow
> more options for classes and parking might show up, better dorms might
> appear.

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Madelyn, believed that becoming an HSI was a non-issue and thought that non-Hispanic students would reap many benefits. In addition to becoming more diverse and gaining additional exposure to new cultures and languages, students at SWSU would also benefit from the money received through Title V funding by becoming an HSI. Similar to Madelyn, Josh thought the HSI designation would benefit all students and would promote cross-racial interaction. He stated:

> I think it is great to get more students involved. It's great for other minorities to interact and majorities to interact with the Hispanics as well. My town I came from was very Caucasian and African American so I had interacted with those two groups. But coming to [this state], especially in college, and a few generations back being Hispanic, I don't have that culture…for a lot of Caucasian students here and in [the state] in general, grew up in these towns that are almost all White. They're coming here and they're very closed minded. But they are getting to know other people that they never got to interact with before…I think it is a good benefit for everyone. We are all getting to learn about other people and getting to educate ourselves together. I think it's great.

Josh recognized that students were coming to SWSU from communities that were not racially diverse. He saw the move to becoming an HSI as an opportunity for Caucasian students to learn from people they do not normally interact with. Josh included himself in this group noting that he hoped the additional Latino population would provide an opportunity for him to learn more about his Cuban and Puerto Rican ancestry.

Leanne who is White also saw becoming an HSI as beneficial for learning about others. She stated,

> if we're going to be in the community, we need to serve the community…I hear that our Hispanic population is going to continue to grow and if we're going to be in a place that has a lot of Hispanic people, we need to serve Hispanic students in an appropriate way, and in a way that makes them feel welcome and a part of the system. But in general, I believe that everyone deserves an equitable opportunity to get into a good university and so regardless of if they're Hispanic or if they're White or if they're

African American or Asian or wherever they're from I think then they should be able to have that opportunity. And I think that those diverse world views only serve to strengthen the education in general because in a university, not only do you learn from your classes and your teachers, but you learn from your fellow students just as much as you do from anything else, if not more so.

Madelyn, Josh, and Leanne all discussed the benefits of SWSU becoming an HSI and the positive effects it could have on all students. Additionally, Josh and Leanne's statements also captured the importance of interaction with diverse others that is expressed in the literature—that college campuses are becoming increasingly diverse (Carnevale, & Fry, 2000; Hussar & Bailey, 2006) and that students learn tremendously from interacting with diverse classmates (Antonio, 2001; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado, et al. 1994; Hurtado, et al. 2004; Milem, 1994).

HSI Designation as a Means of College Access

In addition to students discussing that SWSU becoming an HSI would promote diversity outcomes and learning across difference, students also saw SWSU becoming an HSI as positive because it would promote greater access to college. Leanne conveyed as much when she stated,

> if we're going to be in a place that has a lot of Hispanic people, we need to serve Hispanic students in an appropriate way, and in a way that makes them feel welcome and a part of the system. But in general, I believe that everyone deserves an equitable opportunity to get into a good university if we are going to be a place that has a lot of Hispanic people.

Leanne expanded on this idea and spoke more specifically about how the HSI designation would also create more of a pathway for college access. She stated,

> I think it's a good idea *(chuckles).* Because…we're here in [name of state] and [city name] is a vast majority Hispanic…I think some people would be happy about it for the same reasons that I'm happy about it—it brings

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diversity, it serves the community that we live in. And gives people that may have historically not had as much of a chance to experience a university education, gives them more of an opportunity and makes them feel more welcome and supported.

For Leanne, increasing the Hispanic enrollment was not just about the benefits currently enrolled SWSU students could gain, but she also saw it as an obligation SWSU had to serve the community in which the university was situated. Leanne had a social justice orientation and believed that becoming an HSI and increasing the Hispanic enrollment was one way SWSU provide more equitable educational opportunities for Hispanics. Like Leanne, Sara, who is White, also thought SWSU becoming an HSI could increase college access. She stated:

> I think a lot more conferences and stuff will be held here if that happens [SWSU becomes an HSI]. And so that's bringing in different schools to our campus and different professors and everything to our campus. Maybe people who are thinking about grad school or getting a doctorate…and besides Hispanics, more resources and more opportunities for every student.

Sara volunteered regularly in overwhelmingly Hispanic schools in the area surrounding SWSU and was optimistic that an HSI being in the backyard of the students with whom she worked would positively influence their educational experiences. She stated,

> I think with [Hispanic] students here—high school just telling them that there is a Hispanic-Serving Institution, right up the street they're going to have a lot more things for you than another school can have, they're going to have a lot more things you can relate to more and a lot more things you can get involved in—I think it will benefit them [sic].

Sara was hopeful about more Hispanic residents of Southwestern City attending SWSU as a result of SWSU attaining the HSI designation. Nationally, 11.7% of college students were Hispanic in 2007, but of this Hispanic college population, only 26.4%

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graduate within four years (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Having proximal access to a college is an asset and could assist many Latino residents of Southwestern City if they were able to take advantage of a college education. Research demonstrates that those who attend college have higher lifetime earnings (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, no date; Day & Newburger, 2002), and nationally, Hispanics have lower household incomes than Whites or Asians (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).[25] Furthermore, residents have additional collegiate opportunities if they are able to take advantage of *The Promise* program discussed below.

Title V of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act (which is the title under which HSIs receive their funding) provides discretionary spending to organizations and institutions of higher education to "expand their capacity to serve minority and low-income students" (U.S. Department of Education (2005). In addition to striving to become an HSI and serving minority students, SWSU also maintains initiatives to serve low-income students. SWSU has one such initiative I have named *"The Promise"* which assists low-income students with financing their college education at SWSU. *The Promise* is for first-time entering (non-transfer) freshman who are state residents. The goal of *The Promise* is, "helping guarantee all [state name] children have access to a higher education, regardless of their family's financial resources."

While SWSU's HSI initiative and *The Promise* are distinct, they do influence one another. Assuming the income of Latinos in the region mirrors income levels nationally, in that their incomes are lower than Whites, by increasing the low-income population via

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[25] Median household income for Southwestern City was not available by race, but the median household income for all races was $26, 357 in 2009.

The Promise initiative, SWSU may also be increasing the Latino population. By coupling

these initiatives SWSU may be fulfilling the charge of the state: to serve the residents of

the region and increase the university's Latino population (citation withheld for

anonymity, 2007). These suppositions and Sara's hopefulness about local Latino college

attendance are supported by Santiago's (2007) findings. Santiago's (2007) findings reveal

that Latino students' tend to enroll in colleges near their homes and in colleges with a

lower cost.

HSI Designation: Good for Some or Good for All?

Overwhelmingly students at SWSU believed the HSI designation would be

positive for the institution and for students. Despite their feelings of support, participants

believed that the designation would affect SWSU students of different racial backgrounds

differently. Students' opinions sometimes aligned by race, but not in all cases. Maya, a

Hispanic junior said:

> Obviously, Hispanics would like it [the HSI designation], but a lot of
> people would be like, "then why can't Whites have it? Why can't Blacks
> have it? Then the Blacks need to get it too once they reach that percentage
> as well." So I mean I think that'd be like some arguments on it. Like,
> why [pause] why just us? Why Hispanics? What's so special about us
> now? Why? Because we're going to be the majority in the future?

Maya wondered "what's so special about us?" and stated throughout her interview

that she did not want to be singled out for being Hispanic. Erika, who is White and

Hispanic also stated, "I don't know if the Hispanics should get special treatment."

Conversely, Daniel who identified as Latino wanted additional attention paid to Latinos

from his home town. He said,

They're trying to get more Hispanics coming here. And I do see that but I kind of have a problem with it…they're always bringing [students from] schools from the [name of region with large Latino population]. And I guess for me growing up, I grew up in a prosperous town. It's ranked top ten of the best places to live in the United States. It's a nice town. Growing up, my parents didn't go to college. And so they were always saying "go to college." I didn't know what college was. I feel like they didn't talk too much about college in school. We had good schools. The teachers would talk about it but we never had schools come to us. Come take a day and come to our school. I feel like—maybe not just me necessarily, being Hispanic but other kids from our school weren't given the same opportunities…I wish Southwestern State would have come to our school because honestly, the things they do would have got me excited to come to college. Like walking around the campus, going to dining halls, and having lunch. It's an experience. It really is an experience.

While all three of these students identified as Hispanic/Latino, they had differing opinions about how much attention should be given to Latino students and racial identity. Maya and Erika did not want to be singled out because of their race, but Daniel believed that Latinos in his home could really use additional help with college preparation.

Two White seniors, Sara and Holly believed that that becoming an HSI would be positive for SWSU, but thought some people might not like the designation and described that becoming an HSI could be viewed as a racist act by some. Sara said:

I guess there will be a few people who wouldn't want it [the HSI designation], but I think that would be out of ignorance…If they're racist or they don't feel they want a lot of Hispanics coming to our school—then they might not like that.

Holly, echoed this statement when she stated:

Well, since we're in [state name], I think some people would be pissed (chuckles). I mean you look at the attitudes sometimes, you hear really derogatory things and not everyone thinks that everyone has the right to the same sort of education and privilege.

Holly and Sara both intimated that those who are racist or ignorant would not be accepting of people of all racial backgrounds. Holly went on to say that these types of opinions cut across racial lines. She expressed:

> I think that it would be a divide between happy and angry and I think [these emotions] would encompass all ethnicities. Because I know that some of these kinds of things aren't seen as a positive thing to ethnic groups. I know African Americans for and against affirmative action, Mexican Americans for and against affirmative action; everyone's got their own opinion.

Students overwhelmingly felt positive about HSIs and believed that acquiring the designation would be a good way to increase campus diversity and Latino college access. However, there was also an underlying sentiment of "what about us?" or "what about the others?" Students either did not want their own group left out or did not want to see others who could benefit left out. Leanne who is White and talked extensively about the benefits of HSIs in providing opportunities and equity, also noted that others may see the HSI designation differently:

> I would say most people would be happy about [the HSI designation] but I know there are some people that wouldn't be happy about it…people who wouldn't want it would probably feel like because there is a focus on serving Hispanic students in particular, that that might take away from White people's opportunity…I shake my head because just historically, White people have been given a lot of things that they don't acknowledge. They just have, they all say that they pull themselves up by their bootstraps and that nobody's helped them but historically, the government has helped White people exclusively and given them things like land and money to do things—taken it away from people of color, and now people are all up in arms about affirmative action, when affirmative action existed for a very long time, but it used to only serve White people and so I don't know. I think people just get bent out of shape without really understanding context.

Most students believed that becoming an HSI would have a positive impact on campus. However, several students also understood that some people may have negative

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reactions to SWSU becoming an HSI that would be the result of ignorance. Although

students had limited information about what it meant to be an HSI, the comments above

demonstrate their awareness that SWSU becoming an HSI is not just a White-Hispanic

issue, but is an issue that cuts across racial lines and affects students of all racial

backgrounds.

