ABSTRACT

Title of Document: PEER INTERACTION AND LEARNING IN
                            COMPOSITIONALLY DIVERSE RESIDENCE
                            HALLS

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This collective case study investigated how peer interactions occurred in two

racially and ethnically diverse, first year residential communities at a mid sized public

research university. For each case, minority students from two or more racial or

ethnic identities composed at least 40% of the floor's population. The study provides

descriptions of diverse peer interactions and subsequent learning outcomes as

described by residents. Characteristics and conditions which support or impede

diverse peer interactions and impact learning are suggested.

Anxious to make friends and seeking support to reach academic goals, first

year students developed relationships with other residents in close proximity to them

regardless of perceived differences before later branching out to form relationships

outside of the floor. The strategies residents used to interact with diverse peers and

included: 1) participating in neutral activities, 2) finding similarities, and 3) joking.

By observing the living environments and actions of diverse others and by

participating in neutral activity residents discovered hidden similarities. Residents in these diverse environments avoided serious conversations about race and ethnicity instead navigating diverse peer relationships by joking about differences. Prior diversity experiences, heightened emotions and desire for friends influenced students' initial comfort with diverse peer interaction, but over time students with and without prior diversity experience engaged in diverse peer interaction due to diverse composition of floor and expectations of sustained contact. By living in close or intimate quarters with others different from themselves, residents encountered simple cultural differences. Observations of similarities and simple differences stimulated questions and conversations. Curiosity, proximity and increased comfort allowed students to encounter new values and beliefs creating both confusion and excitement. Diverse peer observations and interactions facilitated a variety of desirable learning outcomes including increased openness to diversity, willingness to consider new ideas, reduction of prejudice and stereotyping, increased perspective taking, better listening and communication skills and an increased willingness to compromise and act with polite consideration of others. Interacting with diverse peers in a compositionally diverse residence community provided the challenges necessary to prompt new ways of seeing the world.

PEER INTERACTIONS AND LEARNING IN COMPOSITIONALLY DIVERSE
RESIDENCE HALLS

By

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem: Understanding and Facilitating Peer Interactions in Diverse Residential Communities to Maximize Learning Outcomes

Colleges and universities have "actively address[ed] campus diversity issues since the 1960s" (Smith et al., 1997, p.3). Litigation related to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, increases in minority enrollments in the mid-seventies, and the racial conflict which occurred on many campuses in the 1980's challenged colleges and universities to examine the campus racial climate and the nature of relationships between students of differing races (Hurtado, 1992). More recently, the changing demographics of our nation and challenges to the use of affirmative action in college admissions processes have again placed issues of diversity on center stage for higher education (Orfield & Kurlaender, 2001; Smith et al., 1997). As experts defended the University of Michigan's use of race-conscious admissions practices in the Supreme court case *Grutter v. Bollinger* (see also *Gratz v. Bollinger),* they drew from existing conceptual models and produced new research to prove that interaction between students of different racial and ethnic groups not only produces societal benefits, but fosters learning outcomes central to the mission of higher education (Gurin, 1999; see also Bowen, 1999). While experts and legal teams were successful in making the case that diversity serves a compelling interest for education, much of the earlier research cited in the expert testimony was not explicitly designed to investigate the impact of diversity on educational outcomes (Gurin). This gap in empirical evidence for the educational value of diverse interactions spawned a decade of new research that now

provides the evidence to support what many educators already believed to be true, but previously lacked the evidence to prove - that much of the learning that occurs during college results from interactions between students who are different from each other (Bowen, 1999; Gurin, 1999; Hurtado, 1999; Rudenstine, 2004; Witt, Chang, & Hakuta, 2003). In fact, Milem (2003) suggests that this evidence "illuminate[s] a central issue that is often missed in the debate over affirmative action - that supporting diversity in colleges and universities is not only a matter of social justice but also a matter of promoting educational excellence" (p.126).

Residence halls present a unique and rich opportunity for fostering the informal diverse peer interaction that promotes this educational excellence (Witt et al., 2003). As noted by Bowen:

> In a residential college setting, in particular, a great deal of learning occurs informally. It occurs through interactions among students of both sexes; of different races, religions and backgrounds; [..] who are able, directly or indirectly, to learn from their differences and to stimulate one another to reexamine even their most deeply held assumptions (p. 3).

Forty years after civil rights legislation paved the way for racial integration, our nation's neighborhoods remained largely segregated (Sugrue, 1999) and segregation in our high schools was on the rise (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Therefore, for students attending racially and ethnically diverse institutions, residence halls may provide their first significant exposure to students who are racially or ethnically different from themselves

(Hurtado, 1999; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Informal interactions with diverse peers in residence halls may be particularly powerful sources of learning not only because they occur during an important developmental stage of late adolescence and early adulthood, but because the residence hall experience separates students from their old home environment and provides a new environment that exposes them to different ideas and experiences (Gurin, 1999; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002). In the transition from home to college, resident students have the opportunity to experience interactions across race and ethnicity which not only promote learning, but may also provide the frequent, sustained residential contact necessary for positive cross racial interactions to develop (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000).

Unfortunately, merely interacting across race does not guarantee educational benefit or even positive interactions. Although "it has sometimes been held that merely by assembling people without regard for race, color, religion, or national origin, we can thereby destroy stereotypes and develop friendly attitudes. The case is not so simple" (Allport, p. 261). Since the passage and implementation of civil rights legislation of the 1960's prohibiting discrimination, many housing and residence life staffs have assigned students to college residence communities without regard for race. Yet 50 years after Allport wrote the words above, we still have no magic formula for ensuring productive interracial interaction between individuals living in these communities. Nor does simply living with diverse others guarantee positive impacts on learning outcomes. While students may reap personal and educational benefits from cross racial interactions, interracial interactions may also negatively influence educational outcomes, lead to

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conflict between students, or alienate minority students (Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado, Carter & Kardia, 1998; Fries-Britt, 1998, 2002; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Loo & Rollison, 1986; Villalpando, 2002). Therefore, residence educators have been encouraged to actively intervene in residential communities to maximize the educational benefits of diversity for all students by encouraging positive cross racial interactions between residents. While Allport suggests general conditions which facilitate productive interracial interactions, educators have been given "no template for interaction across racial/ethnic groups" (Gurin et al., p. 362). Diverse peer interaction cannot be left to chance if higher education is to take full advantage of the positive effects of diversity on students' education and learning outcomes (Schofield, 2001).

To effectively implement strategies that increase the diverse peer interactions which impact learning outcomes, residence educators must have better information about how students perceive diversity, how peer relationships develop, and the conditions under which these interactions facilitate or inhibit desirable educational outcomes in diverse residence communities (antonio, 2004; Chang, 2001a). The proposed study responds to this need by expanding understanding of how resident students interact and learn in compositionally diverse residential communities, communities with high numbers of minority residents where no one racial or ethnic group represents more than 65% of the floor's population. The perceptions and experiences of resident students who live with diversity every day can suggest factors that encourage diverse peer interactions, develop positive interracial and interethnic residence communities, and foster learning outcomes. Therefore, this study uses

qualitative case study methods to explore peer interactions in two racially and ethnically diverse residence environments from the perspective of the residents who live in these communities.

The Purpose of the Study

This case study explored how college students interact in diverse residential environments in order to identify contextual variables and conditions which support or impede diverse peer interactions and, ultimately, impact learning. How do interactions occur among residents in racially and ethnically diverse college residence communities? What sorts of interactions occur? How can I, as a practitioner, encourage these interactions? How do these interactions affect the residents living there? What conditions facilitate interaction? These questions prompted both the initiation of this study and the selection of the case study methods selected to carry it out. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do students who live in compositionally diverse residence communities describe their experiences and the nature of their interactions with other members of the community?

2. What characteristics, conditions, policies or programs support or impede positive peer interactions in compositionally diverse communities?

3. Does peer interaction in diverse residential communities impact learning? If so, how do students describe these effects?

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As an exploratory case study, this research sought not just to describe students'

experiences, but to discover through analysis of residents' and staff's descriptions,

supporting documents and artifacts *how* peer interactions in compositionally diverse

living environments occur and how students think these experiences shape their learning

in order to expand current theory and to improve practice.

Importance of the Problem and Need for the Study

Research spanning four decades consistently indicates that interaction with peers

influences a variety of developmental and learning outcomes (Astin, 1993; Pascarella &

Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Specifically, the research suggests that interaction with diverse

peers leads to increases in cognitive complexity, openness to different perspectives and

to diversity in general, greater understanding of self and others, increases in problem

solving and critical thinking, interpersonal competence and altruism, humanitarianism,

and a variety of other desirable college outcomes (antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny,

Levin, & Milem, 2004; Astin, 1993, 1999a; Baxter Magolda, 1992; Gurin,1999; Gurin

et al., 2002; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Kuh, 1995; Milem, 1992, 1994, 2003; Milem, Chang, &

antonio, 2006; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn & Terenzini, 1996; Pascarella,

Whitt, Nora, Edison, Hagedorn & Terenzini, 1996; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling,

1996; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora & Terenzini, 1999; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella,

Terenzini & Nora, 2001). The literature reviewed in chapter 2 of this proposal

demonstrates that "a diverse student body adds value to the educational process [...]

when colleges and universities are committed to implementing initiatives that promote

the unique benefits that diversity provides" (Witt et al., 2003, p. 2). Therefore, colleges

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can and should attempt to create the conditions that foster learning in diverse environments (Hurtado, 1999; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators & American College Personnel Association [NASPA & ACPA], 2004). Yet few campuses have "maximized student opportunities for positive cross racial interaction" (Chang, 2002, p.5). To take full advantage of these benefits, research like that proposed in this study is needed to raise new questions, to expand theory and to suggest new strategies for educational practice in diverse settings.

Deeper understanding of students' everyday experiences in diverse residences with racially and ethically diverse peers will suggest strategies to maximize the educational potential in residential contexts. Early research investigating the relationship between diversity and learning focused on the impact of formal curricular and pedagogical practices (Hu & Kuh, 2003). Yet the simple act of studying with diverse peers may have greater effect on critical thinking and problem solving - skills commonly associated with the classroom - than does participation in curricular activity that "makes diversity its explicit focus" (Hurtado, 2001, p. 198). As Chickering and Reisser (1993) indicated, "a student's most important teacher may be another student" (p. 392). In "response to questions about the best approaches to fostering interaction" (Smith et al., 1997, p. 25), recent research has focused on relationships and informal interactions between racially and ethnically diverse students. Informal out-of-class peer interactions have significant impact on learning and developmental outcomes such as the development of leadership skills, interpersonal competence, cognitive complexity or intellectual development and critical thinking skills (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Kuh, 1993,

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1995; Kuh et al., 1991; Terenzini, Pascarella & Blimling, 1996). Everyday interactions such as studying, talking or socializing with students of different races or ethnicities significantly enhance the learning, development and cultural awareness of students (Astin, 1991, 1993; Chang, 1996, 1999; Milem, 1992, 1994; Whitt et al., 2001). These everyday interactions expose students to new perspectives and experiences which challenge their current and comfortable ways of thinking. Interracial interactions may create the cognitive dissonance or disequilibrium widely recognized by developmental psychologists as necessary to stimulate cognitive or intellectual development (Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003; Sanford, 1962).

Students living in campus residences report more involvement and more frequent, sustained interaction with diverse peers than commuters, providing greater opportunity for resident peers to influence learning and development. (Astin, 1993; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Simply living and interacting in college housing with racially and ethnically diverse peers may positively impact students' thinking about and openness to diversity (Pike, 2002). Therefore, "residential settings on campuses present a unique, but often untapped opportunity for molding intergroup relations" (Witt et al., 2003, p.14). The learning opportunities available among diverse student populations can be maximized by implementing policies and practices in living communities designed to promote interactional diversity (Hu & Kuh; Kuh, 1995). But in order to maximize these opportunities, practitioners need to know which policies and practices are most effective in promoting interaction between residents from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

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Extant research suggests institutional characteristics that hinder or enhance positive interaction in diverse learning environments. Current research provides clues to guide practitioners in "making diversity operational at the institutional level" (Smith et al., 1997, p. 43) by identifying the importance of leadership, mission, diverse faculty and staff, and strong overall institutional commitment to diversity. Research does less to explain the specific nature of individual, interracial peer relationships (antonio, 2004). Nor does the literature identify specific practices for fostering interracial interactions in residential environments. While recent work provides insight into the connections between diversity, interaction and learning (Gurin et al.; Milem, 2003; Milem, Chang & antonio, 2006), we do not yet fully understand how diverse peer interactions develop, what specific interactions are most influential in facilitating learning, or how interaction with diverse peers influences development and learning (Whitt et al., 1999). And even though a racially and ethnically diverse student body is a necessary condition to execute diverse learning environments and stimulate cross-racial interaction (Hurtado et al.; Chang, Astin, & Kim), most prior research studies of peer interaction and learning outcomes were conducted in racially homogenous institutions with minimal racial and ethnic diversity in the student body (Chang, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). As a result, we know little about how diverse peer interactions take place in residential contexts with heterogeneous or compositionally diverse student bodies. In summary, the existing research simply does not fully explain *how* interaction with diverse peers occurs in our increasingly diverse residence communities. Additional research is needed to extend our theoretical and practical understanding of how students interact with and

learn from their informal experiences with diverse peers in compositionally diverse residential settings.

As our society, our colleges and our residence halls grow increasingly diverse, understanding how peers interact in compositionally diverse residence environments is also increasingly important. Reflecting on their comprehensive review, Pascarella and Terenzini "confronted the sobering reality" that they could only "draw conclusions about a population of students that no longer dominates postsecondary education" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998, ¶ 3-4). As racial and ethnic minority populations continue to grow and student populations on many campuses become increasingly diverse, conducting research that expands our understanding of peer interactions in racially heterogeneous contexts is both increasingly necessary and increasingly possible. Colleges in the United States enrolled 3 million more students in the 2000-2001 academic year than they did in the 1980-1981 academic year. During the same time period the number of minority students attending college more than doubled - growing from 2 million students to over 4.3 million (Harvey, 2003). Therefore, much of the 27% increase in growth experienced in higher education over the past two decades can be attributed to the larger numbers of students of color attending college. Numbers of Hispanic and Asian-American students tripled during this time period while African-American and American Indian populations increased by 56 percent and 80 percent respectively. In contrast enrollments for White Americans grew only by 9% in the 1980's followed by a 2.4% percent decrease in growth during the 1990's (Harvey).

The changing demographics of our nation and of higher education have been widely discussed as a critical issue for both our society and for higher education (Bowen; Pascarella, Whitt, Nora, Edison, Hagedorn, & Terenzini; 1996; Sugrue, 1999). While this study was prompted by interest in peer interactions which facilitate individual learning and develop, interacting with diverse peers may also produce social outcomes that benefit our diverse society. Learning in settings with diverse membership may teach students to challenge assumptions, prepare them for citizenship, help them to function in diverse workplaces in order to contribute to our nation's economy, and encourage interaction between people of differing races and ethnicities after college (American Council on Education et al., n.d.). The benefits of diverse interaction during college may include greater cultural awareness, reduction of prejudice, greater likelihood of having diverse friendships during and after college, and greater likelihood of living or working in a diverse setting after college (Allport; Pettigrew & Tropp; Sugrue, 1999). Therefore interaction with diverse peers is important, not only for an individual student's learning outcomes, but for the future of our diverse society (American Council on Education; Bowen). Experiences in compositionally diverse environments in college are necessary to equip students for our "increasingly heterogeneous and complex democracy" (Gurin, 1999, ¶ 5). Understanding the experiences of students in diverse residential living and learning contexts can guide policy and programmatic decisions which not only foster positive educational learning and social outcomes for all students, but will ultimately benefit society as a whole.

While studies have found diverse peer interactions to be positively linked to

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multiple educational outcomes, studies also suggest that the racial and ethnic composition of the student body, while not sufficient, is a necessary precursor for such interactions to take place (Gurin, 1999; Hurtado, 1999). Simply stated, for interactions with diverse peers to occur, the peer group must be diverse. Few studies have focused specifically on the experiences of students in highly diverse living environments similar to those proposed for this study. Given the importance of diversity for students and society, this study contributed to the growing body of knowledge on interactional diversity in compositionally diverse environments by directly asking students to suggest the missing information.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Theory related to peer interaction, diversity and learning can be expanded and deepened by employing case study methods. Much of the research on peer interaction and college learning outcomes employs regression methods to analyze large data sets. These quantitative studies have been critical to establishing relationships between a wide variety of college outcomes and peer interaction. Large scale, quantitative studies are useful in identifying relationships between variables, but leave important questions unanswered. We do not yet fully understand how students' interactions with peers, or diverse peers, influence these outcomes, nor do we fully understand how specific institutional program and policy decisions impact students' experiences. As an example of this point, consider the findings and conclusions from a large scale regression study investigating the impact of interaction with peers on cognitive development (Whitt et al., 1999). Students from 23 colleges and universities were surveyed. The regression

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analyses found significant and positive relationships between in-class and out-of-class peer interactions and cognitive outcomes. Simple peer interactions such as talking and studying had great impact. Yet, the study does not explain how peer interactions occurred or how these interactions influenced outcomes. The authors speculate that peer interactions have impact because they require students to consider the perspectives of diverse peers, but concede that they:

> cannot provide detailed descriptions of the interactions nor explain why we obtained these results. Those are questions that should be asked of the students themselves [...] more detailed accounts of how students decide which peers (individuals as well as groups) will influence them, how those influences occur and with what effect are needed (Whitt et al., p.74).

While critical for measuring outcomes and identifying variables that impact such outcomes, quantitative approaches alone are not sufficient to capture the "multi-layered web of influences at work" (Pascarella, Edison et al., 1996, p. 191). As Chang (1996) points out, quantitative research can be reductionist. Qualitative research is needed in order to create complex understandings of how students' experiences impact them (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). This complexity "appears to be accessible in studies that probe deeper into students' interpersonal experiences" (antonio, 2004, p. 557). Through analysis of resident students' descriptions of their experiences, qualitative methods can expand theoretical understandings by exploring complex meanings,

concepts and relationships that may be missed by quantitative study alone.

Understanding conditions which facilitate diverse peer interaction can be used to inform fund allocation and to develop policies and practices which promote learning. Encouraged to support curricular learning, residence staffs across the country have invested financial and staff resources to create residentially based learning communities. Learning communities house students together in communities with programs and activities focused on shared academic endeavor. While not conclusive and sometimes inconsistent in their findings, several studies suggest living-learning communities have the potential to foster desirable outcomes, including greater levels of peer interaction and peer support, greater academic involvement, and greater intellectual development (Arminio, 1994; Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen & Johnson, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Rice & Lightsey, 2001). Other studies conclude that residentially based programs such as first year interest groups and upper class living learning programs foster openness to diversity and increase positive perceptions of the campus climate for racial diversity (Inkelas et al.; Longerbeam, 2005; Pike, 2002). Such studies suggest that living-learning programs improve perceptions related to diversity, but findings of a recent study on learning communities at one large research university may also suggest that such programs can reduce students' actual exposure to racially and ethnically diverse peers. "While students in LC [learning communities] report greater institutional commitment, they report less exposure to racial/ethnic diversity which coincides with the lower racial/ethnic diversity in the LC populations" (Stassen, 2003, p. 602). Though Stassen concludes that less exposure to

diversity is the only weakness of the learning communities in the study, given the strong

relationships found in the research between interaction with diverse peers and learning

outcomes, these findings may warrant greater concern than expressed by the author.

Homogeneity within a student population may facilitate the formation of peer groups

and encourage loyalty to group norms, shared attitudes and values (Newcomb, 1966),

however, homogeneity may also impede learning (Gurin, 1999). Residence

communities intentionally designed to "encourage students' encounters with people

different from themselves" have the greatest influence on college outcomes (Pascarella

& Terenzini, 2005, p. 603). Understanding how diverse residential communities impact

students can suggest strategies to create communities where students not only live to

learn academic content, but learn to think critically and live effectively in our

increasingly diverse society. Such understanding will assist administrators in directing

scarce resources to the most effective interventions.

Finally, changes in society and higher education require testing of current

theories and development of new understandings to guide current practice. This case

study assumes that the meanings discovered through research exist in the larger social,

historical and cultural contexts of our society. Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest that

new contextually based theories are called for whenever there are changes in the larger

social and historical context of society. Changing demographics, changing access

patterns for higher education, and societal attitudes toward diversity represent such

change. As a practitioner trained in the early eighties, I am often aware of how

differently I - and other practitioners of my generation - think about issues of diversity

than the current generation of college students does. In fact, my initial interest in this problem emerged from that awareness. As a researcher with assumptions rooted in pragmatism, I also assume that the students who live and interact in the communities proposed for study share responsibility for creating and describing their environment through their lenses. From a pragmatist perspective, it is important to reshape theory and understanding as each new generation attempts to make use of diversity daily in their lives and work. Listening to students and developing understanding directly from their experiences provided information to shape better learning environments for and with the students at the host institution.

Overview of Methodology

This study employed collective case study methods appropriate for the exploration of complex social phenomena such as diverse peer interactions and learning in their natural context (Merriam, 1998). Because compositional diversity has been identified as a necessary prerequisite for interaction with diverse peers (Gurin, 1998; Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999), and because peers in residence environments frequently socialize, study and engage in discussions with peers (Astin, 1993; Hu & Kuh; Kuh et al., 1991; Milem, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005), racially and ethnically diverse residence communities provide fertile cases for the study of diverse peer interaction (Merriam). This study employed a collective or comparative case study design collecting, analyzing and comparing data from two different residence communities or floors residence halls of similar structure. Multiple cases are examined

in a collective design in order to identify findings that are replicated in or across multiple contexts (Yin, 2003).

Cases were selected from residence floors situated in the residential community of a compositionally diverse, public, research university where nearly 37% of first year students identify as members of racial or ethnic minority groups. The racially diverse context proposed for this study is unique for multiple reasons. The racial and ethnic composition at this institution is diverse compared to many predominantly White institutions in its geographical region. Minority students attending predominantly White institutions may have lower retention and report levels of satisfaction lower than their White peers (Chang, 1996). However, at the institution selected for study, African American students are retained and graduate at rates higher than rates for White students (Comparison, 2005; Tinney, 2005). As reported in a nationally benchmarked student of student satisfaction with housing, there are also no significant differences in overall satisfaction with university housing for any racial or ethnic group at the institution (Educational Benchmarking Report, 2004). In comparison, results from this national study (including data from over 200 colleges and universities) reveal that minority students in the total sample report significantly less satisfaction with their residential experience than do their majority peers (Jones & Butler, 2004). The experiences of students at an institution where both majority and minority students seem to benefit equally on measures of persistence and satisfaction may provide unique insights into the characteristics that support positive peer interactions in racially diverse

contexts. The site was also selected for the convenience of the researcher, an employee of the institution selected for study. Therefore, the site provides ease of entry, ability to find participants willing to be interviewed and ease of getting to and from the site for data collection (Cresswell, 1998).

Case study uses multiple sources of evidence in order to triangulate or confirm the research findings (Yin). Semi-structured individual interviews were the primary method of data collection. For each case, interviews with the Resident Assistant and six to nine residents selected to mirror the diversity of each floor were conducted in November of 2006, December of 2006, and February 2007. Interview data were augmented by document analysis and analysis of other sources of data including unit assignment practices, programming records, community agreements, satisfaction surveys and demographic reports. The final interview with the individual interview participant was also used to check understandings and to confirm emerging themes. Both within case and cross case analyses were conducted to identify themes. Detailed descriptions of the site and methods are described in the third chapter.

Definition of Terms

Compositional diversity (Milem et al., 2006)*,* also referred to in the literature as structural diversity, refers to the "numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 5) in the college environment. In this proposal, compositionally diverse communities are those with members from three or more racial or ethnic groups where no one group makes up more than 65% of the community's

population. Compositional diversity is synonymous with the terms *racial and ethnic diversity* and *structural diversity.*

Diversity refers to the presence of racial and ethnic differences in the residential peer group. While diversity can be defined in many other ways (sexual orientation, sex, gender, ability, major) this research is limited to the study of racial and ethnic diversity consistent with the definition of compositional/structural diversity found in the frameworks discussed in the literature review (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2006). Diversity is used as short hand for the term racial and ethnic diversity.

Diverse peers refer to students who do not share the same race or ethnicity. Within the methods chapter of this proposal, diverse peers more narrowly refers to residents living on the same residence floor who do not share the same race or ethnicity.

Individual learning outcomes refers to the individual educational outcomes associated with an individual student's development and learning as reported by the participants in this study. In the literature, learning outcomes include the "active thinking skills, intellectual engagement and a variety of academic skills" (Gurin et al., p.334) as well as the cognitive and affective gains accrued by students (Astin, 1993). Individual benefits are defined as "the ways in which the educational experiences and outcomes of individuals are enhanced by diversity on campus" (Milem, 2003, p.129). Borrowing concepts from both of these terms, the definition of individual learning outcomes used in this study excludes group outcomes or benefits which accrue to the institution or society as well as non- learning outcomes such as student satisfaction and

degree attainment. The broader term *outcomes* also allows for the possibility that not all learning outcomes will be beneficial or positive. In this research, individual learning outcomes will be identified by students' subjective assessments (Orfield & Whitla, 1999).

Interactional diversity refers to the frequency and the quality of intergroup interactions between peers (Gurin et al., p. 333). In this proposal, it refers specifically to the daily interactions between diverse peers of differing races and ethnicities which occur or are initiated in the residence community under study. Interactional diversity is synonymous with the term *behavioral diversity* (as used in the literature) and *diverse peer interactions*.

Peer Interaction refers to interactions between residents of the same community occurring in the community or originating from interactions in the community. For example, if residents of the same floor went to dinner with each other in the Dining Hall, the interaction would not take place on the floor, but would be included in this definition because the interaction originated in the residential community. Interactions may be verbal, nonverbal, or written. For example, both a conversation that takes place in the hallway and an Instant Messenger communication via computer would be considered interaction.