HSI Impact on Non-Latino Students

Despite an overwhelming positive response to SWSU becoming an HSI, some

African American students and one Hispanic student described how the new designation

could provide negative impressions for some. Maya, a Hispanic junior commented on

how other races might be affected as a result of the focus on Hispanics. She thought some

groups might, "get racially neglected because they [SWSU] would rather have a diverse

community to make an institution look more diverse. 'Oh we accept coloreds so we're

going to ignore Whites just so we can look better.'"

Julianne did not have a problem with SWSU becoming an HSI, but thought that

White students might. She said:

> What surprises me is when you hear stuff like the other races get upset.
> Especially the White race who doesn't have the same problems that
> Hispanic and Black students have…It should be a norm—to help whatever
> group is having those kind of problems [sic].

Julianne believed that becoming an HSI was a matter of equity and such an

initiative helped a population in need. However, as is often the case, those who are not

receiving direct benefits or services do not always see initiatives as fair. Along this same

line, Warren thought becoming an HSI was a good idea but believed other racial groups

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should not be ignored just because there was a specific focus on Hispanic students. He

stated:

> I would say it wouldn't be a bad thing [becoming an HSI]. Maybe they
> can do the same for African Americans or the Asians…maybe not as high
> a percent because they're demographics are not the same—maybe if you
> made the Asians, ten percent and maybe the African Americans, maybe
> twenty. I think you can focus on one at a time but I think it should impact
> everybody.

Rather than looking at the HSI designation as a means of *equity*, where those with

the most need get the most services, Warren believed the way to be fair was through

promoting *equality* where all groups had access to the same resources. In addition to

wanting to see a more equal distribution of resources and initiatives, Warren also thought

that other students might not view it positively. He said, "I think the main reaction would

be 'oh, okay,' but I think a small percentage of people would be upset…I think for some

populations such as African Americans, people might be upset."

While Sandy thought the designation was good, she understood that some African

Americans might not see it the same way. She stated,

> some populations, such as African Americans might be upset, but then if
> you say well, these are the numbers…we're eight percent or five percent
> or whatever, versus almost a 25% population, we're serving them, but
> we're still serving you…we still represent you as part of the student body
> but let's just be real. We also have a very large population of these people,
> so we have to embrace that in everything that we do.

Sandy understood that some African Americans would not see the HSI

designation as positive because increasing the Latino population could send the signal

that Latinos are more important than African Americans. Orlando agreed with Sandy's

comments and explained how he thought that the effect the HSI designation could have

on African Americans could be both positive and negative. He said:

It can work as a positive, they [prospective students] see that we're more diverse and more friendly to diversity, then more African American students want to apply and come here. But then I also see it as you know, our [African American] percentage will look even smaller as compared to the rest [of the student population] and kind of discourage others.

While Orlando personally believed any additional diversity could encourage all students, including African Americans, to attend a more diverse SWSU, he also understood how others could view it differently. Ama spoke to this point when she expressed what her impressions would have been as a prospective student considering SWSU if it was an HSI. She stated,

whenever you hear that name [Hispanic-Serving Institution], you would assume that it's a historically Hispanic university and what not, and I know that if I [pause]…I wouldn't want to come to a university that would be majority Hispanic…I feel like I, why would I go to majority Hispanic school when I might as well just go to a majority Black school?

In her interview Ama said she thought about going to an HBCU for college, but in the end decided on SWSU because she wanted to attend an institution where there were all different types of people. She stated, "my college is the real world and I feel like if you went to historically Black college, I mean, you're going to be around Black people all the time and it's not a good representation of how life is." By having and promoting the HSI designation, Ama would have been given the impression that SWSU would be the Hispanic version of an HBCU. In seeking a higher education experience that was diverse, she did not believe attending a majority Hispanic institution would give her the diverse "real world" college experience she wanted. Furthermore, for Ama, if she was going to attend an institution with one predominant race, she would prefer that it be an HBCU, an institution where the majority would be her own race.

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Another African American female, Audrey, also conveyed a similar sentiment.[26] She believed that some non-Hispanic students may not want to attend SWSU if they heard it was a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Some prospective students might think SWSU would be an institution at which they would feel uncomfortable and/or unwelcome. Audrey also thought the high percentage of Latino students was already affecting African American students. She believed that SWSU was one of "the best kept secrets from African Americans" in the state and that many African American students were not coming to SWSU because there were not very many African American students on campus. Drawing from Audrey's comments, by SWSU striving to become an HSI the institution may have been focusing more attention on Latinos and not on African Americans.

Findings presented in earlier chapters demonstrated that students felt more comfortable in collegiate settings in which they were not the sole member of their racial group. Interviews with students clearly indicate that SWSU has a two-pronged challenge: serving and increasing its Latino population, while remaining a visible and viable option for African American students. Because SWSU is transitioning from being a traditionally White institution to being a Hispanic-Serving Institution it is important for the institution to consider marketing and how others will view the university. As a public institution SWSU is open to students of all backgrounds, but they must make sure prospective and current students see it that way; especially if the intention of becoming an HSI is to better represent the demographics of the state. While the Latino population is growing

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[26] Please note that Audrey declined being audio recorded therefore I do not have many exact quotations from
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significantly in the town and within the state, it is also important to remember there are sizable African American and White populations in the state. Not only is it important to serve all of the residents of the state, but it is also important that all populations understand what it means for SWSU to be an HSI. Therefore, in addition to specific efforts being made to recruit Latinos, more attention may need to be paid to defining what it means that SWSU is an HSI and educating others about this definition.

<div align="center">**It's for the Money**</div>

Eleven of the 26 students in the study worried that part of the reason SWSU was trying to become an HSI was to obtain the Title V funding associated with the HSI designation. Overwhelmingly, these students did not think funding was the right reason for the institution to be focusing on this designation and instead believed that SWSU should become an HSI for altruistic reasons; essentially, because promoting diversity is the right thing to do. This sentiment was exemplified by Holly who stated:

> I think it's awesome any time a university can get more money. I just hope they would use it wisely and if they're getting it as a designation for having a diverse population, they should use it towards diversity and for that population. They should use it towards retention programs for the population of people that they've gotten this money…and support services or other organizations. Not adding to the football stadium.

Holly saw the possibility of receiving a Title V grant as an added bonus to becoming an HSI; however, she wanted to make sure any additional funds would directly support students, not support what she believed to be ancillary university structures. Josh expressed a similar point of view when he stated,

> I think that's great. I think this school should be doing it [bringing in more Hispanics]. They shouldn't be doing it for money though. I feel strongly against that…it's important for them to be doing it for the right

reasons and not for the money. I think that when people here think it is just for money it doesn't look good…If they are going into it as we just want more money for our school then it's not right and that upsets me.

Where Holly was concerned that any monies be used wisely, Josh wanted to make sure the university was becoming an HSI for social justice reasons and because serving Latinos was the right thing to do. He did not believe SWSU should be pursuing the HSI designation with the intention of receiving funds. Like Josh, Erika who is Hispanic also did not want SWSU to become an HSI just to get money. She wanted SWSU to strive to become an HSI for altruistic reasons; however, when she commented about this she also pointed out that there were needs all students face that the Title V money could help solve. She stated:

> I don't know if they're just trying to draw Hispanics just for the money…they don't have the resources to house [students]. We don't have parking resources at all, and so it makes me wonder if they're just trying to get the money as part of this—not just the title and just to support Hispanics but just to get the money…It would be a good resource to benefit the Hispanics, but the whole campus needs things...They should benefit the whole campus in general. I don't know if the Hispanics should get special treatment.

As was discussed above, Erika was not the only Hispanic student who didn't believe special treatment or attention should be given to Hispanics. Maya, a Hispanic junior, said that the designation made her feel uncomfortable and singled out as Hispanic. Maya said:

> I don't want them to do it because it's like oh, we accept your people so give us a grant. I would want to do it because it's going to benefit us because they really, truly want it to benefit us.

Title V funding is a complicated topic that top scholars and practitioners in the field are still trying to sort out. Many questions still arise about how the money should be

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spent and how institutions should be held accountable for spending funds and

maintaining enrollment. According to the Department of Education team leader of the

Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions program "grant money given to HSIs must be

used to help students with a low socioeconomic status in some way, but exactly what the

funds are used for is flexible" (O'Connor, 2010). As experts negotiate what it means to

be "flexible" and to make sense of how funding and the new designation should be

regulated, it is no wonder students are also unclear about what the HSI designation means

for them and their college community.

Madelyn had an interesting perspective on this topic. While she thought SWSU

becoming an HSI was positive, she also wondered whether SWSU's main aim may have

been to obtain money and the HSI designation was the best way to obtain additional

funds. She stated:

> It's good that the Hispanics are the focus because they're becoming such a
> large group in America now that they should be recognized in the
> universities as being a prominent group. But I think it's kind of odd that
> it's giving the universities incentive to get more money to get more
> students. So it's kind of like they're more targeting these students to get
> them here so they can get more money. I'm sure that's not always the
> case but it kind of what it seems like. All universities want more federal
> aid and if this is just one way that they can get it that's how they're going
> to do it.

Janelle, a White woman in her 60's also wondered how pure the motives were of

the institution. She questioned, "are they doing it to get Hispanic students or are they

doing it to get money? If they weren't getting any money would they still be after them

[Hispanic students]?"

Like Madelyn and Janelle, Josh and Warren both hoped SWSU was becoming an

HSI for altruistic reasons. However, these young men worried that from the outside it

might look like SWSU was becoming an HSI in order to receive money. Warren believed

others might think SWSU was, "becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution because of the

money." Similarly, Josh stated,

> I feel our school is pretty good about diversity…[but] I think there are still
> a good percentage of people that are going to get the wrong impression
> that the school is just doing this for money and they don't really care…or
> they're just letting people in that don't necessarily meet the
> standards…They'll be like "oh, I couldn't get in here, or my cousin
> couldn't get in here but they're letting in Hispanics in here because they
> school will get more money for that."

Josh's comment about unqualified students being admitted is similar to

misconceptions people hold about Affirmative Action and "quotas." His statement brings

to light some of the other misconceptions that may arise as a result of SWSU acquiring

the HSI designation. As an institution located in the Southwest, SWSU is situated in a

higher education landscape where the consideration of race in college admissions is

closely scrutinized. The numerous affirmative action cases that have been filed (i.e.

Hopwood v. Texas, Grutter v. Bollinger, and Fisher v. University of Texas) are evidence

of the strong reactions many have to college decisions to take race into account for

admission.

 Although the SWSU president was interested in being a "deliberately diverse"

institution, by recruiting a diverse student population and specifically targeting regions

with high Latino populations, some may misinterpret efforts to become equitable as

selective recruitment. The SWSU's president's intention behind becoming "deliberately

diverse" was to create a diverse collegiate environment that students wanted and cultivate

an environment that would prepare them for the world beyond college (SWSU President,

2008). Nonetheless, given this complex history of race vis-á-vis college admissions,

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SWSU's efforts to level the collegiate playing field could be misconstrued, and some

uninformed outsiders could view SWSU's efforts to increase diversity as discriminatory.

While other students were looking at the monetary components of SWSU

becoming an HSI as negative, Gabriel, a Latino senior, conveyed that the funds SWSU

would receive by becoming an HSI would benefit everyone. He stated:

> I'd go back to diversity. I'm sure the money will be put to good use.
> They could allocate it to different departments. Because it's not like
> Hispanics are just doing education. They're doing engineering. They're
> doing science. They're doing social work. They're doing health care.
> And so it's not just benefitting Hispanics—it's benefitting everybody
> else…I don't know how people would think that the money wouldn't
> benefit anybody else because it is allocated to everybody. I know there
> are services that do target—not just Hispanics but first generation
> students. And they have tutoring and mentoring for first-generation
> students. But it's not just limiting the scope to just Hispanics. Because
> Hispanics aren't just first-generation—a lot of people are becoming first
> generation. I don't know how people would see it as a negative.

Isaac, who is also Hispanic, echoed this sentiment, that receiving federal funding

as a result of the HSI designation would be a benefit for the whole campus. He said,

> Well, I think if we get the 25% and the college gets federal funds I think
> that would give them a little more leeway discretionary whether to build
> more dorms or parking lots or whatever. This college is growing
> period…As an institution it's certainly not going to get smaller. I think
> there's a lot of things to get done and if they get the federal funds that will
> certainly give them some money to be able to do those things. Not just
> building buildings and stuff like that but more academic programs,
> professors, staff and all of the support things that you need. Not
> necessarily saying okay we should rely on that but at least it opens another
> avenue for the revenue.

Unlike some of their peers, Gabriel and Isaac looked at the HSI designation from

a broader perspective believing that the money received from the HSI designation would

benefit all students, not just Latinos. In contrast to some of their peers, these two men

were also more optimistic about receiving Title V funding.

Summary

This chapter presented findings about participants' impressions about SWSU becoming an HSI. Overall White, African American, and Latino participants believed SWSU should become more diverse and they supported the institution becoming an HSI. However, some students did have concerns about the fairness of the HSI designation. Some participants did not want non-Hispanic racial groups to be overlooked as a result of attention being paid to Latinos. All the White students in this study believed the HSI designation was a good idea. Any negative thoughts White students had about the designation were aimed at the perceived intentions of SWSU: becoming an HSI not for altruistic reasons, but for the financial gain provided by the Title V grant money.

White students also spoke generally about not wanting to see any other groups displaced by the HSI designation. However, African American students focused more on the impact the designation would have on their racial group. African Americans didn't want the focus on increasing the Latino population to steer attention away from their racial group. African American students worried that they would be overlooked and would be competing with Latinos for resources at SWSU. Some also worried that an increase in Latino enrollment would make the African American population look even smaller and could prevent some prospective African American students from considering SWSU because they would not think it would be an institution that would serve them.

The different findings among Latino students were that some felt like the HSI designation singled them out more than they wanted to be. Maya who identified as Hispanic and Ama who identified as Black indicated most strongly that the HSI designation would make them feel singled out. This is important to note. Often times

when programs are designed to help groups they can still feel singled out. On campuses where racial tension may already exist, bringing additional attention to race can further distinguish the ingroups (non-Hispanic students) from the outgroups (Hispanic students). Given that students at SWSU were navigating a highly racialized campus setting, increasing the amount of programming that highlights similarities and shows students that they are all a part of a cohesive community would be important. Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) would refer to this as promoting a *common ingroup identity model.*

On the surface it appeared that students were all in favor of SWSU becoming an HSI, but upon further examination it was clear that there were some particular ways in which students wanted the institution to become an HSI and specific reasons they did not want it to become an HSI. Students' impressions are important to consider when thinking about how the campus climate will change as a college or university becomes an HSI and how students' identities are tied to the institution they attend.

This chapter has been devoted to reporting the findings about students' perceptions of their institution becoming an HSI. When discussing these perceptions, students indicated there could be racial tension among different groups as the institution increases its Hispanic population. The following chapter, the conclusion, will pull the components discussed throughout the findings of this dissertation together in order to create a complete picture of cross-racial interactions at an Emerging HSI.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Overview

A desire to understand the *stories* behind students' cross-racial interactions led me to this investigation of students' cross-racial interactions at an Emerging HSI. The focus of this dissertation has been two-pronged; first, it has been an investigation of the extent to which White, Latino, and African American students at Southwestern State University engaged in cross-racial interactions. Secondly, this study was an exploration of how the Emerging Hispanic-serving designation influenced students' perceptions about, and interactions with diverse others. The significance of this study can be seen in the growing diversity of our nation. As U.S. society diversifies, the future workforce depends upon the full participation of people of all races. However, many voice that students are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of a multicultural and global society (Bastedo, et al., 2009; Bikson & Law, 1994; Business Higher Education Forum, 2002; Schroeder, 2003; Wright, 1997). In spite of the sustained attention to this topic, little has been written about the ways HSIs (as well as other Minority-Serving Institutions) prepare students for the diverse society beyond post-secondary education. The present study took

on this challenge and investigated the extent to which cross-racial interactions occur among students at Southwestern State University, an emerging HSI.

Findings suggested that most students at SWSU did not often interact with others from racial backgrounds different from their own. Students were interested in engaging with diverse others, but lacked the experience and comfort to do so. Because many participants had limited cross-racial interaction prior to college, they were hesitant to engage in cross-racial interactions in college. Students were afraid of feeling uncomfortable in new settings; students of color did not want to be singled out because of their race, and White students did not want to say something to offend students of color. This climate contributed to the limited cross-racial interaction at SWSU.

Chapter II discusses how colleges and universities are grappling with the changing racial and ethnic demographics that shape their institutions (Wright, 1997; Schroeder, 2003). University officials are trying to determine how the diversity of the student body, faculty, and staff can serve as an asset to their students and their institutions as a whole. In this respect, SWSU has an advantage over some other institutions of higher education because it already has a racially diverse student body. SWSU faces several challenges related to cross-racial interaction and HSI context: how to encourage more cross-racial interaction so that students glean the learning outcomes associated with cross-racial interaction, and how to leverage their Emerging HSI status to encourage cross-racial interaction and better prepare students for their post-collegiate lives. As research has demonstrated, simply increasing the number or percentage of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds on a campus is not sufficient to engender cross-racial interaction or promote positive learning and democratic outcomes (Hurtado, et al.,

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1998; Milem, et al., 2005). Therefore, the task for SWSU is to facilitate cross-racial interaction on its campus.

The benefits associated with interacting cross-racially are well documented (Hurtado, et al., 2002; Milem, 1994; Saenz, et al., 2007). These and other studies have shown that as a result of interacting across race, students increase several skills, including: critical thinking skills, intellectual engagement, perspective taking, and racial and cultural understanding. Developing these skills is essential, given that prior to college most students have little experience interacting with others from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and that many U.S. neighborhoods and high schools are racially segregated (McArdle, et al., 2010; Orfield & Eaton, 2003; Orfield, et al., 2003).

However, increasing skills in the above areas involves more than simply interacting with others from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Rather, the *type* of interaction experienced through cross-racial occurrences shapes the extent to which learning and democratic outcomes are achieved. Previous studies have investigated the *frequency, quality,* and *context* in/with which students engaged in cross-racial interaction (Milem et al., 2005; Saenz, et al, 2007). However, the results of my student indicate that it is important for researchers to examine the barriers that prevent students from interacting cross-race in the first place.

In this study, I asked students about their experiences with cross-racial interaction in curricular and non-curricular settings. Through the 26 interviews I conducted, students relayed their experiences in these settings. What emerged were accounts of surface-level cross-racial interactions in many settings, descriptions of settings that were mono-racial, and narratives of only a few settings where cross-racial interactions were occurring.

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Findings from this study provide a deeper understanding of cross-racial interactions and hone in on the ways that students' perceptions and sense of comfort affect their cross-racial interactions. As a result of my study, we understand that fostering comfort in settings of difference is essential to promoting cross-racial interaction on college campuses.

Summary of Findings

Results from this study identified two main dimensions through which students negotiated their cross-racial interactions: perceptions and comfort-level. Students engaged in different types of cross-racial interactions in various settings at SWSU, but perceptions and comfort-level emerged consistently as themes that enhanced, or limited, cross-racial interactions. Perceptions about cross-racial interaction can be organized into several sub-categories: (a) the perceived value and "real world" application of cross-racial interactions, (b) perceptions of the racial composition of curricular and non-curricular settings, (c) essentialized identity of others' perceptions of race, and (d) perceptions about what it would mean for SWSU to become an HSI. What surfaced as a result of these perceptions was students having various levels of comfort in settings of difference at SWSU.

The other main theme that emerged, comfort, demonstrated that the more comfortable students felt in situations of difference, the more likely they were to engage in cross-racial interactions. Findings about comfort suggest that in order for students to have meaningful cross-racial interactions the university should focus on creating more

settings in which students feel at ease with diverse others and supporting as well as modeling cross-racial interactions.

Perceptions

Upon initiating this investigation I did not anticipate perceptions playing such a central role in the findings. Nonetheless, perceptions emerged as a common theme that students discussed in a variety of ways. Given the emerging HSI status of SWSU, students' perceptions and cross-racial interactions were compounded by a college campus that was becoming more diverse. In order to better serve an increasingly diverse region, SWSU was very intentional about increasing its Latino enrollment to become an HSI. At first glance students believed SWSU's future status as an HSI was positive and would help increase the diversity of the campus as well as promote learning and understanding about different backgrounds. However, when pressed further, some students worried that by presenting itself as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, students who were not Hispanic or Latino would feel unwelcome at SWSU. In addition, many students also believed that SWSU was becoming an HSI not for the altruistic reason that it was the right thing to do, but rather to acquire federal grant money.

In the same ways students believed SWSU should have altruistic motives for becoming an HSI, they also believed in the altruistic motives of cross-racial interaction. However, unlike the HSI designation they more readily understood the practical value of cross-racial interactions. Students believed that an appreciation of differences was important to satisfy their curiosity. They also understood that learning to get along with others from various backgrounds would prove necessary in their post collegiate

professions. Social work students in particular saw the "real world" applicability of cross-racial interactions, as their future professions would demand that they interact with people from all backgrounds. Several seniors expressed that had there been more diversity and cross-racial interaction on campus, they would have had a greater understanding of difference. Despite students expressing interest in interacting with diverse others, they often failed to do so.