Race is used as short hand for the term "race and ethnicity."

Racial diversity is used as short hand for the term "racial and ethnic diversity."

Race and ethnicity refers to the demographic identity the student checked on an admission application and/or the group identity a student reveals during an interview or focus group if different than admissions records.

Staff refers to the staff members responsible for the residential community at the time that the study is being conducted. Staff live in the community and have first hand knowledge of the case both as resident members and employees of the community under study. Staff members include Resident Assistants (RAs) and Community Directors (CDs).

> *Resident Assistants* are paraprofessional student employees who live on a floor and serve as a peer mentor, programmer and community standards negotiator/enforcer. RAs are upper-class students with sophomore standing or above. RAs receive on going supervision and direction from a Community Director. RAs receive formal counseling and helping skills training through participation in a 3 credit paraprofessional helping skills class with specific content related to culture and diversity.

> *Community Directors* are a full time, professional staff members who live in the residential building containing the cases or communities under study. The CD supervises RAs, counsels students, manages resident conflicts, oversees programs, coordinates desk, and conducts judicial hearings. The CD has a Masters degree in Counseling, Higher Education, College Student Personnel work or related field.

These definitions serve to create a common language in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

FOR THE STUDY

Introduction to the Literature Review

The literature review served multiple purposes in developing and implementing

this case study. First, by identifying the literature that influenced my development as a

student affairs practitioner, the literature review made public the writing that influenced

my thoughts as I initially developed research questions and approached the literature

related to peer interaction and learning in diverse residential communities. Because the

researcher is the primary tool for the analysis of data in a case study (Merriam, 1998),

knowing the researcher's prior assumptions was critical to understanding my role in

generating research questions and in interpreting data. This literature also served as a

tool to check assumptions during collection and analysis of the data by prompting

verification of the case findings where notable agreement or disagreement is found with

my pre-existing views. The literature that influenced me as a practitioner also provided

limited insight into the larger historical context in which this study is situated.

Therefore, the first section of the literature traces relevant literature introduced to me

during my twenty years as a student affairs and residence life educator.

In the second section, I summarize foundational literature related to college

outcomes and peer interaction in order to set the context for the more recent literature

that provides the conceptual framework for the study. Together, the works of Feldman

and Newcomb (1969/1994), Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), and Astin (1977, 1985,

1993) establish the critical role of peer interaction in facilitating or hindering college

outcomes (including the educational or learning outcomes of interest in this proposal). While these works drew their conclusions based on research populations biased toward the largely White majority student populations typical on many campuses at the time (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), they also foreshadowed the importance of diverse peers, paving the way for a decade of research more inclusive and responsive to the changing racial and ethnic demographics of our student bodies.

The research published since the early 1990's includes a growing body of work that explores how "experiencing diversity during college influences the outcomes of college itself" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 3). In the third section of this chapter, I explore this literature as it relates to the impact of peer interaction and learning in diverse residential environments. In the fourth section, I explore literature that both directly and indirectly suggests conditions which may facilitate interaction between or learning from diverse peers in residential communities including characteristics of campus culture (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991), characteristics of campus climate (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999; Milem et al., 2006), and conditions for productive interracial contact (Allport, 1954/1979; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). The role of residential communities in fostering diverse interactions opens this section. Taken as a whole, the literature summarized in this chapter reshaped my assumptions originally developed through practice, guided the development of research questions, directed selection of cases, and provided the conceptual frame for the case study.

In a qualitative study, the conceptual framework provides theoretical sensitivity - insight that allows the researcher to understand data, to decide what is relevant to the

case, and to identify evolving themes during the collection and analysis of data

(Merriam; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theories and concepts found in the literature are

compared to the themes emerging from the collected data during analysis. Literature

identifies concepts "used to discover new connections between theory and real-world

phenomena" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 52). Therefore, the final section of this

chapter summarizes and synthesizes relevant concepts from the literature to suggest a

model for understanding *how* peer interactions which facilitate learning take place in the

specific context of racially and ethnically diverse residential communities. This

synthesis (displayed graphically in Figure 1 at the end of this chapter) serves as the

conceptual framework under girding this case study.

Personal and Historical Context: Development, Learning, Diversity and Peer

Interaction

My interest in interactions between diverse peers and learning originated from

my practical experience as residential life staff during the eighties and nineties. My

understanding of and assumptions about diverse peer interaction were also influenced

by the literature of the same period. I entered the field of student affairs in the 1980's as

psychological theories of college student development were growing in prominence.

The training of many student affairs or student personnel workers schooled during this

time period focused on how to foster students' cognitive, moral and psycho-social

student development through daily living outside of the classroom. Fostering learning

was the purview of academic colleagues and rightfully belonged in the classroom,

laboratories and libraries. Despite a common purpose as educators, academic affairs

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and student affairs operated in separate realms within colleges and universities with distinct responsibility for curricular learning and co-curricular development respectively (Astin, 1999b; Baxter-Magolda, 1992).

Though working in separate spheres of campus, faculty and staff at many colleges and universities in the eighties also shared the challenge of educating a student population that was becoming more diverse on multiple dimensions including race and ethnicity (Smith, 1989). More diverse student populations stimulated faculty and academic administrators to create inclusive curricula and classroom environments (Schmitz, 1992) while student development educators sought ways to teach racial tolerance, develop inclusive living communities, and to help students manage conflict (Smith). Broader access to higher education raised concerns for some about the quality and preparation of students and concerns about the more inclusive curriculum developed in response to the greater diversity of college students (Adams, 1992; Smith).

The Involvement in Learning (Study Group, 1984) report, a set of recommendations aimed at improving higher education, was issued in response to these concerns. The report's authors sought ways to improve learning in "diverse educational contexts" where diversity was seen not just as a challenge to be managed, but as the "means by which quality education is achieved" (Study Group, p. 3). The report encouraged the blurring of lines between curricular and co-curricular realms. Of particular relevance to this inquiry, the report specifically recommended the creation of learning communities in dormitories recognizing the critical role out-of-class

experiences can play in fostering learning (Study Group, p. 34). Such recommendations were supported by early research demonstrating that student learning occurs outside of the classroom as well as inside of it (Astin, 1977, 1985; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969/1994).

Regardless of where learning activity occurs, learning outcomes are the result of a student's level of *involvement* – "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984/1999b, p. 518). Involvement has both quantitative aspects (e.g., how frequently a student interacts with peers) and qualitative aspects (e.g., the content or intensity of the interactions). The quality and quantity of student involvement directly impacts the quality and quantity of what students learn. Student involvement can occur anywhere and includes participation in the simple acts of daily living as well as in formal classroom contexts (Astin, 1999b; Kuh et al., 1991). In fact, the most significant environmental effects of college on students resulted from informal interactions between peers and faculty inside and outside of class (Astin, 1993, 1999a; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Therefore, the student peer group is a critical element of the educational environment. Definitions of learning also grew to encompass both cognitive (e.g., critical thinking) and affective outcomes (e.g. self understanding and tolerance for others) shaped both in and out of class (Astin, 1999a, 1999b). By the mid nineties, prominent leaders in student affairs no longer saw development and learning as separate phenomena facilitated in separate realms of campus. In *The Student Learning Imperative* (Student Learning Imperative, 1996) these leaders stated that learning encompasses both traditional notions of learning

and development. Further, student learning in this broad form must be the primary goal of student affairs professionals. This notion of learning remains central to the work of student affairs professionals today (NASPA & ACPA, 2004; ACPA et al., 2006).

By the mid-nineties, research also broadened to investigate developmental and learning outcomes across and within multiple racial and ethnic groups (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Although the types of outcomes and the types of conditions necessary to facilitate outcomes may differ for students in various racial and ethnic groups, recent evidence indicates that all students benefit from diverse interactions in educational environments under the right conditions (Chang, 1999; Chang, 2001a; Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003; Milem et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Villalpando, 2002). This literature - not part of my earlier education - challenged my thinking and reshaped my initial questions related to peer interaction. I also began to question how I (and those I work with in the residence halls) could more purposefully create conditions which facilitate educationally productive, diverse peer interactions which equally benefit all students. Because the more recent literature builds upon three frequently cited works, the next section presents foundational literature before reviewing the recent literature on diverse peer interactions and individual learning outcomes that provides the framework for this study. Diversity and diverse interactions impact a wide range of desirable outcomes including benefits to the institution, the economy or private sector, society as a whole and the individual student (Milem, 2003). While some of the research reviewed in this chapter also addresses college outcomes other than individual learning outcomes (including institutional, economic, societal benefits and individual

outcomes as satisfaction or retention), such research is mentioned only when it provides insight into diverse peer interactions and the individual learning benefits relevant to this study.

Foundational Frameworks: Peer Influence, Interaction and College Outcomes

Research on college outcomes in American education dates to the 1920's (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969/1994). Two major works, *The Impact of College on Students* (Feldman & Newcomb) and *How College Affects Students* (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), together summarized college outcomes research from this early period of research through the 1990's. These works used different analytical frameworks and focused on different variables and outcomes at different points in history, yet reached strikingly similar conclusions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). A third body of research emerging from studies begun in the late 1960's and developed more fully in *Four Critical Years* (Astin, 1977), Astin's college impact model provided the conceptual foundation for much of the later research related to peer interaction in college. Together, these three works provide a starting point for the discussion of peer interaction, diversity, residence and individual college learning outcomes.

Feldman and Newcomb: College Impact and Peer Interaction prior to the 70's

In Feldman and Newcomb's (1969/1994) work, *The Impact of College on Students*, the authors defined college impact research as studies which attempt to answer the question "under what conditions have what kinds of [college] students changed in what specific ways?" (pp. 3-4). Feldman and Newcomb answered this question by analyzing and synthesizing 40 years of research related to the effects of college. Their

sociologically focused frame sought to identify the effects of socialization, "the pressure on new members of the group to adhere to prevailing ways of thinking, feeling and behaving in the group" (Feldman, 1994, p. xx). Their analysis focuses on the congruence or fit between the student and the specific college environments the student enters. While not ignoring traditional learning or intellectual outcomes, the outcomes they identified are largely social or affective in nature - values, attitudes, satisfactions- and were reported as changes related to specific environmental impacts including peer group characteristics. Feldman and Newcomb concluded that after controlling for entry characteristics, college attendance independently impacts students' values (and that these impacts remain intact after college.) College environments in general press students to become more open-minded, less authoritarian, less conservative, less prejudiced, less religious, more aesthetically sensitive, more independent, more self confident, and more intellectually interested and capable (Feldman & Newcomb).

Attitudinal and value changes during college may be the result of environmental "forces promoting attitude change" toward the aggregate peer group values, but because colleges and universities may attract and select students who are similar to each other upon entry, changes may also simply accentuate or "reinforce and strengthen extant orientations" (Feldman & Newcomb, 1994, p. 223). Sub-environments such as membership in a specific residence community or fraternity may also mitigate the impacts of the larger student body by providing press from a smaller, more influential peer group with different values from the larger student population. Important to this proposal, Feldman and Newcomb concluded that peer groups play a critical and

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dominant role in the socialization and influence of college students. Environmental variables such as student entry characteristics, homogeneity of the student body, campus culture, and characteristics of sub-environments such as residence halls and self-selected friendship groups were identified as critical influences on college effects.

In earlier works, Newcomb (1962, 1966) expounded on the conditions which encourage peer interaction and the formation of friendships and peer groups. Newcomb suggests that three factors - pre-college acquaintanceship, propinquity and similarity of attitudes and interests – influence the formation of college peer groups. Pre-college acquaintanceship is relatively less important than the other two factors because small numbers of high school friends attend college together and because there is little evidence that pre-existing relationships persist throughout the college years. Students are most likely to interact with students they come into frequent contact with early in their college career. Propinquity, close proximity to other students, establishes the pool of students easily available for friendship. (For example, Newcomb suggests that students form friendships with other residents who live on the same residence hall floor more frequently than with students who live on different floors.) From this pool of convenience, students are most likely to form close friendships with other students who share similar values and interests.

As in Feldman and Newcomb, Newcomb (1962, 1966) indicates that homogeneity of the peer group is an important condition contributing to the peer group's power to influence members. For Newcomb, writing in the sixties, homogeneity was defined as age, sex, social class and religion. However, he notes that these

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"observable forms of similarity" are accompanied by "homogeneity of attitudes" (Newcomb, 1966, p. 13). It is the holding of similar values, attitudes and interests that gives peers their influence. Three other conditions – size of group, isolation from groups with holding differing values, and importance of group values to the individual member - are also key factors in peer influence. The most influential groups: 1) are small enough that members can recognize all members, but large enough to sustain subgroups, 2) interact little with other groups holding different values or interests, and 3) are composed of peers who value the commonly held attitudes of the group (Newcomb, 1962).

Published in the 1960's and summarizing research that dates back to the 1920's, many of the specific findings of Feldman and Newcomb's research cannot be assumed true for today's larger, more complex institutions and less homogenous, diverse college student bodies. Feldman and Newcomb's text and Newcomb's work on peer groups explain the formation of peer groups and subsequent influence on attitudinal change, but sheds less light on the relationships between peer interaction and learning. Never-the-less, their general findings and framework remain useful and are still used to illuminate current discussion of college outcomes. Indeed, Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) subsequent work confirmed that many of the findings reported in 1969 held true into the nineties.