The settings and ways in which students experienced cross-racial interaction were an important component to this study; however, students' experiences became more complex when juxtaposed with what they perceived the experiences of others to be. Although several of the participants in this study engaged in cross-racial interaction to varying degrees, they perceived the campus as racially separate and perceived that others on campus did not have many cross-racial interactions. Conversely, students also perceived other majors to be more racially diverse than their own.

With regard to student organizations, participants had complex understandings about organizations' racial composition. Some students perceived certain organizations to be mono-racial, when they were actually racially diverse. Some of these same students also perceived that members of ethnically centered organizations that were largely mono-racial, such as Juntos Conectado and professional associations, were judgmental of them if they did not fit the essentialized racial identity of their racial group. This perception of group composition and sense of judgment kept some participants from entering into settings where they would encounter difference and engage in cross-racial interactions.

Interviews revealed that students' perceptions sometimes differed from their behaviors, actions, and the facts. Perceptions informed the decisions students made and

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influenced the types of cross-racial interactions students had, and even whether they engaged cross-racially at all. Researchers must consider the tension between reality and perceptions of reality. The facts as well as the perceptions must be considered in order to make effective policy and programmatic decisions that promote student learning and cross-racial interaction.

Comfort with Cross-Racial Interactions and Difference

One of the central findings from this study was that comfort-level drove students' action or inaction relative to cross-racial engagement. What contributed to students' sense of comfort was their perception of various settings. If the perceptions students held made them feel comfortable, then they proceeded with cross-racial interaction, but if the perceptions made them uncomfortable then they did not engage in cross-racial interactions. The notion of comfort as it relates to cross-racial interaction is a complex one as students may experience discomfort and/or discrimination. Steele and colleagues (Steele, 1997; Steele, & Aronson, 1995) discuss the powerful influence stereotype threat has on students' academic and social well being. This research has shown that discrimination and perceptions about discrimination negatively influence students' experiences in academic and social settings. Nagda and Gurin (2007), and Nance (forthcoming 2012) contend that in order to grow and glean the learning outcomes associated with cross-racial interaction, students must experience discomfort and learn how to work through it. However, discrimination and discomfort are different and should not be confounded. Students should be challenged and supported throughout their exploration during their collegiate years (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). As a result of being

challenged students may experience discomfort. On the other hand, discrimination, or not being treated fairly, or being denied access to certain opportunities because of one's identity, is not a challenge students should have to face. Where discomfort can generate positive learning outcomes, discrimination can lead to disengagement and poor learning outcomes.

One student, Mackenzie, referred to racial separation as a "trend," meaning that the climate at SWSU was such that cross-racial interactions were not common or consistently supported. However, the lack of cross-racial interaction was much more than this. In fact, the lack of cross-racial interaction was more of an avoidance response to difficult situations. This idea is supported by Mallett and Swim (2009) who found that stigmatized groups tend to avoid situations in which they experience discrimination. Plant and Butz (2006) determined that when non-Black students approach cross-racial interactions with an "avoidance-focus," or from the standpoint of trying to avoid the interaction, negative cross-racial interactions are more likely to occur. Plant and Butz's (2006) research also suggests that as a result of experiencing negative cross-racial interactions students may be less likely to engage in future interracial interactions.

By applying the literature to students' experiences at SWSU it is apparent how the cycle of avoidance and experiencing negative cross-racial interactions can ensue. Many SWSU students avoided cross-racial interactions, because they perceived they would not feel comfortable in situations of difference. However, by avoiding cross-racial interactions students were therefore more likely to experience negative cross-racial interactions once they engaged with diverse others because they were unprepared for such experiences (Hurtado et al., 2003; Hurtado et al., 2004; Pettigrew, 1998).

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Furthermore, as a result of having negative experiences students become less likely to initiate in future cross-racial interactions. When the findings from this study are coupled with the literature on the longer term effects of avoiding cross-racial interactions, the need to encourage and support such interactions becomes clear. Nagda and Gurin (2007) found that although it may be difficult for students to engage in difficult discussions about difference, doing so enables students to become more "critically conscious" and to live more democratically (p. 36).

Emergent Theory on Campus Racial Climate and Student Cross-Racial Interaction

At the start of this investigation, I created a model which accounted for students' experiences with cross-racial interaction and explained the institutional and societal components that influence cross-racial interactions on campus. In this hypothesized model, I built upon the literature on pre-college experiences and detailed the nexus between the components of cross-racial interaction (frequency, quality, and context). This initial model (described in Chapter III) included many of the components present in the Milem et al. (2005) framework (see Appendix F). However, after analysis of participant interviews, I believe a different conceptualization is more appropriate for this study. Frequency, quality, and context were not the only, or even the primary, drivers of cross-racial interaction at SWSU. Rather, results revealed that the *ways* in which cross-racial interactions occurred for different groups of students and the barriers students encountered in their attempts to engage in cross-racial interaction were key findings.

The components of cross-racial interaction cannot individually determine students' experiences with cross-racial interaction. Simply because students are engaging

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in cross-racial interaction does not mean that their interactions are positive or that they are meaningful (Chang, et al. 2004; Hurtado et al., 2004; Saenz et al. 2007). When the components of quality and context are added to frequency a more complete picture of cross-racial interactions emerges.

Previous research on campus racial climate acknowledges the role of compositional diversity in the overall campus racial climate (Hurtado et al. 1999; Milem, et al., 2005), but these studies do not explicitly delineate the role compositional diversity plays in cross-racial interaction. Findings from the present study demonstrate that students at SWSU still encounter cross-racial interactions in ways that are consistent with previous research (Hurtado et al. 1999; Milem, et al., 2005; Saenz, et al., 2007)—frequency, quality, and context; however, the present study aligns more with the work of Chang, et al., (2004), which takes compositional diversity into account and assesses the depth of cross-racial interactions.

Context was the area that proved to be most salient for students' cross-racial interactions and the types of cross-racial interactions students had at SWSU varied depending on the context. Specifically, the frequency, quality, and depth of cross-racial interactions differed depending on the context in which the interactions occurred. Due to the general lack of cross-racial interactions at SWSU, students had few interactions they could judge as positive or negative, let alone categorize as frequent. However, when honing in on specific settings participants were able to discuss their experiences with diverse others more clearly. Students' experiences related to cross-racial interaction differed depending on the combination of context, frequency, and quality of that

interaction. Table 9.1 highlights these different combinations of frequency, quality, and
context.

Table 9.1 Dimensions of Cross-Racial Interaction at SWSU

Context	Frequency	Quality	Depth of Interaction
Classes			
• General	Infrequent	N/A	N/A
• Social Work Courses	Frequent	Mixed	Mixed
• Honors Courses	Frequent	Positive	Surface
Out of Class • General	Infrequent	N/A	N/A
• **Multi-Racial Organizations**	Frequent	Positive	Medium/Deep

Generally, at SWSU students engaged infrequently in cross-racial interaction in
classes. Because of their infrequent cross-racial interaction the quality and the depth of
interactions could not be measured. However, within curricular settings there were two
exceptions to infrequent cross-racial interactions—students majoring in social work, and
students in the Honors College. Students in both of these subject areas described their
classes as racially diverse and discussed engaging cross-racially frequently. Although
there was not as much racial diversity in social work classes as students would have liked
to see, students did interact across race amongst their cohort. Students in honors and in
social work both described their experiences with cross-racial interactions as positive, but
some social work students also described their interactions as uncomfortable at times.

Because social work students in my study were aware that cross-racial interactions would serve them well in their careers they were interested in engaging in deep and meaningful discussions with people of different backgrounds. However, some social work students did not know how to begin deeper level conversations and feared that they would say the wrong thing and offend their classmates. Social work students wanted to begin deeper level conversations with peers of different backgrounds, and such as conversations about what it was like to be a member of a particular racial group, but their fear of offending someone kept the conversation at a surface-level, yet still left students feeling uncomfortable and with a desire to know more.

Honors students did not experience the same discomfort as social work students. Although there was some racial diversity in the Honors College cross-racial interactions were surface level and did not verge on deeper level conversations. In the Honors College students attended talks about various cultural topics, they engaged with guest speakers about what it was like for him or her to live in Kenya, or the Philippines, but they did not place themselves in the shoes of the speaker; nor did students relate the speakers' experiences to the experiences of their peers. In classes and when they "hung out" in the Honors Lounge students were interacting across race, but these interactions remained surface level. As such students were able to learn and appreciate different cultures while interacting with diverse peers, but there interactions did not reach the deeper level.

In curricular settings African American and Latino students described that they were not engaging in cross-racial interaction very frequently. This was in large part due to the lack of compositional diversity in their classes. African American students described having negative experiences with cross-racial interaction in classes stating that

they were excluded from group work and asked to represent the opinions of their entire race. The interactions African American and Latino students were having across race were surface level as judgments were made based on the color of their skin.

In settings outside class, which include co-curricular organizations and social settings, students generally engaged in cross-racial interactions infrequently. As discussed above, students most often remained in racially separate silos. Due to the lack of interaction across race, gauging the depth of cross-racial interactions was also irrelevant. In addition to the general experiences of students in non-curricular settings, African American students described having particularly negative experiences with cross-racial interaction in settings outside class. African American students engaged infrequently in cross-racial interactions outside of class, but when they did engage cross-racially many of their experiences were negative. African American students reported being called the N-word and being ostracized by White students in other ways. Similar to the negative experiences African American students had in classes the negative experiences they had outside of class were surface level and judgments were made largely based on their skin color.

In contrast to the experiences students had in other settings at SWSU, students in multi-racial organizations experienced frequent, positive, and medium to deep level interactions across race. Depending on the specific multi-racial organization to which they belonged, the depth of the cross-racial interactions differed. Because of their positive experiences with cross-racial interaction students were likely to continue engaging in cross-racial interaction in this setting. In addition, due to the racially diverse membership of the organizations, by joining such organizations they had made a

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commitment to engage across-race. For students in multi-racial organizations their organizations served as counter-cultures to the mainstream campus racial climate at SWSU where there was little or no cross-racial interaction. For students in these organizations the dimensions of cross-racial interaction discussed by previous researchers (frequency, quality, context) hold credence (Hurtado et. al., 2004; Milem et al., 2005; Saenz et al., 2007). Students in multi-racial organizations at SWSU interacted frequently across race and expressed having positive interactions across race. This combination of frequency, quality, and context was what engendered not just cross-racial interaction at SWSU, but positive deeper level cross-racial interaction.

By the nature of their involvement in such organizations students were interacting with peers who had different backgrounds from themselves. However, as Chang, et al. (2004) bring to light, there may be other factors at work that contribute to students' cross-racial interactions in multi-racial organizations at SWSU. While the opportunity to engage in cross-racial interaction is certainly increased within multi-racial organizations, the nature of the organizations may also be contributing to students' successful cross-racial interaction. Allport (1954) and Pettigrew (1998) discuss that several conditions assist in reducing prejudice. These conditions include: equal group status within the given setting, common goals, intergroup cooperation occur, and support from authorities. In multi-racial organizations all of these conditions exist along with the opportunity to engage across race. Therefore, some of the reasons that students in multi-racial organizations may be so successful are because of the common goals students have within the organizations, the collaborative nature of the organizations, or the institutional support they are receiving.

While different contexts generated different levels and opportunities for students to engage in cross-racial interaction, it is notable that the nexus of the three dimensions of cross-racial interaction (frequency, quality, and context) was where students felt or developed a sense of comfort, and where all of the conditions were appropriate such that frequent, positive, and meaningful cross-racial interactions were able to take place. In order for cross-racial interactions to occur it is necessary for students to feel comfortable and they experienced this comfort in multi-racial organizations. It was in multi-racial organizations that students also perceived the organizations to be welcoming and accepting. While these students felt comfortable in settings of difference they felt less comfortable in settings in which cross-racial interactions did not occur. As such, students who were well versed in cross-racial interaction avoided many settings that were mono-racial.

Although students in multi-racial organizations were engaging in cross-racial interactions within their co-curricular settings, they were still coming in contact with settings at SWSU in which cross-racial interactions were infrequent and where there were barriers to cross-racial interaction. All students at SWSU noted that Greek life and many of their classes were settings that inhibited cross-racial interactions. In addition, many of the co-curricular organizations were in large part mono-racial and student organizations remained racially separate and mono-racial because they were consistent with the campus climate. This cycle of racial separation was therefore perpetuated by both the student organizations and the institutional campus climate.

The racial separation at SWSU was exhibited differently for students of different racial backgrounds. Latino, African American, and White students at SWSU experienced

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different challenges related to cross-racial interaction. For example, White students felt uncomfortable engaging in cross-racial interaction because they did not want to make their peers feel uncomfortable or singled out. What hindered Latino students' cross-racial interactions in all campus settings was pressure they felt to conform to the essentialized racial identity of their group. Finally, as previously mentioned, African American students felt ostracized in many campus settings and this kept them from engaging more across-race. These differences demonstrate that perceptions and the experiences students had at SWSU varied by race (Milem et al., 2005; Saenz, et al., 2007); therefore, students' experiences with campus racial climate also varied by race.

All of the above noted findings are important aspects to cross-racial interaction; however, the hallmark finding was that students in multi-racial organizations had distinctly different experiences with cross-racial interaction than students of other backgrounds. This study was not initiated with the intent of examining students' experiences in multi-racial organizations; however, findings reveal that this would be an important area for future research. From the present study several characteristics of students in multi-racial organizations have emerged which can inform future research on cross-racial interaction. Students in multi-racial organizations expressed that what led them to engage in cross-racial interaction was that they either 1) sought out diverse settings when they came to SWSU, or 2) were encouraged to join a multicultural organization by a professor or mentor. Future research should investigate more deeply students' experiences in multi-racial organizations in order to understand what makes

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them become involved in such organizations and how this relates to the cross-racial interactions in which they engage.[27]

The discussion above describes the relationships students have with cross-racial interactions at SWSU and what prevents them from engaging in more cross-racial interactions. The findings from the present study refine previous research on cross-racial interaction. As a result of the present investigation we understand why students of different races experience cross-racial interaction differently. We also understand that regardless of race, students in multi-racial organizations experience more positive cross-racial interactions than students with other affiliations.

Implications for Future Research

Many findings emerged from this study that add to the literature on cross-racial interactions and emerging Hispanic-Serving institutions. However, as is the case with all studies, there is still more research to be done. As has been mentioned throughout this study, literature on emerging HSIs is sparse and investigations in almost any area of related research would help to build the literature base. This dissertation was particularly concerned with students' experiences at an emerging HSI. To date, most investigations about emerging HSIs and HSIs have focused on the HSI designation and within the policy arena (Laden, 1999; 2001; Santiago &Andrade, 2010). In recent years more studies have begun to look at the constituents on HSI campuses such as students, faculty, and staff (Nunez & Bowers, 2011; Reyes, 2011), but these areas of research are still underdeveloped. The literature on students at HSIs focuses on the experiences of Latino

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[27] Additional recommendations for future research will be delineated in a section below.

students and does not describe or analyze the experiences of students with other racial backgrounds who attend HSIs (Acosta, 2010; Crisp, Nora, Taggart, 2009; Nunez & Bowers, 2011; Nunez, Sparks, Hernandez, 2011). The present study addresses this topic, but more research is necessary to better understand the experiences of students from other racial/ethnic groups.

This study also investigated the traditional settings in which cross-racial interaction has been examined—curricular, co-curricular, and informal settings. While these three settings are the ones that have been used in quantitative studies, my investigation determined that in interviews, students spoke about their experiences in co-curricular and informal settings very fluidly. Many of the students developed friendships through their co-curricular organizations; therefore, many of them hung out with the same friends in both co-curricular and informal settings. As a result of this fluidity of friendships, students did not easily distinguish between co-curricular and informal settings and the cross-racial interactions that occurred in each setting. Future research, both quantitative and qualitative should consider this when creating research designs and the effect this may have on the interpretation of research findings. Depending on the wording of research questions, for quantitative studies this could mean that students are "double counting" the cross-racial interactions they have, and in fact they may not be engaging in cross-racial interaction as frequently as we might believe.

Another finding related to setting that emerged from this study was the discovery that work settings may play a role in cross-racial interactions. Change et al. (2004) discuss the role of work settings related to cross-racial interactions; however, their findings differ from those in this study. Participants in this study discussed how they

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engaged in cross-racial interactions in their workplaces. Students interacted with co-workers who had different racial backgrounds than themselves and interacted with customers and/or clients who also had different backgrounds from their own. Chang et al. (2004) discuss that students who work off campus are less likely to engage in cross-racial interaction and they are more likely to engage in cross-racial interactions if they work on campus. This was not the case at SWSU. Regardless of where students worked, on or off campus, they reported engaging in cross-racial interaction in work settings. In work settings students engaged with diverse others somewhat frequently (e.g. several times each week), and the depth of their interactions varied. Findings about work environments were unexpected and this study was not designed to investigate cross-racial interactions in work settings. Therefore it was difficult to determine explicit patterns within this context. To date, little research exists that investigates work settings as environments in which cross-racial interaction occurs. Future research should undertake an investigation that explicitly analyzes cross-racial interaction in work settings.

Another unexpected finding that emerged was the salience of Greek life at SWSU and the role Greek organizations presumably played in preventing cross-racial interactions. This dissertation covered the topic of Greek life and cross-racial interactions, but initially, it was not an anticipated area of investigation. Future studies should intentionally and deliberately investigate the connections between cross-racial interactions and Greek letter organizations. By intentionally designing a research study that addresses cross-racial interaction and Greek life, more nuances may emerge about this topic and greater understanding may be gained.

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As mentioned above, this study found that students who were members of multi-racial organizations engaged in more cross-racial interaction than other students. Specific studies should also be designed to investigate the role multi-racial and multicultural organizations play in cross-racial interactions. Although participants in this study had similar experiences their experiences did differ slightly based on which multi-racial organization they belonged to, especially for students (such as Warren) who were members of a multi-racial Greek organization. As such, nexus or juxtaposition of multicultural/racial organizations and Greek organizations is also worthy of examination in future studies.

This study was conducted at SWSU during a time when the institution was still designated as an Emerging HSI. Now that the institution has attained the full HSI designation, the demographics of the institution have changed, as has federal funding that supports SWSU. Due to the new HSI designation and these other changes that have occurred at SWSU it would be valuable to return to the campus and conduct a similar research study to understand what, if anything, has changed at SWSU. Finally, replicating this study at multiple Emerging HSIs or HSIs would be valuable and add to this area of research. Developing a series of cases would allow this study to be more generalizable and would provide a broader picture of cross-racial interactions within the context of HSIs.

Implications for Practice

In addition to conducting additional research, to further our understanding about cross-racial interactions at SWSU and other Emerging HSIs, implications for practice

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have also been identified. It was clear from this research that perceptions and comfort were main contributors to students engaging in cross-racial interactions in college. One way to negotiate the tension associated with comfort and perceptions is for SWSU to continue to provide opportunities for students to engage in cross-racial interactions in ways that are comfortable for all students. In order to enact change in these areas research must be coupled with practice. As such, the following practice-based implications are suggested to 1) encourage students to look beyond their perceptions and 2) enhance students' comfort with encountering difference. The following recommendations have been divided into two categories: recommendations for curricular settings and recommendations for out of class activities. It should also be noted that compositional diversity is the foundation of cross-racial interaction and none of these recommendations would be possible at SWSU if it was not for the already racially diverse campus community.

Curricular recommendations include structuring classes in ways that promote cross racial interaction, developing cohort models to group students in undergraduate majors, creating an Intergroup Dialogue program, and providing training for faculty.

1. **Class Structure**

At SWSU, students expressed that classes were spaces where they did not engage in cross-racial interaction. While lecture courses are typically not designed to foster student interaction such opportunities can be built into lectures and fostered in other smaller curricular settings. Classrooms are arenas where meaningful conversations can be cultivated; however, our increasing dependence on technology has become a part of our classroom culture. The implementation of technology can be

useful in classrooms, but reliance on such technologies can minimize the benefits students obtain from interacting and discussing topics with their classmates. Infusing opportunities for students to interact with one another, allowing students to pause and think about new information, and allowing them to disagree with one another are all ways in which cross-racial interactions can be encouraged and benefits can be gleaned within college classrooms.

2. Structure of the Major & Cohort Model

In addition to classes themselves needing to be structured to afford students opportunities to interact with diverse others, the structure of majors influences the types of interactions that occur within classes and between students. Some courses of study admit students into a major as a cohort. At SWSU students who majored in social work began their classes as a cohort. These students took almost all of the classes for their major together and felt that they knew their classmates well. Participants who majored in social work also expressed that they felt comfortable, for the most part, engaging with one another on deeper levels. As a result of the sense of community that was created, students were more comfortable discussing issues such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion with one another within class as well as outside of class.

The Honors Program was another academic unit where students felt comfortable engaging with one another. Although students in the Honors Program did not take all of their classes together in the same ways social work students did, the common spaces and events they frequented allowed honors students to socialize and study with other another frequently.

To foster cross-racial interaction in other academic areas of campus, academic departments should consider implementing a cohort model. In addition to promoting more cross-racial interactions, the implementation of cohorts may also foster support for students of color and women who are in majors (i.e. STEM fields) where they are underrepresented.

3) Faculty Support and Training

SWSU has in place some wonderful faculty recruitment and development resources. Their programs make concerted efforts to recruit and retain faculty from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. One of SWSU's programs encourages faculty members to apply to a program that assists them with creating syllabi that are inclusive of various cultural and ethnic perspectives. Either as a part of or in addition to this program, SWSU could add faculty training that would guide faculty about how to incorporate cross-racial interaction within classes.