Pascarella and Terenzini: Peer Interaction and College Outcomes through 1990

In the 20 plus years between Feldman and Newcomb's research and the publication of Pascarella and Terenzini's *How College Affects Students*, research on

college outcomes grew both in number and sophistication (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, developmental theory guided the work of many student affairs practitioners during this time period. Advances in statistical regression methods and software combined with an increasing reliance on developmental theory to create research designs that attempted not just to document college outcomes, but to explain them within the new developmental psychology frameworks as well as the sociological frames used by Feldman and Newcomb (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). While Feldman and Newcomb focused on the environmental impacts that led to changes in outcomes, Pascarella and Terenzini focused on the cognitive and affective outcomes themselves. Despite the difference in emphasis and approach, there is significant agreement between the two works' conclusions. Comparing their work to Feldman and Newcomb's synthesis (as well as another synthesis published by Bowen (1977), but not discussed here), Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) summarized their findings:

> Taken as a total body of evidence, [these] syntheses suggest that [...] Students learn to think in more abstract, critical, complex, and reflective ways; there is a general liberalization of values and attitudes combined with an increase in cultural and artistic interests and activities; progress is made toward the development of personal identities and more positive self-concepts; and there is an expansion and extension of interpersonal horizons, intellectual interests,

individual autonomy, and general psychological maturity and well-

being. (pp. 563-564.)

While their specific findings are too vast to summarize in detail, several specific points

germane to this study merit mention. Interactions with peers were found to have a

strong influence on multiple college outcomes including intellectual, moral and personal

development. Self-concepts and a broad range of values are also influenced by peer

interaction. Like Feldman and Newcomb, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) recognized

the environmental press created by a homogenous peer group. They suggested that

homogeneity or "like-mindedness" of the peer group may discourage individual change;

it is the diversity within the peer group that leads to development and learning"

(Pascarella & Terenzini, p. 621). While the influence of peers as socializing agents was

clearly confirmed by their research, the causes or processes by which peer interactions

influence college outcomes remained less clear. The authors did not say what frequency

or type of interaction is required to produce outcomes. And, while they speculated that

interaction with diverse peers positively impacts learning outcomes, Pascarella and

Terenzini concluded that insufficient racial and ethnic diversity in many of the studies'

samples made it difficult to generalize findings to more diverse populations.

Astin's College Impact Model: Input-Environment-Output Framework

When Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) were deciding how to frame their

synthesis of college outcomes research, they turned to the work of Alexander Astin,

arguably one of the most widely cited contributors to this body of knowledge. His

classification of college outcomes based on type of outcome, cognitive or affective, and type of data, behavioral or psychological (Astin, 1977, pp. 8-9), provided the framework for classifying the works reviewed for Pascarella and Terenzini's synthesis. Analyzing data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), a large, longitudinal database of college students' information started in the sixties and operated under the auspices of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California Los Angeles, Astin developed a simple model to explain the impact of college on students. Referred to as the college impact or I-E-O model (Input-Environments/Experience-Output), the model seeks to identify the impact of various college *environments* and experiences on students' college *outcomes*. Impact is determined by comparing initial student characteristics at entry (*inputs)* to student characteristics after they've experienced college (*outputs*). While variables measured by the CIRP data have varied over time, data include over 100 input characteristics ranging from high school performance measures to expectations for satisfaction with college. Input characteristics are used as controls and pretests to measure against later outputs. A wide variety of environmental variables including measurements of peer group interaction and place of residence - variables relevant to this proposal - are obtained from follow-up post test surveys. Input data and environmental data are combined with post test outcome data to assess the impact of specific environmental variables on college outcomes (Astin, 1993). Outcomes measured by this research included self reported increases in critical thinking and problem solving as well as more affective outcomes such as increases in cultural awareness, leadership, and social activism. From the large pool of

environmental factors investigated, those with the greatest influence on college outcomes are in order of significance: peer interaction, faculty interaction, student centered faculty, peer discussions of race or ethnicity, hours of study, tutoring peers, socializing with diverse peers, high socioeconomic student body, institutional diversity emphasis, faculty positive about general education, and an altruistic student body (Astin, 1991).

Peer interaction was clearly the most powerful and broadest environmental influence, affecting 18 of the 24 college outcomes measured (including learning outcomes such as increases in problem solving skill, critical thinking ability and overall academic development.) It is also notable that three of the most influential environmental factors occur through interactions with peers (discussing race, tutoring, and socializing with diverse peers) and three factors relate to campus diversity (discussing race, socializing with diverse peers, and institutional diversity emphasis.) Living away from home is also influential even after controlling for pre-college characteristics. Astin asserts, "the students' peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (Astin, 1993, p.398) and suggests that living on campus is important because it brings students into sustained contact with peer groups.

Many elements of the conceptual framework guiding this study and described at the end of this chapter emerge from the early works described in this section. Peer interaction is identified as a singularly important influence on college outcomes. In particular, out- of-class interactions and interactions with diverse peers emerge as two

important types of interactions influencing developmental and learning outcomes. Foundational works also established the importance of pre-college characteristics in shaping students' predisposition to participate in diverse peer interactions. Research also suggests that residential environments facilitate out-of-class peer interactions by providing close proximity to peers. Despite the important ideas the foundational works establish, none of these works, alone or together, are adequate to understand peer interaction in the heterogeneous student populations present at the more racially and ethnically diverse colleges and universities of the 21st century.

Research from 1990: Diverse Peer Interaction and Learning Outcomes

Focus of recent research

More recent studies continue the important work in the field of college impact. While the trend toward studying the impact of college on developmental outcomes using quantitative methods continues, the research found after 1990 (the ending date for Pascarella and Terenzini's major synthesis of college outcomes research) includes both quantitative and qualitative studies. Two additional shifts in research of particular relevance to this study stem from changing concepts of learning and increasing attention given to studying the impact of diversity on learning outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Recent studies reflect a broader definition of learning and intellectual development that views learning and development as intertwined and students as active participants in constructing knowledge through interaction with others (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini). Seen through this lens, out-of-class experiences and peer interaction facilitate the students' interpretation and creation of

knowledge. The second significant difference between the research prior to 1990 and more recent research is a shift from studies emphasizing how college influences openness to diversity to an emphasis on how diversity affects the educational outcomes of college (Pascarella & Terenzini).

The importance of out-of class experiences and peer interaction for learning outcomes.

Multiple studies confirm the effects of out-of-class experiences and peer interactions on a variety of cognitive, intellectual, and attitudinal learning outcomes - outcomes central to the mission of higher education, but previously assumed tied to the curricular world (Kuh et al., 1991; Kuh, Douglas, Lund & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2007). An example of this work is seen in Baxter-Magolda's (1992) use of qualitative methods to explore the impact of students' co-curricular experiences on intellectual development. One hundred and one students from a single institution were interviewed during their freshmen year and during each subsequent year through graduation. A total of 89 students participated for all four years of the longitudinal study. Students were asked to describe out-of-class experiences important to their college growth. Peer relationships and living arrangements were identified as two of the seven co-curricular experiences students said positively impacted their intellectual development. Learning from peers interactions emerged as a theme with students at all levels of cognitive development across all years of study. Learning to get along with other students while living in campus residence halls was also seen as important to growth by student participants. The small number of minority

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students in the sample (only three participants identified as students of color) and the qualitative nature of the study do not allow the findings to be generalized to more compositionally diverse environments. Nor do data suggest specific interventions necessary to facilitate peer interactions and to foster learning. However, more generally, Baxter-Magolda suggests that in order to facilitate learning and intellectual development, colleges should support students as they learn to live with different others through structured interventions. For example, workshops which help students learn to navigate roommate conflicts and develop relationships may help to provide the structured support that allow students to handle the challenges inherent in encountering diverse perspectives.

While Baxter-Magolda suggests that colleges should provide support for students in residence environments, support from peers may inhibit critical thinking (Terenzini, Springer, Pascarella & Nora, 1995). Having supportive or friendly peer relationships was negatively related to the development of critical thinking skills in a longitudinal study of cognitive change during the first year of college. Students who described relationships as competitive or uninvolved achieved higher levels of cognitive growth than their supported peers. Learning outcomes (including critical thinking) and measures of first year college experiences were collected from 210 first year students at a research university using the American College Testing programs' Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) and the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) respectively. The CAAP is an instrument yielding objective measurements of academic skills including reading comprehension, mathematics, and

critical thinking skills. The CSEQ is a self reported measure of students' involvements and experiences while in college. Both instruments, in part or whole, are used in multiple studies reviewed for this chapter. Demographic information and pre-college characteristics were also gathered. As might be expected, pre-college measures of critical thinking explained the largest percentage of variance for the regressions run for the study. However, consistent with other research reviewed, this quantitative study found that out-of-class experiences influenced critical thinking as much as did class related measures. The research population for this study contained few resident students and White students were over represented in the sample. Therefore, these findings can not be generalized to a compositionally diverse, residential student body.

Using mixed methods, Kuh (1995) attempted to identify which out-of-class experiences students deemed most important to their learning. Data were collected from 149 seniors from 12 different schools using semi-structured interviews. Participants were racially and ethnically diverse including 30 African Americans, 6 Asian Americans, 6 Hispanic Americans, 6 international students and 101 White Americans. Independent readers of interview transcripts identified eight out-of-class experiences affecting learning: leadership responsibilities, peer interactions, academic activities, faculty contact, work, travel, institutional ethos, and other experiences not fitting in previous categories. In addition, 14 outcome categories (changes students attributed to their out-of-class experiences) were generated from the interview data and reduced to the following five categories using statistical factor analysis: interpersonal competence, cognitive complexity, knowledge and academic skills, practical competence, and

humanitarianism. These five outcome variables were used as the dependent variables and the eight types of experiences were used as independent variables to create cross tabulations. Peer interaction was identified as the most important out-of-class influence in the development of interpersonal competence, humanitarianism and cognitive complexity for all ethnic groups. Peer interaction affected gains in interpersonal competence more frequently for participants of color than for White participants, and learning outcomes were less frequently influenced by peer interaction for participants from commuter institutions, but outcomes influenced by out-of-class experiences were similar for all groups of students. Kuh concluded that the most influential out-of-class experiences "demanded sustained effort to complete various tasks as students interacted with people from different groups and peers from different backgrounds" (p. 145- 146).

A meta analysis of 18 research studies published between 1991 and 2000 investigating out-of-class experiences and critical thinking, also concluded that non-classroom involvement had a positive impact on the development of critical thinking skills (Gellin, 2003). While there are important reasons to be cautious about the findings of this study (few studies selected for the meta analysis investigated similar involvements), this study found that out-of-class involvements including peer interaction and living on campus led to gains in cognitive skill. The largest effect size (.23) was found for living on campus leading the author to conclude that on campus residences provide opportunities for involvement and interaction.

In a separate review of literature prior to 1995 related to out-of-class experiences and educational outcomes, learning was defined more broadly to include grades and

cognitive development as well as learning related attitudes and values toward learning (Terenzini, Pascarella & Blimling, 1996). Specific experiences such as interacting with diverse peers and living in a residence community appeared in the list of environmental factors which influenced intellectual and cognitive outcomes. Based on the existing literature at the time, the authors concluded that out-of-class experiences had a far greater impact on students' development than previously assumed.

A series of analyses using data from The National Study of Student Learning (NSSL), a longitudinal study examining the influences of academic and non-academic experiences on learning, attitudes about learning, cognitive development and persistence, validate this conclusion (Pascarella, Whitt, Nora, Edison, Hagedorn & Terenzini, 1996; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Pascarella, Bohr, Nora & Terenzini, 1996; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora & Terenzini, 1999; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini & Nora, 2001). Not only do out-of-class experiences have greater impact than previously thought, the NSSL studies suggest that out-of-class experiences may have a greater impact on learning and cognitive development than traditional academic or classroom experiences have on learning (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). The NSSL collected data using the CAAP instrument previously described in this chapter. Students at 23 colleges were tested over a three year period beginning in Fall of 1992 and ending in Spring of 1995 (Pascarella, Whitt et al., 1996). Weighted for race and ethnicity, the sample of 2400 entering students approximated the national cohort of first year students. Data collection included demographic data, pre-college characteristics, campus experience

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measures and CAAP measures of general academic and cognitive development (reading comprehension, math, and critical thinking). Actual number of participants in each of four analyses varied due to the selection criteria for institutional inclusion in the differing studies and the diminishing participation in each of the three years of data collection. Like previous studies, pre-college characteristics had the greatest effect on learning outcomes. In a summary of first year results including all 23 participating institutions, perceptions of a non-discriminatory racial climate, involvement with diverse peers, attending racial or cultural awareness workshop, and living on campus were identified as variables contributing to students' gains in cognitive development (Pascarella, Whitt et al., 1996; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn & Terenzini, 1996). Full time students exhibited greater gains in critical thinking during the first year of college than did part-time students, a finding attributed by the research team in part to the higher likelihood that full-time students engage in experiences which facilitate learning such as interaction with peers, involvement in activities and living on campus (Pascarella, Bohr et al., 1996). In a study of participating four-year institutions, six non-academic experiences positively predicted openness to diversity and challenge (a measurement of attitude toward learning encompassing students' willingness to explore different philosophies, perspectives, values and to exchange influence with those different from themselves) including: living on campus, number of hours worked, diverse acquaintances, topics of conversations (current events, culture, life styles, philosophy, etc.), information in conversations (discussed professors comments, changed opinion, persuaded others), and participation in racial and cultural awareness

workshops (Pascarella, Edison et al., 1996). While these effects were positive for all

students, the impact of living on campus and participating in awareness workshops was

greater for White students than students of color. A later analysis of the second and

third years' data, revealed similar results though living on campus had no significant

effects by the third year of college (Whitt et al., 2001). While the largest gains in

learning occurred during the first year, peer interactions had "significant positive effects

on objectively measured outcomes and self-reported gains in all areas except

understanding science for all three years of the study" (Whitt et al., 1999, p. 72).