In addition to fostering cross-racial interaction in classes, faculty should also model cross-racial interaction. Throughout their interviews students discussed that they did not know how to initiate cross-racial interaction. Having faculty role models that engage in cross-racial interaction can encourage students to do the same. Opportunities for cross-racial interaction can be created by cross-departmental collaborations and partnerships between academic and administrative divisions. Examples include: bringing faculty or administrative colleagues into classes as guest speakers, or staff and faculty collaborating to create co-curricular opportunities for

students, such as symposia or retreats. In addition to SWSU, institutions across the nation have also developed excellent models of this type of work.[28]

4) Intergroup Relations

Over the past decade intergroup dialogue programs have gained momentum at campuses across the nation.[29] Incorporating intergroup dialogue courses into the curricula have proved beneficial for increasing cross-racial interaction and learning (Dessel, Maxwell, Masse, & Ramus, 2010; Nagda & Gurin, 2007). While this recommendation requires significant changes to the curricula, the benefits are far reaching. Intergroup dialogue courses are deliberately structured so that students are in classes with different identity groups and discuss issues of race, class, ethnicity, and religion. Students leave classes with profound growth and understanding about the topic covered and gain a deeper appreciation for different points of view (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). SWSU may find such a program helps foster dialogue in academic settings and encourages students to engage in more deep cross-racial interaction.

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[28] Nationally excellent models of curriculum transformation can be found at the University of Washington http://depts.washington.edu/ctcenter/mission.shtml , the University of Oregon http://codac.uoregon.edu/ and the University of Michigan http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tsmdt.php

[29] Some of the hallmark Intergroup Relations (IGR) programs can be found at: University of Michigan: http://www.igr.umich.edu/, University of Washington: http://depts.washington.edu/sswidea/, University of Massachusetts, Amherst: http://courses.umass.edu/educ395z/

The following recommendations have been provided for out of class settings.

1) **Provide college or university sponsored opportunities for interaction with diverse peers.**

By departments or units hosting presentations and colloquia on topics of race, diversity, or multiculturalism cross-racial interaction may be promoted. Presentations of this type are likely to attract a wide array of participants. Structuring such opportunities to allow for audience participation or small group activities would provide students and other community participants with opportunities to engage with others from different backgrounds than themselves.

2) **Provide opportunities for in-depth discussion with diverse others.**

Providing meaningful interaction is one of the biggest factors, if not the biggest factor in promoting understanding. One of the best ways to develop understanding is by having in-depth and honest conversations. Retreats with trained facilitators and student organizations provide wonderful opportunities for dialogue about race, culture, and effective ways to collaborate with people from different backgrounds. Diversity training workshops are yet another opportunity for students to learn about race and diversity in deep and thoughtful ways. Although they are often now thought of as cliché, such trainings do provide meaningful opportunities for interaction with diverse peers, and provide opportunities students may not otherwise have. These benefits were highlighted in student interviews with Sandy, Orlando, and Warren.

3) **Community Building Grant**

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One way to encourage students to engage with one another is to create a community building grant that provides student organizations with a small sum to host an event. In order to receive this grant student groups must co-author a proposal with another organization with whom they do not typically work. University of Michigan instituted such a grant process with substantial success. This grant process aligned with the mission of the Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs Office which sought to "engage students, faculty, and community members in understanding and appreciating the diversity represented at the University and in joining others in working toward community and social justice" (MESA, 2012). The purpose of this grant is to "foster *partnership building* programs between two or more organizations which have not typically worked together, and that helps to educate the broader community around any particular subject" (MESA, 2012). Within their grant proposals students are also required to describe how the partnership between the two organizations will be maintained beyond the time period of the grant.

4) Focused African American Recruitment and Retention Efforts

In addition to focusing on serving African Americans, SWSU also needs to remain attentive to the needs of African American students. African Americans, more than any other racial group, felt ostracized and experienced racist actions directed toward them. Additionally, in their interviews, students of all races expressed that African Americans could be overlooked as a result of SWSU becoming Hispanic-serving and focusing on Latino students. Moreover, of the racial groups interviewed (African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White) African American students had the

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lowest graduation rate (51%).[30] Although Latino students certainly need support to enroll and graduate from college, especially given the high population of Latinos in the region, there is also a need to provide support for African American students to persist to graduation.[31]

Finally, more than students of other racial backgrounds, African Americans expressed being the only African American student, or the only student of color in their classes, and often felt uncomfortable as the "only one" in class. By focusing some recruitment and retention efforts on African Americans, their compositional diversity will increase, thereby limiting the isolation African Americans feel as targets in their classes (Hurtado et al., 1999; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Milem et al., 2005).

5) Developing Partnerships with the Institutional Diversity Office

SWSU, like many institutions of higher education has an institutional diversity office. At SWSU this office is well connected to other offices and groups on campus whose purposes are to enrich campus diversity through various venues. By developing a partnership with this office that specifically addresses cross-racial interaction, institutional commitment to cross-racial interaction could be created. As a central office, the institutional diversity office would be able to create and maintain programs that enhance cross-racial interaction, such as those described above.

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[30] When including all racial groups at SWSU, Asian/Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islanders had the lowest graduation rate at 48% and African Americans had the second lowest graduation rate at 51%. See Table 7.1 for the full list of graduation rates by race at SWSU.

[31] All students at SWSU could use assistance with persisting to graduation; however, because this study focused on African American, Latino, and White students, the discussion is focused on these three groups.

Conclusion

While the suggested initiatives are viable for transforming students' cross-racial interactions at SWSU, many of these recommendations are also viable at other institutions that have racially diverse populations. These could include other (Emerging) Hispanic-serving institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, or Predominantly White Institutions. Other institutions that are becoming increasingly diverse must also contend with many of the same considerations SWSU faces. For all of these institutional types, the keys lie in heterogeneity, compositional diversity, and critical mass. Considering the point at which heterogeneity is recognized within a group becomes the main question. Kanter (1977) uses critical mass theory to explain the situation at which the tipping point occurs. Kanter (1977) discusses the ways in which the dynamics of groups with majority and minority membership change depending on the membership. She created four categories: uniform, skewed, tilted, and balanced to describe various group dynamics.[32] Kanter (1977) suggests that when groups are "balanced" allies emerge and coalitions are formed which can influence the overall culture of the group.

However, using HSI and emerging HSI as examples, some aspects of critical mass theory are applicable to this setting, where other aspects are not germane. Santiago and Andrade (2010) apply Kanter's (1977) critical mass theory to the HSI context. These authors contend that "When applying critical mass theory, the 25 percent enrollment requirement fits within the aforementioned category of the "tilted" group (15-40 percent)

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[32] Kanter (1977) describes the four groups as follows: Uniform groups are groups that are largely homogenous. Skewed groups are those in which minorities make up 15% or less of the group. In tilted groups non-dominant group membership falls within the 15-40% range. Balanced groups are those in which minority and majority membership is close to one another in the 40-60% range.

that could trigger the transformation of an institution's culture and practices" (Santiago & Andrade, 2010, p.7). These authors therefore question if there might also "be Emerging HSIs that are now transforming their institutional policies, programs, and practices to better serve their own "critical mass" of Latino students" (p. 7). Santiago and Andrade (2010) acknowledge that research has not been conducted on the emerging HSIs through the lens of critical mass theory; however, their invocation and application of Kanter (1977) suggests that her model is one that can be used to understand how critical mass affects institutional change. Specifically, these authors suggest that critical mass theory provides a way to understand how emerging HSIs and HSIs move from being Hispanic-enrolling to Hispanic-serving.

Kanter's (1997) work is based on gender inequity and was created at a time when gender was most commonly discussed as two binary categories. Today, 35 years later, gender identities are not as binary, nor are racial identities. Kanter's (1977) framing only addresses one dominant group and one target group (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997) and does not address how critical mass theory might function in a setting in which there are multiple "target" or disenfranchised groups.

While Kanter's (1977) model of critical mass theory is a place to begin to gain an understanding about institutional change at HSIs, it is not sufficient when applied to Emerging HSIs and HSIs unilaterally. Kanter's model may be useful at some Emerging HSIs and HSIs where the majority of students are either White or Latino; however, at a more racially diverse institution, such as SWSU, Kanter (1977) is insufficient to explain how institutional change occurs when there are substantial populations of other racial groups (i.e. African Americans at SWSU).

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Chatman's (2008) work may present a more modern approach to critical mass theory. Chatman's (2008) work on student interaction reveals that for students to feel comfortable the population of their own race must be at least 5-15% of the entire student population. However, given that the African American population at SWSU was 6% at the time of data collection and that African Americans did not feel comfortable, the lower echelon of Chatman's range was not supported by African Americans students' experiences at SWSU. In addition, student populations that far surpassed Chatman's critical mass range also did not feel comfortable at SWSU. At the time of data collection, Latino students comprised 24% of the SWSU student population at SWSU, but they too expressed being singled out, and not feeling entirely comfortable at SWSU. Therefore, when findings from my study are compared to Chatman's (2008) findings that the 5-15% range is the point at which students begin to develop a sense of comfort, Chatman's findings do not hold up as a viable critical mass range at which students felt comfortable at SWSU.

While Bowman's (2012) work does explicitly address critical mass, his work does look at compositional diversity and inter-racial relationships.[33] Bowman (2012) asserts that "at structurally diverse institutions, students of color will often have greater opportunities to meet same-race students, which may lead to their having fewer interracial friendships" (p.133). He continues on to say that although "students of color may actively seek same-race friendships for social support, this propensity becomes less necessary (and therefore less pronounced) when a sizable number of same-race students

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[33] Bowman (2012) utilizes the term structural diversity as used by Hurtado et al. (1999) to describe the racial diversity of the student body. I utilize the term compositional diversity as used by Milem et al. (2005) to describe the same phenomenon.

attend that institution" (Bowman, 2012, p.135). In other words, once there is a sizable group of Latino students, or African American students (in the case of SWSU), the need for counterspaces dissipates. Bowman's (2012) assertion provides support for the idea that there is a "sweet spot" for diversity. While not enough compositional diversity leads to very few cross-racial interactions (Chang, 1999; Gurin, et al., 2002), having a large population of people of the same racial background also fosters homophily (Bowman, 2012).

It is not clear how applicable critical mass theory is to students' cross-racial interactions in racially diverse institutions of higher education. Based on the findings from the present study and the finding of previous research, a definitive conclusion has not yet been reached about the "sweet spot" or even the range of compositional diversity that engenders positive collegiate experiences for students. What remains clear is that some level of compositional diversity is needed to engender a sense of comfort among students, but what is more salient and concrete is that the experiences students have with cross-racial interaction can engender positive (or negative) collegiate experiences and cross-racial interactions can allow students to engage with diverse others in a way that prepares them for the workforce beyond college.

This investigation into students' cross-racial interactions at SWSU has uncovered some expected findings, some surprises, and has led me to consider new ideas related to cross-racial interaction. I did not anticipate that looking at cross-racial interactions would lead me to discuss students' perceptions of others in quite this way. While discovering that comfort plays an integral role in cross-racial interaction was not surprising, it was unexpected. I believe the recommendations presented above will provide students with

opportunities to engage in cross-racial interactions in setting where they feel both supported and challenged. Everyone must decide individually the extent to which he or she will engage in cross-racial interaction, but support makes it more likely that cross-racial interactions will be initiated and sustained. Faculty and staff support can help students with the challenges they face with overcoming their perceptions of diverse others and allow them to feel more comfortable with engaging in cross-racial interactions.

Across the board, institutions of higher education have become more diverse; however, each campus is free to choose how it will respond to the changing demographics of the student population. When considering campus specific institutional diversity initiatives each college or university must make a decision about why they want to increase their diversity and how this affects the overall culture of the campus.

For institutions that are interested not just in enrolling a diverse student body, but are also interested in serving a diverse student body, the recommendations provided in this chapter provide an outline about how to begin the process of encouraging students' cross-racial interaction. Furthermore, state institutions located in racially diverse areas, and Urban-Serving institutions have an obligation to serve racially diverse populations. Once again, it is not enough to enroll a diverse population; rather the diverse population needs to be interact (Milem et al., 2005). To truly glean all of the benefits of a diverse campus, colleges and universities must also make efforts to encourage students of all racial backgrounds to interact with one another. If institutions of higher education are not encouraging cross-racial interactions it then begs the question: What is the point of having diversity if not to engender interaction and learning outcomes among students?

Students accrue tremendous outcomes from engaging with diverse others and the findings within this dissertation support this. Nonetheless, we must remember that cultivating understanding takes time. Musil (2005) reminds us that interacting with diverse others promotes "*a conception of diversity as a process toward better learning* rather than as an outcome" (p. iv).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Students' Experiences at Southwestern State University

Principal Investigator: Brighid Dwyer, Center for the Study of Higher and
Postsecondary Education,
School of Education, University of Michigan

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Deborah Faye Carter
Center for the Study of Higher and
Postsecondary Education, School of Education
University of Michigan

Because you are a student at Southwestern State University you are invited to be included as a part of this research study which will look at the experiences students' have had while attending college. The purpose of this study is better understand if students from various racial groups have different experiences while attending Southwestern State. This project will help identify the benefits, challenges, and activities students engage in while in college, and will allow professionals at Southwestern State and possibly other institutions to better support students though college.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in one interview which will last approximately 75 minutes (one hour, fifteen minutes). I would like to audio record the interview to make sure that our conversation is recorded accurately. You may still participate in the research even if you decide not to be recorded.

While you may not receive a direct benefit from participating in this research, some people find sharing their stories to be a valuable experience. You may choose not to answer any interview question and you can stop your participation in the research at any time.

I plan to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. To keep your information safe, the recording of your interview will be stored on a flash drive in a locked office until a written word-for-word copy of the discussion has been created. As soon as the study is complete, the recordings will be destroyed. All data related to this study will be kept on a computer that is password-protected. To protect confidentiality, your real name will not be used in the written copy of the discussion. I do plan to keep this study data indefinitely for future research.

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There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This consists of organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan and government offices. Also, federal or state law may require that I give certain information to government agencies to prevent harm to you or others.

If you have questions about this research, including questions about the scheduling of your interview you can contact Brighid Dwyer, University of Michigan, Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, 610 E. University, 2117 SEB, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259, (510) 332-1239, brighid@umich.edu, or Dr. Deborah Faye Carter, Associate Professor, Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, School of Education, University of Michigan, 610 E. University, 2117 SEB, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259, (734) 647-1981, dfcarter@umich.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Michigan Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, (800) 936-0933, 540 E. Liberty St., Suite 202 Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Participating in this research is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

_____   _____
        Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
        Signature of Investigator   Date

APPENDIX B

Demographic Form for Pilot Interviews at Anonymous University

Please answer the following five questions and e-mail your responses to me at

brighid@umich.edu before the time of our scheduled interview. Thank you.

1. What year and term did you graduate (i.e. Fall 2001)?_____

2. How old are you?_____

3. What was your major?_____

4. Did you live on campus while attending college?   Yes / No

    a. If so, for how long? _____

    b. Which years?_____

    c. If you lived off-campus at any time while attending college, where did you live (i.e. an apartment, with parents, etc.)?
    _____

    d. How long did you live in each of these places?_____

    _____

5. Did you commute to campus?   Yes / No

6. How do you identify yourself racially? _____

_____

7. Is that different than how do you identify ethnically? If yes, how do you identify

   ethnically? _____

   _____

APPENDIX C

Pilot Interview Protocol with Alumni from Anonymous University

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Thank you for participating in today's interview. This research project is concerned with students' experiences at Anonymous University (AU). Therefore, I will be asking you a series of questions related to your time spent in college such as what your classes were like, what you did outside of class, and who you pent your time with during college. The pilot interviews of alumni, which you are participating in, will be used to better inform the full study wherein current AU students will be interviewed. Therefore, at the conclusion of interview I will ask you a few questions about your impressions of the interview and how it can be improved.

The University of Michigan requires that all research participants be advised of their rights through a consent form. If you have not already done so, please review and sign the consent form, indicating your agreement for my use of the information your share me today for research. Do you have any questions? May we proceed with the interview? I would like to record our conversation so that we can refer back to it later for analysis. Is it all right if our conversation is recorded? Also, if at any time you would like to stop or have the recorder turned off. Please let me know and I will be happy to do so. I will also be sure to keep your comments confidential, and will not use your name in any subsequent write-ups.

I have a series of broad questions that will serve as a guide. They are by no means inclusive or exhaustive, so please feel free to interject any comments or views not covered by the questions that you feel are relevant to our discussion about your experiences at Anonymous University.

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1. What do you think were most positive and negative about your experiences at Anonymous University?

2. What do you think would have been different if you had attended another institution instead of Anonymous University?   How so?

Curricular:

3. What were your favorite classes that you took at Anonymous University? Why these?

4. What were your classroom discussions like?
   a. Were race and ethnicity ever discussed in your classes?
   b. How much, if at all, did you interact, or have discussions with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in your classes?

5. Some colleges and universities have race and ethnicity course requirements. Do you think Anonymous University should have one?

6. Do you think there should be more or fewer classes at Anonymous University that reflect different racial and ethnic backgrounds?
   a. Which cultures would you like to see reflected? Why these?

Social/Informal:

7. What was the social scene like on campus?

8. When you weren't in class what did you spend time doing?

9. Generally speaking, do you think students at Anonymous University hung out with others who had the same racial and ethnic background as themselves?

10. How much interaction did you have with students of different racial backgrounds in informal and social settings?

Extracurricular:

11. Did you participate in any clubs or activities, if so which ones?

12. Within these clubs and activities how much interaction did you have with students of different racial backgrounds?
   a. What were these interactions like?

Reflecting on Your Experiences at Anonymous University:

13. If you had to choose one thing about Anonymous University that captures your experiences what would it be?

14. Would you recommend Anonymous University to someone else?

15. If you can think back to when you were first starting at Anonymous University, what has changed the most about you since that time?

Multiculturalism & AU:
16. This spring Morehouse College graduated its first White valedictorian, what are your thoughts about this?

17. Do you think Anonymous University makes an effort to recruit both African American and non- African American students?

18. Since it is a historically Black university, do you think Anonymous University should recruit and accept students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds?

19. Do you think African American students are supported differently than students from other racial groups by the administration, faculty, and staff at Anonymous University?

If I have additional questions at a later time, would you be willing to speak with me again, briefly?

Finally, before you leave, I wanted to get some feedback from you about your experience in this interview.

1. What was your impression of the demographic sheet?
   a. Was it difficult to fill out?
   b. Was it too long?

2. How was the interview?
   a. Was it too long?
   b. Were there some questions that were difficult to answer? Do you have any suggestions about how to change them so they are more appropriate?

3. Any additional feedback?

APPENDIX D

Demographic Sheet for Interviews at SWSU

Date: _____

Background Information

1. What year and term do you plan graduate (i.e. Spring 2010)?_____

2. What year are you at Southwestern State (i.e. junior, senior, 5th year senior, etc.)?_____

3. How old are you?_____

4. What is your major?_____
   Minor?_____

5. Did you live on campus while attending Southwestern State?

   Yes / No

   a. If so, for how long? _____

6. Did you commute to campus?   Yes / No

   a. If so, how long was your commute? _____

7. What are the highest levels of education completed by your family members (i.e. some high school, high school diploma, associate's degree, college degree, master's degree, etc.)?

Family Member	Education
Mother	
Father	
Sibling	
Sibling	
Sibling	

8. What are the professions of your family members?

Family Member	Profession
Mother	
Father	
Sibling	
Sibling	
Sibling	

Interview Protocol for Interviews with Students at SWSU

Thank you for participating in today's interview. This research project is concerned with students' experiences at Hispanic-serving institutions. Therefore, I will be asking you a series of questions related to your time spent in college such as what your classes have been like, what you have done outside of class, and who you spend your time with during college.

The University of Michigan requires that all research participants be advised of their rights through a consent form. If you have not already done so, please review and sign the consent form, indicating your agreement for my use of the information your share me today for research. Do you have any questions? May we proceed with the interview? I would like to record our conversation so that we can refer back to it later for analysis. Is it all right if our conversation is recorded? Also, if at any time you would like to stop or have the recorder turned off. Please let me know and I will be happy to do so. I will also be sure to keep your comments confidential, and will not use your name in any subsequent write-ups.

I have a series of broad questions that will serve as a guide. They are by no means inclusive or exhaustive, so please feel free to interject any comments or views not covered by the questions that you feel are relevant to our discussion about your experiences at your Hispanic-serving institution.

RQ's:

- **To what extent do African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White students at Southwestern State University interact and/or have friends from racial and ethnic groups different from their own?**

- How does campus climate at Southwestern State affect African American, Latino, and White students' cross-racial interactions?

- What impact (if any) does Southwestern State being an emerging HSI have on students' knowledge of and engagement with racial diversity on campus?

I would like to start by asking you about yourself.