Taken together these studies confirm the importance of concepts introduced or

intimated in the foundational literature. The research after 1990 provides convincing

evidence supporting earlier claims that learning outcomes are facilitated by out-of-class

peer interactions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Even outcomes attributed to the

classroom realm such as cognitive development and critical thinking are influenced by a

wide range of day-to-day interactions between peers (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Chang,

1996, 1999; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Kuh, 2003, 2005; Milem, 1992, 1994; Whitt et al., 1999).

Informal actions as simple as studying or having conversations with other students

stimulate learning (Hurtado, 2001) and residential communities provide opportunities

for such interactions to occur (Astin, 1993). While there is still much to be understood

about how these interactions develop and how they shape learning, studies clearly

indicate that interactions with diverse peers play a significant role in learning and have

great educational benefit.

Diverse Peer Interactions and Learning Outcomes

The impact of out-of-class diverse peer interaction on learning is apparent in the work previously described. Yet, until recently, little research was done that explored how diversity affects educational outcomes in colleges and universities (Gurin, 1999). Recent research investigates the relationship between the diversity of the student body, interaction with diverse peers while in college, and learning outcomes. In these studies, diversity is often synonymous with the racial and ethnic differences present in the student body. Research focuses not only on the educational effects of interactions between students of differing races or ethnic groups, but on the effects of compositional diversity, the racial and ethnic composition of the student body, as well. This line of research investigates the claim that a compositionally diverse student body enhances the educational aims of higher education by increasing students' exposure to diverse peers and diverse perspectives. In turn, exposure to diversity creates the cognitive dissonance necessary to stimulate growth and learning (Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al. 2002; Milem, 2003; Milem et al., 2006).

As noted in chapter 1, multiple studies have established the positive impact of curricular content and classroom diversity on education for students of all races and ethnicities (Gurin et al.; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Kuh et al., 2007). Like peer interactions, interactions with faculty influence a wide variety of college outcomes (Astin, 1993; Pascarella &Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Taking courses which include content on racial and ethnic issues positively affects students' educational experience (Lopez, 1993; Villalpando, 2002). Female and minority faculty are most likely to facilitate classroom

interaction and to develop courses which include racial and ethnic content, but few universities have made sufficient progress in hiring diverse faculty (Hurtado, 2001; Milem, 2001). Even so, classroom curriculum and, particularly, interaction in diverse classrooms, can play critical roles in facilitating diverse peer interaction and learning (Astin, 1993; Hurtado, 2001). Because the focus of this dissertation is diverse peer interaction in residential contexts, the literature on classroom and curricular diversity is mentioned only superficially here. It is important to note, however, that the effects of classroom diversity and the effects of interactional diversity in residential contexts are intertwined through the complex relationships and perceptions that make up the larger campus context or climate (Hurtado et al., 1999). Further, in cases where living-learning programs exist, the classroom and living context may be inseparable. Relationships that develop in diverse and interactive classrooms may also result in out-of-class friendships (Slavin, 1995, cited in Hurtado, 2001) which extend into the residence halls. While recognizing the complex and interrelated nature of diverse peer interactions, discussion of literature in the next session focuses primarily on studies or findings of co-curricular or out-of-class interactional diversity most directly related to the topic of inquiry.

Chang (1996, 1999) tested the impact of compositional diversity on multiple educational outcomes using data selected from the 1985 CIRP Freshmen survey and the longitudinal CIRP follow up survey collected in 1989. Data from nearly 12,000 students from 370 colleges and universities were included in the sample. Using similar samples and methods, Chang conducted two studies using alternate measures of institutional diversity to conduct multi-variate analyses investigating the effects of institutional

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diversity, the racial and ethnic composition of the student body, on college outcomes. In both studies, institutional diversity had a positive direct effect on the students' likelihood of interacting with someone of a different racial or ethnic group and indirect effects on retention, satisfaction, GPA, intellectual self confidence and social self confidence even after controlling for student background characteristics and institutional characteristics (Chang, 1996, 1999). Although most effects were positive for both White students and students of color, institutional diversity decreased the likelihood of interracial peer interactions and negatively impacted satisfaction for students of color (Chang, 1996). Reporting again the results of his earlier study (Chang, 1999), Chang (2001a) reports no mention of the negative outcomes for minority students and students of color, describing instead only the overall positive outcomes of structural diversity on diverse peer interaction and the resulting educational outcomes. Chang offers early evidence that the racial and ethnic composition of the student body positively influences educational outcomes. Chang also suggests that a diverse student body is a significant predictor that students will socialize across race and form interracial friendships (Chang, 2001a). These results should be viewed with caution since the sample contained small numbers of minority students. Only 12% of the colleges included in the sample had diverse student populations (defined as student bodies where the largest racial group composed less than 75% of the total student population (Chang, 1999). The findings also did not illustrate what types of discussions and what types of peer interactions were most effective in facilitating learning outcomes. However, a later study confirms Chang's earlier results suggesting that a

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diverse student body positively influences cross race interaction and subsequently

enhances learning (Chang, Denson, Saenz & Misa, 2006). This study takes the earlier

conclusion one step further suggesting that individual learning outcomes are influenced

positively at institutions with high levels of cross race interaction even for students with

relatively low levels of diverse peer interaction (Chang et al., 2006).

In the expert testimony prepared for *Gratz v. Bollinger (*see also *Grutter v.*

Bollinger), the University of Michigan's Supreme Court defense of the university's race

conscious admissions practices, Gurin (1999) builds on Chang's work summarizing the

results of three studies including: 1) a single institution longitudinal study of diversity

impacts during college referred to as the Michigan Student Study (MSS), 2) a single

institution study of the outcomes of participation in an academic intervention designed

to foster conversations and relationships across race and ethnicity referred to as the

Intergroup Relations Conflict and Community Program Study, and 3) a multi-

institution longitudinal study using 1985 CIRP Freshmen survey data with four year and

nine year follow-up surveys. Reporting findings from the three studies collectively,

Gurin concluded that a racially and ethnically diverse student body had a significant and

positive effect on the frequency of diverse peer interactions. Participation in formal

activities such as ethnic studies classes and cultural awareness workshops increased

intellectual outcomes, as did informal interactions between peers such as discussing

issues of race and ethnicity, socializing across race and having close friends of a

different race or ethnicity. In turn, these interactions facilitated measurable increases in

self reported learning outcomes such as active thinking, intellectual engagement and

academic skill. In all three studies, across all racial and ethnic groupings, students with the most exposure to diversity consistently reaped the greatest educational benefit (Gurin et al., 2002).

Methods and findings for two of the studies included in Gurin's expert testimony, the MSS and the multi-institutional CIRP study, are presented in a later article (Gurin at al., 2002). Given the use of CIRP data and quantitative methods similar to those used in earlier studies of institutional diversity, it is not surprising that the results of the multi institutional CIRP study are consistent with Chang's (1996, 1999, 2001a) earlier findings of educational benefit for all students, though greater benefits were again reported for White students. The Gurin study using MSS data found no significant impact of diversity on complex thinking for African American students in this sample. While the CIRP study and MSS used similar outcome measures, shared longitudinal designs using regression analysis, and led to similar conclusions, the two studies differed in scale and other small, but important ways. First, the MSS introduced interaction and diversity measures not available for analysis in the CIRP data. Measures of informal interaction included assessments of the *amount* of contact with other racial groups, the *positive* quality of interracial relationships, and the *proportion* of cross race close friendships. The MSS findings allowed new conclusions to be drawn about diverse peer interaction based not only on participation in different kinds of interactions or activities, but on the quantity and quality of interactions impacting learning outcomes as well. Second, compared to the CIRP sample composed of nearly 92% White participants, the MSS was also relatively diverse with African American and Asian

American students representing 12% and 17% of the sample respectively (Gurin et al., 2002). The student bodies at research institutions are often more diverse than other schools because research universities have actively sought to diversify the student body through affirmative action (Milem, 2001). The University of Michigan found itself at the center of the affirmative action debate for this reason, and for the same reason, the diversity of the sample allows us to cautiously transfer these findings to other diverse settings like the institution proposed in this study. Caution is still warranted because, as Pascarella, Palmer, Moyer and Pierson (2001) note, the percentage of African American students in the MSS sample used by Gurin was larger than earlier studies, but the absolute number was still too small to generate statistical power comparable to the larger White sample. Like Terenzini, Pascarella and Blimling (1996), the authors conclude that informal out-of-class interaction with peers across race or ethnicity is more influential than formal instruction. Like Chang (1996, 1999, 2001a), the authors concluded that structural or compositional diversity, the racial and ethnic composition of the student body, is alone not sufficient to positively impact learning, but does contribute to educational outcomes as a necessary precursor to diverse peer interaction or interactional diversity.

Hu and Kuh (2003) collected data using the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) from 124 colleges between 1989 and 2001. Data were analyzed using regression methods to investigate the relationship between interactional diversity and college outcomes. Because previous research indicated that student background characteristics can influence college student experiences and outcomes, dummy

variables were used in the regression analyses to stand for gender, race/ethnicity, major and class level (with women, White students, pre-professional students an first-year students serving as reference groups). First year students participating in the study were more likely than upper-class students in the same sample to meet others of different races and ethnicities. Students with stronger academic preparation and with more educated parents reported greater frequency of interactional diversity as well. Men were less likely than women to interact across race and students of color reported more interaction across race than did White participants. However, unlike many studies that indicate pre-college variables have the greatest correlation with outcomes, individual background differences (gender, age, race/ethnicity/major, class standing, parental education, academic preparation) explained little of the variability in interactional diversity. The authors suggest that diverse peer interactions may not be heavily influenced by background or institutional characteristics. This conclusion is in contrast to studies that emphasize the important influence of student background characteristics such as race, gender, academic talent and preparation, prior diversity experience and student major (antonio et al., 2004; Milem, 1994; Milem & Umbach, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, Whitt et al., 1996), but corroborates a study that found few background characteristics (except talent level and being White) influenced cross racial interaction (Hurtado, Carter & Sharp, 1995). As previously found in other studies, interactional diversity had positive effects for all racial and ethnic groups on all outcomes (general education, personal development, science and technology, vocational preparation, intellectual development and diversity competence). Also like other

studies, the strength of the relationships varied by outcome and for different racial groups confirming that "different kinds of students benefit differently from the same experience" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 2). The authors conclude that interactional diversity has an overall positive impact for all students, and suggest that learning environments should be intentionally structured to encourage interaction with diverse peers.

The NSSL studies summarized earlier in this chapter used objective measures of academic skill, learning attitudes, and cognition to establish relationships between out-of-class peer interactions and learning. However, most of the diversity impact studies described thus far - including the studies drawing samples from the CIRP database or collecting data using the CSEQ - rely exclusively on self reported measures of cognitive development and educational gains (Gurin et al., 2002; Pascarella, Palmer, Moye & Pierson, 2001). A recent study using NSSL data confirmed that diversity experiences and interactions with diverse peers also affect standardized, objective measures of cognitive growth (Pascarella et al., 2001). Student data from an institutional sample of 23 colleges participating in the NSSL including 18 four-year institutions were analyzed to investigate the impact of diversity experiences (as measured by the CSEQ and NSSL instruments) on objectively measured first year and third year gains in critical thinking (as measured by the CAAP.) As previously described, NSSL data collection began in Fall of 1992 with subsequent data collection in Spring of 1993, 1994, and 1995. Defining diversity experiences more broadly than previous racially focused research, only three of the 10 diversity variables (as measured by the CSEQ) addressed

experiences specifically related to race or ethnicity: participation in diversity courses, having friends of different races, and participating in cultural awareness workshops. Remaining variables included having discussions with peers who differed from the respondent on philosophy or values, religious beliefs, political opinions, country of origin, social problems, and lifestyles or customs.

Like previous research, findings indicated different experiences had different effects for different racial and ethnic groupings. Differential effects were also noted for men and women within these groupings. At four-year institutions, only two of the three racial diversity variables affected first year outcomes, and these experiences were significant only for White students. Both White men and women benefited from attending a racial awareness workshop. White women also benefited from having friends of a different race and from discussing political differences, a variable not directly related to race or ethnicity. For students of color first year outcomes were not affected by racial diversity. Discussions about lifestyles and customs had the greatest impact on cognitive gains for men of color while discussions about social problems had the greatest impact for women of color. Five of the 10 diversity experiences had significant affects on critical thinking measures for one or more groups of students at the end of the third year, but none of the diversity experiences related to race or ethnicity directly affected third year gains for any group of students. However, first year experiences with racially diverse friends mediated later gains in third year critical thinking for White men "suggesting that exposure to significant diversity experiences in the first year may have continuing benefits to students' growth throughout college"

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(Pascarella et al., 2001, p. 269). Therefore, this study concluded that even after controlling for pre-college characteristics, a broad range of diversity experiences had significant and positive affects on objectively measured cognitive outcomes. However, unlike previous studies, the authors concluded that the direct benefits of racial diversity on cognitive development may be limited to students in the first years of college. While all students benefit from diversity, this study suggests that if educators want to maximize the benefits of diversity for all students, they must think more broadly about the types of diversity interactions that benefit different groups of students. While exposure to different peers and ideas stimulates intellectual development (Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003; Milem et al., 2006), difference is in the eye of the beholder. What is new or challenging for one student or group may not be new or challenging for another student or group.

The findings of Pascarella, Palmer, Moye and Pierson (2001) suggest that encountering new or different values, views and perspectives held by peers may have greater influence on critical thinking than simply interacting with racially or ethnically diverse peers. However, Rudenstine (2004) argues that because students' from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (as well as other demographic categories) come to college with different life experiences and exposure to different customs and values, they are likely, but not guaranteed, to hold differing perspectives and points of view on important issues. He says,

> there's no necessary reason that an African-American student from
> West Virginia should have ideas or perspectives or experiences or

aesthetic tastes that are different from those of an Asian-American student from Los Angeles or a White student from Maine. But I would think it would be odd if three such students did not turn out to be significantly different from one another in any number of interesting and stimulating ways, capable of expanding one another's horizons- and those of their fellow students (p. 68).

If the educational value of diversity lies in exposing students to different values and perspectives as Rudenstine says, it is important to know if a compositionally diverse student body provides the diversity of viewpoints necessary to stimulate learning. This is also an interesting question, because while Newcomb (1966) considered homogeneity of the peer group to be an important factor in peer interaction, he was clear that visible forms of diversity were important to peer group formation because visible diversity was accompanied by within group similarity in values and attitudes.

Values and attitudes related to current issues do appear to vary between racial groups. To provide evidence for the relationship between race and social viewpoints, Chang (2003) drew data – including racial and ethnic demographic information and participant responses to ten questions measuring attitudes related to social issues or political identity- from the 1994 CIRP Student Information form (SIF). The SIF collects information about the entering college students including demographic and other background characteristics as well as information about values and attitudes. The SIF is administered at the beginning of the fall semester to incoming first year students. The study sample included 5,326 entering first year students from 93 four-year colleges and

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universities. Questions measured opinions related to current issues such as health care, death penalty, drug testing, crime and discrimination. Cross-tabulations and one-way analyses of variance or Chi-square calculations were performed to determine if differences in opinions on social issues exist between racial groups. Between group differences existed for all questions and all differences were significant.   Chang's study confirms that significant racial group differences exist on important social issues for first year students when they arrive at college. However, of equal importance, the study also found that a full range of opinions exists within each group and that significant overlap of opinion exists between groups. Therefore, Chang concludes that educators must exercise caution against stereotyping and suggests that qualitative studies may provide "a richer and deeper understanding of how students benefit educationally from racially dimensioned interplay and exchanges of ideas" (p. 68).

Another recent study also shows that minority student opinions and racially diverse peers may be sources of the new or different ideas necessary to stimulate complex thought for White college students (antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin & Milem, 2004). Racially diverse groups are "characterized by a divergence in backgrounds, values, attitudes, and experiences" (antonio et al., p. 508). Therefore, these groups expose students to *novel* perspectives. Responding to the lack of research using controlled, experimental designs and objective measurements, this study randomly assigned participants to treatment or discussion groups in order to test the impact of group racial composition and group opinion on objective measures of *integrative complexity.* The authors define integrative complexity as "the degree to

which cognitive style involves the differentiation and integration of multiple perspectives and dimensions" (antonio et al., p. 509). Three participants (all White with shared opinions related to social issues on a pre-test) were randomly assigned to discussion groups. A research collaborator was also assigned to each group. Using a 2x2 factorial design, the collaborators assigned to participate in treatment groups varied by race and opinion; collaborators were either White or Black and followed a pre-assigned script during the discussion phase of the experiment that either agreed or disagreed with the prevailing group opinion. Three hundred-fifty-seven White students from three research universities and 31 research collaborators participated in the study. In sequence, a social issue was introduced to the group, participants responded individually to the issue by writing a short essay, group discussion of the issue occurred, and participants completed a second individual essay. Participants also rated group members, including the collaborator, on three variables assessing the degree to which each group member made the participant think differently, introduced novel perspectives, and influenced the group. The average of these questions composed a *perceived novelty* scale. Regression analyses were run to test for a variety of effects on perceived novelty and integrative complexity. Not surprisingly, collaborators expressing opinions differing from the group were rated higher on the perceived novelty scale. When collaborators expressed divergent opinions, group participants scored higher on post discussion measures of integrative complexity. Black collaborators were viewed as more novel than White collaborators regardless of opinion expressed and despite following the same scripts as White collaborators. The presence of a Black collaborator

had small effects on integrative complexity as measured by essays before any discussion took place, but had no significant impact on integrative complexity as measured by the post discussion essays. While the effect of race on complex thinking was small, the experimental nature of this research tentatively establishes a causal link not previously possible in qualitative or correlation studies. However, having close friends and classmates of different races prior to the experiment had a stronger effect on integrative complexity than did any of the experimental variables. This finding builds support for the claim that students' background characteristics affect interactional diversity and underscores the importance of understanding diverse interactions at the intimate level of friendship groups, a specific form of peer interaction.

Feldman and Newcomb (1969) suggested that friendship groups serve as influential peer reference groups, Chang (1999, 2001a) suggested that institutional diversity encourages interracial friendships, and the MSS study (Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002) used close friendship and dating relationships as diversity experience measurements. Summarizing a wide variety of research on friendship formation, Fehr (1996) concludes that people are likely to form friendships with others who are similar to themselves, but cautions that different kinds of similarity matters in different stages of friendship. Further, none of the studies cited by Fehr specifically investigated cross racial friendships nor examined how race and ethnicity impacts perceptions of similarity. Until recently the higher education literature was also relatively silent on the subject of diverse friendship groups and still does not explain how diverse groups form or how such groups influence learning. The elementary and secondary K-12 literature

offers clues suggesting that diverse friendships are facilitated by extra curricular activities that require cooperation across racial and ethnic differences such as sports or clubs (Schofield, 2001). Hallinan and Williams (1990) study of friendships in secondary school environments explored the selection of friends by examining 20,000 friendship pairs and the impact friends had on college aspiration. Students sought relationships with others who they perceived shared values and attitudes, had equal or higher status, and returned interest in friendship. The authors hypothesized and confirmed that being the same race and gender increases the likelihood of mutual friendship. While more same race friendships than interracial friendships existed in this study, interracial friendships were more influential in college aspiration and subsequent college attendance than same race friendships for both Black and White students reporting mixed raced friendships.

While little in the higher education literature explores the formation of small peer groups or friendships across race or ethnicity in higher education settings, antonio's (1998, 2001, 2004) recent works exploring multi racial friendship stand out as a notable exceptions. Using Astin (1993) and Chang (1996) as examples, antonio (2001) argues that earlier studies of diverse peer interaction relying on frequencies of socializing are flawed by their failure to distinguish between casual peers and more sustained acquaintances or friends. Studies also failed to distinguish between different types of diverse peer interactions (antonio, 1998, 2001). For example, interactions between African American and White peers would be treated as indistinguishable from interactions between African American and Chicano peers in most previous research.

antonio's research shifts the focus of diverse peer interaction away from the institutional or aggregate peer group level (e.g. entire student bodies or first year cohorts), spotlighting instead the effects of students' closest peers on college outcomes. This is an important point because aggregate level and friendship level peer groups may differ substantially in group characteristics and in the ways they influence interracial interaction and college outcomes. For example, previous studies at the aggregate level indicate that African American students experience interracial or cross race interactions more frequently than do White students (Hurtado, Dey, and Treviño, 1994). Yet in antonio's (1998) study, African American students were more likely than any other racial group to have homogenous or same race friends. While this finding may simply confirm Chang's (1996) assertion that a more diverse student body decreases interracial interaction for minority students, it alternately might suggest that African American students experience higher levels of diversity at the institutional level than at the interpersonal or friendship level. This observation might also explain why in an earlier study of peer influence on the academic self concept and political orientation of African American students, antonio (1995) found that African American students were "strongly influenced by White peers in some instances, especially because of their greater numbers, yet still significantly affected by the smaller African American presence in others" (p.20). These findings may suggest that diversity operates differently within intimate, daily interactions and aggregate or acquaintance spheres of peer influence.

antonio (1998) used both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the role race plays in the formation of friendships and to understand the impact of diverse and

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homogenous friendship groups on college outcomes. In doing so, he not only shed light on the formation and role of diverse friendships in college environments, but revealed how little is known about the conditions that foster them. Longitudinal data were collected from 677 members of the 1994 freshmen class of a single, diverse university upon entry and again in 1997. The sample for this research was significantly more diverse than samples in previous studies (Asian American, 42.1%; White, 32.6%; Chicano, 11.3 %; Latino, 4.2%; African American, 3.8%; and Native American, 1.5%), but African American students were under represented as compared to the University's actual freshmen population at the time of the study (6.8% vs. 3.8%). A survey instrument designed for the study included items from CIRP and CSEQ questionnaires as well as questions specific to the study. Using multivariate regression analyses, the study investigated the impact of close friends (the five or six people closest to the student) on measures of interracial interaction outside of the friendship group, racial understanding and cultural awareness. Qualitative interviews with 18 male participants of varying races and ethnicities were also conducted to explore the role race plays in developing friendship groups (antonio, 1998; antonio, 2004).

Students' perceptions of the campus climate as racially and ethnically segregated had little relationship to the development of diverse friendship groups. Fully 90% of all participants in antonio's study perceived the university environment to be segregated by race and ethnicity, but only 27% of students' closest friends were all or predominantly of the same race and same ethnicity. Nearly three quarters [1] of all

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[1] This finding considers same race, multi ethnic groupings to be diverse. For

participants had diverse friendship groups, yet perceived their group to be "unique" on a socially segregated campus (antonio, 1998, p. 175). Being the same age and sharing a serious attitude toward school were the most common reasons given for forming friendships. Only a third of the participants indicated race was an important variable in selecting friends. Not surprisingly, students with predominantly same race friendships identified race as a more important variable for selecting friends than did students with mixed race friendships. These results challenge the idea that race plays the primary role in developing intimate peer groups on multi-cultural or diverse campuses (antonio, 2004). This does not, however, mean that race does not influence students' relationships. Race played an important role in the degree of emotional closeness students' experienced in friendship groups and influenced the content of students' conversations. For example, same race friends reported sharing personal problems and feelings more than did students in diverse friendship groups. Other variables also influenced the development of diverse friendships. Female students, students with pre-college diversity experience, and students living in residence halls were most likely to

example, a friendship group of Chinese, Korean and Filipino students would not be considered homogenous. An alternate definition of diversity collapsing all Asian students in to one group and all Hispanic students into one group changes the number of diverse friendship groups in this study to 53%, a smaller number, but still a majority of friendship groups.

have diverse friends (antonio, 1998). In fact, residence halls were the most important

site for developing friendships and were particularly important in the development of

cross racial friendships (antonio, 1998, 2004). The majority of students with diverse

friendship groups in their third year of college had developed these friendships in the

residence halls. Seventy-one percent of all diverse friendship groups in this study had

origins in college housing, while only 40 % of those with homogenous or same race

groupings had origins in the residence halls (antonio, 1998). Many interracial

friendships began in the residence halls during the first year of college and persisted

over time (antonio, 2004). Like Hu and Kuh (2003), antonio points out the important

role that simply being near to others and sharing the same spaces plays in facilitating

diverse peer relationships and the selection of friends. Thus, nearly 40 years later,

antonio's work also reaffirms the importance of propinquity in establishing close peer

relationships as described in the earlier work of Newcomb (1962, 1966). Both

Newcomb and antonio specify that residence halls provide these shared spaces.

The Role of Residence Communities in Facilitating Diverse Peer Interaction

Antonio's recent research on friendship formation affirms findings from some of

the earliest research related to college peer groups: students are most likely to make and

maintain relationships with other students with whom they find themselves in close

proximity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Newcomb, 1962, 1966). While the literature

reviewed thus far reveals that diverse peer interactions can positively influence learning

outcomes, it also repeatedly suggests that campus residence communities play an

influential role in facilitating these interactions. To recap, in a qualitative study of

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intellectual development, students reported that learning to get along with other students while living together in residence halls facilitated their cognitive growth (Baxter-Magolda, 1992). Living on campus influenced cognitive development in quantitative studies using objective and self reported measures of cognitive development (Pascarella et al., 1993; Pascarella, Edison et al., 1996; Pascarella, Whitt et al. 1996). Two previously reported summaries of the literature related to the effects of out-of-class experiences on learning outcomes independently concluded that living in campus residence halls positively influences intellectual and cognitive outcomes by providing greater opportunity for involvement and interaction with peers (Terenzini et al., 1996; Gellin, 2003).