1. Why did you choose to attend Southwestern State?
   a. *Did you go directly from high school to college?*
   b. *If not, what did you do in between high school and college?*
   c. *Do you think this impacted your college experience? How so?*
   d. *Did you participate in a college preparatory or "bridge" program?*

2. How do you identify racially or ethnically?
   a. *Are most of your friends from your same racial/ethnic background?*
   b. *Because you are XXX do you feel a special relationship to other XXXXs?*
   c. *Has that changed since you have been in college?*

3. Would you please describe your closest friends?
   Probe: here at Southwestern State and from home.
   a. *How did you become friends?*
   b. ***What do you feel you have in common with your friends?***
   c. *What are their racial/ethnic backgrounds?*

4. Where did you meet other students/friends at Southwestern State when you first came to campus?
   a. *How did you make friends?*
   b. *What organizations were you involved in?*
      i. *Are you in a fraternity or sorority?*

5. Have you lived in a residence hall at any point as an undergraduate?
   a. *What was/has this experience (been) like?*
   b. *How much did you interaction with other racial groups here?*

6. In general do you think it is important for people to interact with other racial/ethnic groups?
   a. *Why? Why not?*

7. Generally speaking, do you think students at Southwestern State hang out with others who have the same racial and ethnic background as themselves?
   a. *Why do you think this is (group preferences, lack of opportunity, etc)?*

8. How often do you interact with students who have racial/ethnic backgrounds different than your own?
   a. *In what settings do you interact with them?*
   b. *What are these interactions like? (positive/negative)*

9. How has it been to make friends with people from different racial/ethnic groups?
    a. *Probe for ease or difficulty and reasons why.*
    b. *Probe for group identity and group membership*
    c. *Have you thought about joining an activity/club or group because of its racial/ethnic makeup?*
    d. *Have you thought about dropping a group you have already joined because of the racial/ethnic makeup*

10. Tell me about your classes.
    a. How have conversations or interactions in class impacted your experiences with or awareness of diversity?

11. How often do you interact with faculty and staff of color?
    a. *Do you have a formal advisor?*
    b. *What are these interactions like? (positive/negative)*
    c. *In what settings do you interact with them?*
    d. *How important is it for you to <u>interact</u> with them?*

12. How important is it for you to see students, faculty, and staff from different backgrounds around campus?

13. How important is it for you to <u>*interact with*</u> students, faculty, and staff from different backgrounds around campus?

14. Since attending Southwestern State, has the amount of contact you have with people of different racial backgrounds increased, decreased, or is it about the same?
    a. *Why do you think this is?*
    b. *Same for people of the same background?*

15. Have you seen the racial demographics of Southwestern State change during your time here as a student?
    a. *What do you think about this?*
    b. *Do you think it will change the experiences students will have at Southwestern State?*

16. If you had to guess what do you think the racial percentages are at Southwestern State?

17. Have you heard the term Hispanic-serving institution?
    a. *Do you know what it means?*
    b. *Did you think Southwestern State is an HSI?*

18. What do you think about this designation?

        a. *Does Southwestern State being an emerging Hispanic-serving institution impact your thoughts about diversity on campus?*
        b. *What does this designation mean for non-Hispanic students on this campus?*

19. Do you think the campus needs more diversity?

20. Some universities have a diversity requirement, do you think that should be something Southwestern State should institute?
        a. What difference would it make?

21. Overall, would you say you are satisfied with your experiences regarding diversity at Southwestern State?
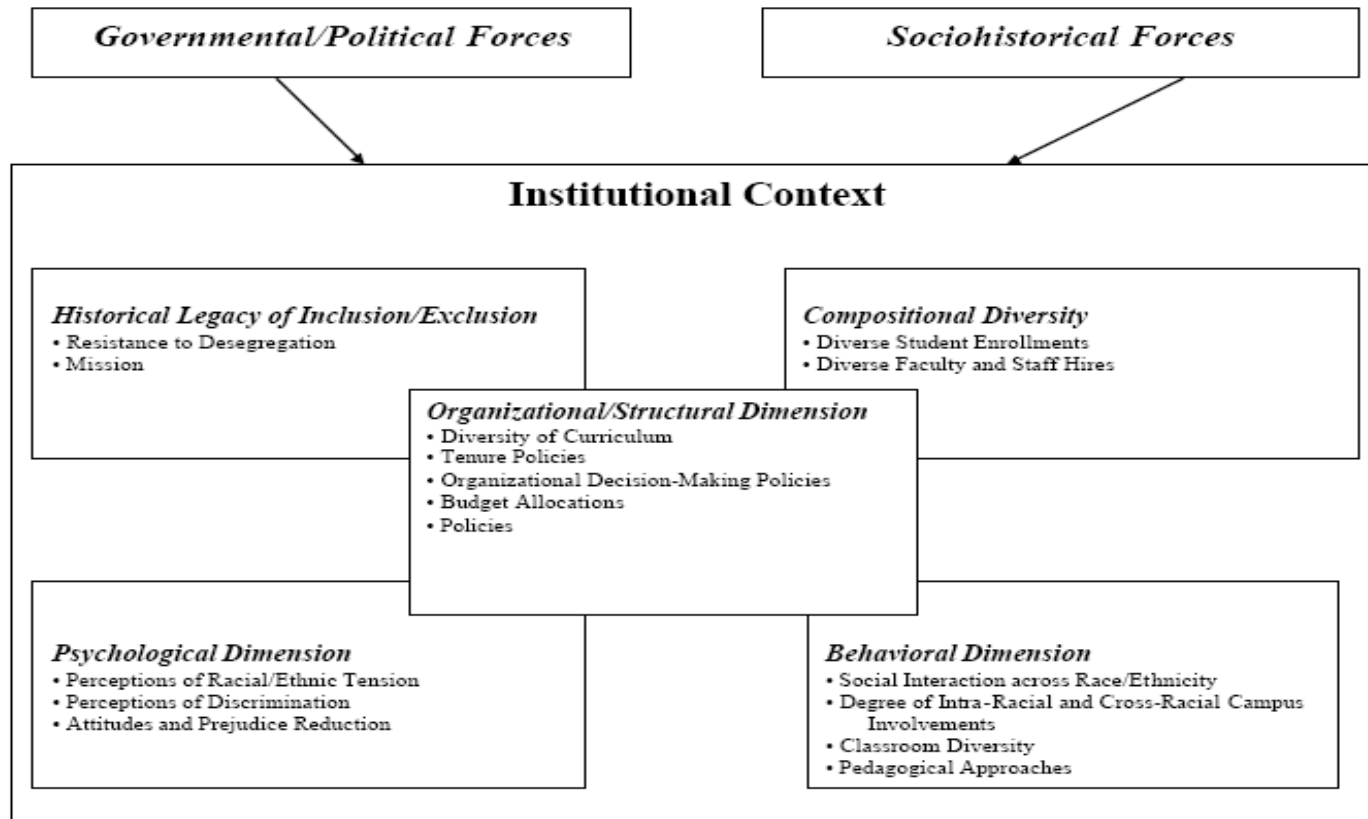   a. *Are there aspects of your experiences in which you are unsatisfied?*

22. Is there anything else you would like to add?

If I have additional questions at a later time via phone, e-mail, or in person, would you be willing to speak with me again?

APPENDIX F

Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005) Campus Climate Framework

APPENDIX G

List of Participants

Pseudonym	Race	Major	Year	Honor Society/ Honors Program	Greek	Age
Ama	Filipina & Black	Advertising, Mass Comm.	Jr.			20
Sandy	Guyanese/Black	Special Education	5th yr Sr.		x	22
Orlando	Black	Finance	Sr.		x	21
Warren	Black	Public Relations	Sr.		x	22
Julianne	Black	Occupational Education	Jr.	HS		40's
Audrey	Black	Social Work	Sr.			21
Daniel	Latino	Finance	Sr.		x	21
Gabriel	Latino	Sociology	Sr.		x	21
Isaac	Hispanic	Political Science	Jr.			48
Ishmael	Hispanic	Geography	Sr.			22
Rosie	Hispanic	Sociology	Sr.			21
Isabel	Hispanic (Mexican Am)	Psychology	Sr.			22
Maya	Hispanic	Mass Communications	Jr.			20

Jordan	Chicana	Soc & Spanish	Sr.	HS		24
Tanny	Hispanic	Education (Math)	Jr.	HP & HS		21
Anna	Hispanic	Social Work	Sr.	HS		22
Megan	Bi-racial (Mexican-Spanish-White-American)	Art & Women's Studies	Sr.	HP		22
Heather	Bi-racial (Hispanic & White)	Social Work	Sr.	HS	x	22
Erika	Bi-racial (Hispanic & White)	Geography & Enviro. Studies	Jr.	HP & HS		20
Josh	Caucasian	History	Sr.	HP & HS		21
Mackenzie	White	Social Work	Sr.	HS		mid-late 20's
Holly	White American	Social Work	Sr.			28
Madelyn	White	Public Relations	Sr.	HP		20
Janelle	White	Social Work	Sr.			61
Leanne	White	Social Work	Sr.			33
Sara	White/Caucasian	Mass Comm/ Diversity Studies minor	Sr.	HS		22

APPENDIX H

Background on Greek Organizations

The SWSU website described the four Greek Councils in the follow ways:

The following was stated about the Interfraternity Council:

> The Interfraternity Council (IFC) at Southwestern State is the governing body for thirteen fraternities, and is associated with the North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC). The IFC's principle responsibilities are operating a student-run peer judicial system for its member fraternities and coordinating the formal recruitment process. The IFC provides chapters a chance to build relations with each other, unite on issues concerning the Council, and provides an opportunity for student chapter members to excel both inside and outside the classroom. Below is link to the bylaws that govern the Greek men at Texas State and outlines the high standards Greeks are held to.

The Panhellenic Council is the council that oversees many of the White sororities at

SWSU. The overview the website provides about the Panhellenic Council is very limited

and states the following:

> Sorority life enriches your college experience through community service, scholarship, sisterhood and campus involvement. The bonds found within sisterhood will reach far past your college years!

> The SWSU website provides the following information about the National Pan-

Hellenic Council:

> The National Pan-Hellenic Council, Incorporated (NPHC) is currently composed of nine (9) International Greek letter Sororities and Fraternities: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Sigma Gamma Rho

Sorority, Inc. Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. and Omega Phi Psi Fraternity, Inc. NPHC promotes interaction through forums, meetings and other mediums for the exchange of information and engages in cooperative programming and initiatives through various activities and functions… The stated purpose and mission of the organization in 1930 was "Unanimity of thought and action as far as possible in the conduct of Greek letter collegiate fraternities and sororities, and to consider problems of mutual interest to its member organizations."

Finally, the SWSU website describes the Multicultural Greek Council in the

following way:

Established at Southwestern State University in the fall of 1999, the Multicultural Greek Council recognizes and supports Greek social and service organizations whose needs have not been met by any existing council. Kappa Delta Chi, Sigma Delta Lambda, Sigma Lambda Beta and Sigma Lambda Gamma joined together to better meet their individual and joint needs, to voice their concerns and to ensure harmony among member organizations.

The Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) is currently composed of six Greek letter sororities and fraternities: Kappa Delta Chi, Phi Iota Alpha, Sigma Delta Lambda, Sigma Lambda Beta, Sigma Lambda Gamma and Sigma Iota Alpha. The organizations in the council are predominantly Hispanic-based but have grown to include membership from a world-wide range of ethnicities and races.

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