Research conducted during the 1970's and 1980's which compared the effects of living on campus and commuting experiences on a variety of college outcomes were equally positive (Inman & Pascarella, 1998). These studies consistently indicated that greater social and developmental benefits accrued to students living on campus even after controlling for the higher socio-economic status, degree aspirations, academic aptitudes and initial levels of commitment associated with resident status. Summarizing two decades of college outcomes research, Pascarella and Terenzini declared living on campus to be the "single most consistent with-in college determinant of [college] impact" (1991, p. 611).

However, within this body of research, studies investigating cognitive or intellectual outcomes were few in number, lacked controls, and relied most frequently on grades as measures of intellectual development (Pascarella et al., 1993). In fact, a

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meta-analysis of the literature on college residence halls and academic performance outcomes identified only ten studies with adequate controls for pre-college student characteristics. The weight of evidence from these studies revealed no consistent differences between the grade point averages of residents and commuters, leading Blimling (1989) to conclude that living on campus offered only a slight advantage over commuter and Greek housing and had no consistent, direct impact on academic performance.

Lacking confidence in grades as adequate measures of intellectual outcomes, two studies investigated the impacts of residence experiences on intellectual outcomes again using the CAAP. In a single institution study at a large commuter institution, (Pascarella et al., 1993) tested the impact of living on campus versus commuting to campus on first year gains in reading comprehension, mathematics and critical thinking CAAP scores. The second study was a multi institutional study with similar, but expanded scope as described below. In the former study, 210 freshmen, 40 residents and 170 commuters, took the CAAP upon entry and at the end of their first year. Resident students had significantly larger gains in critical thinking at the end of the first year. No significant differences between residents and commuters were found for gains in reading or math skill. The authors reasoned that resident student gains were mediated by the faculty and peer group interactions and involvements that were facilitated by the residential experience rather than as the direct result of residency alone.

Inman and Pascarella (1998) sought to confirm the results of the previous single institution study and to test the hypothesis that residents' learning advantage is mediated

by the variant opportunities for social interactions resident and commuting students experience during the first year. They conducted a multi-institution, longitudinal analysis of data from the NSSL database (or the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment database as Inman & Pascarella choose to call it). As previously indicated the NSSL database contains data collected from 2,400 freshmen attending 23 institutions. Pre-college characteristic information and CAAP data were collected in Fall of 1992 with follow-up data from the CAAP and CSEQ collected in the Spring of 1993. Regression analyses were conducted with a sample of 326 residents and 316 commuters attending six different institutions. Rather than confirming results of the previous study, resident students in this study did not make significantly greater gains than commuters in first year critical thinking. Only extracurricular involvement positively predicted gains in critical thinking at the end of the first year. While the sample had equal proportions of residents and commuters, the institutional sample the participants were drawn from was composed primarily of commuter institutions. Interpreting the findings, the authors consider the possibility that the commuter schools sampled may have implemented support systems to meet the needs of a commuting population, thus facilitating cognitive growth and minimizing differences between resident and commuter gains. The authors also speculate that one year may be an insufficient time period to capture differences in cognitive development. However, in other studies gains in cognitive development were most evident during the first year of college (Pascarella, Edison et al., 1996; Pascarella, Whitt et al., 1996), so this explanation should be considered with caution. In addition, neither study revealed the

racial and ethnic composition of the participants or institutional sample.

While there is no conclusive evidence that living on campus *directly* influences cognitive outcomes, there is strong reason to believe that residing on campus affects learning outcomes *indirectly* by increasing the opportunities for students to get involved and to interact socially (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Living on campus has large, positive, and direct effects on both faculty and peer interactions (Pascarella, 1984; Pascarella, 1985). The research presented earlier in this chapter provides strong evidence to support this claim as does parallel research investigating the effects of on-campus residency on a variety of other college outcomes including intellectual self concept, interpersonal self concept, educational aspirations, satisfaction and persistence. For each of these outcomes, the effect of resident status on learning is indirect and mediated by interactions with faculty and peers.

The research also consistently reports that living on campus increases racial understanding and reduces racial prejudice (Astin, 1993; Chang, 2001; Milem, 1992, 1994, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). While appropriately categorized as a democracy outcome or societal benefit (Milem, 2003), reduction in racial prejudice has also been linked to individual educational outcome variables such as the likelihood of *changing an opinion as a result of the knowledge and arguments presented by others* and to developing *ethical standards through thoughtful consideration of arguments and facts*, key elements of critical thinking (Chang, 2001b). So, although living on campus may or may not directly impact intellectual outcomes, there is evidence indicating that

living on campus indirectly impacts these important learning outcomes by challenging prejudices through exposure to alternate points of view.

By facilitating peer interaction, residence halls clearly "play a central role in the impact of college" (Pascarella, 1985, p. 298). By extension, in compositionally diverse institutions, residence halls provide the proximity to diverse peers critical for the development of the peer interactions and friendships necessary to positively impact cognitive and other learning outcomes (antonio, 2004; Gurin, 1999; Milem et al., 2006; Witt, Chang & Hakuta, 2003). "Because the college can vary the mix of students, place trained staff on site, organize developmental activities, and alter the arrangements of rooms and furniture so as to balance privacy and interaction, residence halls have great potential" to shape desirable college outcomes (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 275).

Conditions that Facilitate Diverse Peer Interaction and Learning in Compositionally

Diverse Residential Communities

Recognizing that students may learn more from their peers than from the faculty, Hurtado (1999) encouraged faculty to purposefully tap the learning potential of diverse peer groups in classroom environments. Astin concurs, but broadened his encouragement saying, "if the students' peer group can be one of the most powerful sources of influence on student outcomes, why not take advantage of this fact in designing not only our curricular delivery systems, but also our co-curricular programs?" (Astin, 1991, p. 18). Yet, many colleges have focused on increasing racial diversity of their student bodies without paying attention to the conditions and institutional contexts necessary to foster the diverse peer interactions that facilitate

educational outcomes (Hurtado, 1999; Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999; Milem, 2003; Milem et al., 2006). As mentioned previously, most students come to college from segregated neighborhoods and schools (Orfield, 1996). Therefore, many first year students are likely to arrive on campus full of stereotypes and lacking the skills necessary to effectively navigate diverse residential communities (Hurtado, 1999). It is unlikely that any residential college or university will reap the full benefits of greater compositional diversity without paying attention to the many elements of the residential environment which impact diverse peer interactions.

Campus environments are "complex social systems defined by the relationships maintained between people, procedures, structural arrangements, institutional goals, values traditions and the larger socio cultural environment" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 69). And, like the institutions that contain them, residential systems are also complex social systems defined by similar relationships. Therefore, every institutional policy or practice including roommate assignment, residential policies, structure and location of residences has the potential to impact student interactions (Study Group, 1984). "A major challenge for student affairs professionals is to develop residence programs and interventions that bring the full power of this influence to bear on student learning and cognitive development" (Pascarella et al., 1993, p. 219). While student affairs professionals may have "an intuitive sense of college peer groups" that they use to guide programmatic decisions (Hurtado, 1999, p. 5), little evidence exists to recommend specific and proven methods of facilitating diverse peer interactions in racially and ethnically diverse living environments. For example, although previously cited evidence

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repeatedly indicates that racial awareness workshops are effective interventions (particularly for White students), students at Berkeley indicated such workshops were not effective long term strategies (Duster, 1991). "Don't, they said, try to fix things by putting us through three-hour sensitivity sessions designed to raise our consciousness [...]. Those are too contrived and short lived to make much of a difference" (Duster, 1991, ¶ 31). There is little in the literature to help practitioners identify specific content and methods that make such workshops more or less effective. Never-the-less, the literature does suggest general "implications for institutional practice" (Milem et al., 2006, p. 2) and argues that the success of any institutional diversity effort depends heavily on the institutional context (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al.). The culture, climate, and specific environmental conditions under which diverse peer interactions occur greatly influence the educational outcomes. The conceptual framework under girding this study and the method selected to conduct the study are dictated by the assumption that context is critical in facilitating positive and productive interactions between peers of differing racial and ethnic backgrounds. Multiple authors suggest institutional elements or characteristics of the environment which encourage or inhibit peer interaction and the learning that results from it in diverse college residence communities. The campus culture, climate and the conditions of contact under which diverse peer contacts occur all play important roles in shaping interactional diversity in residence halls. In turn, interactional diversity provides the challenge necessary to facilitate learning.

Characteristics of Institutional and Residence Culture affecting Diverse Peer

Interaction and Learning

Every college and university has a unique culture, "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions which guide the behavior of individuals and groups […] and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meanings of events and actions" (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, as cited in Kuh et al., 1991). Cultural characteristics of an institution play a pervasive and influential role in encouraging student learning outside of class (Kuh et al.). Institutional culture is rooted in a shared set of assumptions "reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it" (Tierney, 1988, p.3). Institutional culture has the power to shape attitudes about diverse peer interactions, influences the form and quality of these interactions, and may even prescribe who interacts with one another.

A large qualitative research study investigated the characteristics of four-year colleges and universities with *involving* cultures, schools where the culture promotes high levels of student involvement and learning outside of the classroom. Because culture is complex and institution specific, quantitative measures or methods were inadequate to define, identify or study these unique and distinct college cultures. Therefore, colleges were nominated for inclusion in the study by 48 higher education experts. Each expert nominated up to five schools "noted for the high quality out-of-class experiences they provided for undergraduates" (Kuh et al., p. 24). Fourteen institutions were selected from the nominations. Institutional materials were reviewed and 1,295 interviews were conducted with students, faculty, administrators and others

from the 14 colleges selected for study. Despite differing institutional characteristics such as size and structure, similar themes emerged across all institutions. Not surprisingly, the institutions identified as involving cultures foster learning through involvement and interaction and have faculty and staff who devote time to students. These colleges also blend curricular and co-curricular learning, have high standards, and value learning. Involving colleges demonstrate strong commitments to diversity and inclusion. On these campuses, students and faculty reported few differences in status exist between campus groups. Multiple sub communities such as residence hall floors exist within a larger community united by shared perceptions of common purposes and beliefs.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) identified residence hall arrangements as one of six key institutional influences on learning and development. Residence halls may be powerful influences on learning because they provide students with automatic access to "ready made" communities – residential subcultures embedded in the larger institutional culture. The peer groups and friendships which develop in the halls can positively or negatively influence college outcomes. Students learn and grow when "encouraged to form friendships and to participate in communities that become meaningful subcultures, and when diversity of backgrounds and attitudes as well as significant interchanges and shared interests exist" (Chickering & Reisser, p. 275). For a residence subculture to have positive effects on the education of its members, it must:

1) encourage regular interaction and develop sustained relationships,

2) provide opportunities to collaborate, solve problems and interact

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meaningfully,

3) be small enough for all to be included,

4) house people from diverse backgrounds, and

5) have clear membership boundaries and norms that defines *good*

members and acceptable behavior. (Chickering & Reisser, p. 277)

The characteristics of residential communities listed above provide general direction to educators for developing residence environments that positively affect learning outcomes. Chickering and Reisser do not specifically tell us how long a sustained relationship must last to have influence, what form opportunities to collaborate must take, or how a meaningful interaction differs from an insignificant one, but by defining residence communities as powerful subcultures, Chickering and Reisser focus attention on the potential of residence communities to facilitate interaction and learning. Like Newcomb (1962, 1966), this work suggests that the size of the group and shared norms, the often unspoken rules that govern peer behavior, are important. And, as described later in this section, the residential qualities which describe residence cultures conducive to learning share striking similarities to the characteristics that foster positive interracial interactions. Specifically, prejudices are most likely to dissipate when cross-racial interactions occur over a sustained period of time and when working cooperatively without competition on shared concerns (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Schofield, 2001). But unlike the early literature, Chickering and Reisser indicate that heterogeneity is a desirable element of residence cultures. As the previous authors

agree, heterogeneous peer groups may help to create intellectually stimulating cultures

that "challenge old attitudes and behaviors" (Kuh et al., 1991, p.13).

Characteristics of Institutional and Residential Climate Affecting Diverse Peer

Interaction and Learning

While culture is characterized by a relatively fixed set of commonly shared

beliefs, values and norms, climate is a more "malleable" set of "current perceptions,

attitudes and expectations" (Hurtado et al.,1999, p. iii) that may differ significantly from

group to group within the institution. Therefore, multiple and distinct racial climates

may exist simultaneously on the same campus at the same point in time. In order to

develop specific programs and policies which extend the educational benefits to all

students, it is critical to understand campus racial climate(s) as well as the campus and

residence culture. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson and Allen (1998, 1999) proposed

dimensions of institutional racial climate. Institutional climates are embedded in and

influenced by the larger *governmental policies and programs* and *sociohistorical*

contexts surrounding them. Federal financial aid policy and civil rights legislation are

examples of external forces that impact campus racial climate by shaping internal

policies and practices. The authors contend that institutional climate is influenced by at

least four key internal elements as well:

> an institution's *historical legacy* of inclusion or exclusion of various
>
> racial/ethnic groups, its *structural diversity* [referred to as *compositional*
>
> *diversity* in recent literature] in terms of numerical representation of
>
> various racial/ethnic groups, the *psychological climate*, which includes

perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, and a *behavioral*

dimension that is characterized by relations among groups on campus.

(Hurtado et al. 1999, p. 6)

Milem, Chang and antonio (2005) endorse the addition of a fifth internal element of

campus climate, *organizational/structural dimension*, to the elements just described.

Proposed to draw attention to the important role that organizational structures,

institutional policies and institutional practices play in shaping climate, the

organizational and structural dimension of climate includes admissions policies and

practices, budget processes, hiring practices and other ways that the "organizational and

structural aspects of colleges and the ways in which benefits for some groups become

embedded into these organizational and structural processes" (Milem et al., 2006). Each

of the elements described above are separate and unique concepts, but they do not exist

in isolation from one another. Rather they are also connected and exert reciprocal

influence.

The conception of racial climate put forth above asserts that students in different

sub communities or racial groups can and will hold different perceptions of the campus

racial climate and, therefore, experience the climate very differently from other campus

subgroups with different resulting educational outcomes. By extension, members of

different residential communities may also perceive and experience campus climate

differently than do members from other floors. Further, because residential communities

are embedded in the larger campus racial climate, members of differing races and

ethnicities within the same residence community may perceive and experience the

climate differently as well. Therefore, attempts to understand diverse peer interactions in compositionally diverse residential communities must recognize that students live and learn in multiple, distinct educational environments even if they occupy the same physical space. Campus climates, embedded in campus culture, form the institutional context for diverse peer interactions and will either facilitate or hinder diverse peer interaction and the subsequent learning that may result from these interactions.

Milem, Chang and antonio (2006) distill the vast body of research on campus diversity into this simple statement: "The key finding across all the research on diversity is that student-student interaction is essential for realizing the educational benefits of diversity" (p. 27). To maximize the benefits of diversity, attention must be paid individually to each element of the campus climate while recognizing that changes in one dimension will both affect and be affected by changes in another dimension. While all of the dimensions of campus climate are important for facilitating diverse learning environments, the behavioral dimensions of campus climate - which by definition includes social interactions across race and ethnicity and the degree of cross-racial campus involvements students experience or engage in (Milem et al., 2006) - are the central focus of this study. The research questions for the study were driven by a desire to understand how these social interactions and cross-racial involvements occur in compositionally diverse residence communities. As stated by antonio (2004), Newcomb (1962, 1966), Chickering and Reisser (1993) and others, the settings in which students most frequently interact provide students with a convenient pool of potential peers with whom to interact. Therefore, this study assumes – as others have concluded - that the

compositional diversity dimension of climate plays a critical role in providing this pool of convenient peers (Gurin, 1999; Hurtado, 1999). On a diverse campus, policies and practices which encourage students to live on campus (such as implementing first year requirements for living on campus and delaying eligibility for fraternity and sorority rush until the second year of college) may facilitate diverse peer interactions (Milem et al., 2006). Housing may be particularly important for diverse peer interaction not only because it places students in close proximity to diverse peers, but because residential contexts provide the conditions of contact most likely to reduce stereotypes and facilitate positive cross racial relationships (Milem et al., 2006). The structural/organizational, socio- historical and psychological dimensions of climate influence (and are influenced by) the compositional diversity of the institution to shape and facilitate diverse peer interaction in residential communities. Together these dimensions provide the contextual backdrop for the behavioral dimensions of climate central to the research question.

Conditions for positive cross race contact and interaction

To develop learning environments that intentionally encourage interactional diversity in residence halls, one must also understand the conditions under which such interactions lead to positive outcomes. This study does not specifically investigate prejudice reduction, but the conditions for intergroup contact that reduce prejudice proposed by Allport (1954/1979) suggest clues for conditions which may encourage diverse peers to develop and maintain positive relationships in racially and ethnically diverse residential communities. Allport hypothesized and presented evidence

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indicating that cross group interactions are most productive when members of differing racial groups meet under conditions that confer equal status on all parties and are institutionally supported. Interactions which are seen as collaborative as opposed to competitive are also more likely to reduce prejudice. Perceptions of shared benefit and common interest, therefore, facilitated positive outcomes from interracial contacts. Finally, productive intergroup contacts were sustained. That is, they were both frequent and occurred over a long duration of time. Such contacts allowed acquaintanceship and friendship to develop. Casual contact does little to reduce bias and may actually encourage it under some circumstances. Based on these conditions, it is not surprising that Allport indicated that residential contact increases the likelihood of friendship and exposes people to the accurate, experiential knowledge that reduces stereotypes.

Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) also investigated the reduction of prejudice. Their meta-analysis of 200 studies strongly supported Allport's contact theory. These studies confirmed that equal status, common goals and interests, and non competitive situations sanctioned by institutional support encouraged interracial friendship. As did Allport, they suggested that long term contact in a variety of settings is the most effective form of interracial contact for reducing prejudice. For this reason, the effects of intergroup contact are particularly strong in organizational settings such as work and school.

Literature exploring K-12 school experiences with desegregation provides guidance for higher educators wishing to facilitate positive interactions between diverse peers. Schofield (2001) identifies 3 factors important for promoting positive diverse

peer interactions in elementary and secondary schools: 1) support from relevant school authorities, 2) cooperation toward mutually valued goals, and 3) equal status of students. These factors mirror Allport's conditions for prejudice reduction in cross racial contact. Schofield also found that in order to facilitate interaction between diverse peers, school leaders (relevant authorities) at all levels must demonstrate support for diversity. Leaders serve as models and demonstrate support of diversity by actively promoting practices that support diversity, allocating funds to programs furthering diversity goals, and rewarding those who implement these policies and practices. Since schools that facilitate students' cooperation toward mutually valued goals experience better interracial interaction, Schofield suggests that schools should adopt collaborative learning models that encourage racially diverse students to work together both inside and outside of class. Extra curricular activities build shared school identity, cooperation and respect. Successful diversity efforts should also ensure that all students are equally prepared or have policies and practices in place which alleviate or mitigate pre-existing inequities.

Levin (2003) argues that intergroup relationships can be improved by emphasizing both similarities and differences between racial groups simultaneously. By focusing on similarities, diverse peers from all racial and ethnic groups can develop a *superordinate* or shared identity. By focusing on differences, students can maintain a sense of membership in a subgroup identity as well. Therefore, students can maintain memberships in multiple sub-communities while still feeling connected and included in the larger campus community. When people see themselves as members of the same

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overarching group, they are less likely to see themselves as better than others in the group. Therefore, the development of a superordinate identity minimizes status differences and competition between groups and fosters positive diverse peer interactions. Kuh et al. (1991) and Chickering and Reisser described the power of sub-communities within an overarching institutional culture to foster involvement and learning. Similarly, Levin suggests that an overarching identity can coexist with a subgroup identity and powerfully impact intergroup relations.

Together these works suggest conditions which may foster positive interracial relationships and create the conditions for learning. Therefore, these concepts suggest characteristics and conditions that provide insight into the possible mechanisms that turn superficial or chance interactions between diverse peers into influential interactions and learning opportunities. With purposeful attention to climate, environmental conditions can be manipulated to provide the new ideas and experiences required to stimulate learning.

Conditions for Learning: Cognitive Disequilibrium, Challenge and Support

To explain how interactions with diverse peers affect learning, Gurin (1999), Milem (2003) and others draw from cognitive–structural theories of learning originating from the works of Jean Piaget, developmental psychologist and genetic epistemologist (Jean Piaget Society, n.d.; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). Piaget believed that cognitive development and learning entails the construction of progressively more complex cognitive structures which encompass the previous less complex structure as individuals mature. Learning and growth are stimulated as individuals attempt to adapt

to environmental stimuli. When an individual is challenged by new perspectives or experiences, the information is assimilated, interpreted and fit into the existing cognitive structure, or accommodated by the construction of new and more complex cognitive structures (Gurin,1999; Jean Piaget Society, n.d.; Milem, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002) suggest that diverse peer interactions provide the cognitive *disequilibrium* necessary to prompt intellectual change and cognitive development. Sanford (1966) indicates that challenges in the environment are required to provide the stimulation required for learning and cognitive growth. Learning requires interaction with others who are different from the learner and depends on the amount of stimulation and the balance between challenge and support present in the learning environment. Too much challenge impedes learning by overwhelming the learner, while too little challenge provides inadequate dissonance to spur growth. Most of the authors cited in this literature agree that diverse peer interactions provide the challenge required to create cognitive disequilibrium by challenging students comfortable and preexisting views. However, only Baxter-Magolda addresses the counterbalancing need for support. When faced with too much challenge, students may seek refuge from the resulting cognitive disequilibrium simply by avoiding the interaction or environments that stimulated the dissonance. Therefore, it is important to understand the conditions which provide both challenge *and* support for peer interactions and learning.

Learning is influenced not only by the institutional context (culture, climate, etc.), but depends on the characteristics of the individual student as well. "Students have

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different genetic heritages and histories of development," so different students may experience similar environments, experiences and interactions with differing results (Rogers, 1990, p.31). While the results of studies included in the literature review vary with regard to findings on the affect of student background characteristics, the preponderance of evidence indicates that a student's background characteristics have an effect on a variety of college outcomes including students' willingness to engage in diverse peer interactions and learning outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Some authors conclude that background characteristics are not critical to diverse peer interactions or openness to diversity (Hu & Kuh; Pike) while others conclude that few background characteristics affect peer interaction. For example, Hurtado, Carter and Sharp (1995) found that only race and academic ability influenced students' levels of interaction. High talent students sought interaction across race more frequently than did students with lower levels of talent and White students reported lower levels of interaction across race than did students of color (Hurtado, et al., 1995). Lopez (1993) found only two background characteristics influenced diverse interactions and each characteristic was influential only in one racial groups. Having liberal political views prior to college was positively related to cross racial contact for White students, and having low socio-economic status was negatively associated with cross racial interaction for African-American students (Lopez). Like Lopez, Chang at al. (2006) found that background variables had differential impact on diverse peer interactions for differing racial groups. Yet, since multiple studies report that background characteristics such as race, age, parents' educational background, sex/gender, major on entry to

college, and prior attitudes/experiences affect interaction and subsequently learning outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), the role of background characteristics and experiences in facilitating college diversity experiences merits serious consideration.

Milem and Umbach (2003) conducted research designed specifically to investigate the influence of pre-college background characteristics on students' plans to engage in diversity related activities and interactions while in college. Survey data were collected from 2,911 entering first-year students at a large public university during the university's summer orientation program. Descriptive analysis revealed that approximately 75% of the White students participating in the study lived in neighborhoods, attended schools and had friends that were all, nearly all or mostly all White. Approximately half of all Black students in the study reported living, attending school, and sharing friendships with all, nearly all, or mostly all people of color. Asian Pacific Americans and Latina/o students were less likely to report similar patterns of segregation prior to college. Despite pre-college patterns of segregation for White and Black students, students in all racial categories planned to get to know students from diverse backgrounds. However, White students were much less likely to anticipate taking diversity courses or becoming involved in activities that promote diversity or explore cultural background. Multi-variate analysis revealed that pre-college exposure to diversity and high school grade point average predicted plans to participate in diversity activities for White students and for Asian Pacific Americans, but not for African American students. Women of all races and ethnicities were significantly more likely to plan involvement in such activities than were men. Students' Holland types,

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categories describing preferred academic and career environments, also had predictive ability for White and African American students. Holland types descriptive of majors such as science, technology, engineering, math and business were negative predictors of diversity involvement for students in these two racial groups. This study adds weight to the evidence suggesting that pre-college background impacts students' plans to engage in diversity activities, but does not establish relationships with actual behavior.

In a study investigating the relationship between students' Holland career typology (as a proxy for major) and students' actual in-college participation in diversity experiences, Milem, Umbach and Liang (2004) tentatively establish a link between pre-college characteristics/experiences and behavioral diversity for White students. Self report survey data were collected from 2,911 first year students at a mid-Atlantic public research university during the summer of 2000. Participants were surveyed again at the end of their second year. Due to the small number of students of color completing both surveys, data analysis was conducted only for the 536 White respondents with useable surveys at the end of their second year. A path model was developed using three pre-college variables from the survey (gender, family income, Holland type), three pre-college variables created through exploratory factor analysis of the data (diversity environment, amount of diverse interactions, plans to participate in diversity activities), and two in-college experiences (perceived opportunities for diverse interactions, exposure to diversity issues in classes) to predict participation in three dependent outcomes (amount of cross racial interaction during the first two years of college, quality of cross racial interactions outside of class, and participation in formal,

university diversity activities.)

Although Milem and Umbach earlier study reported large and direct effects of students' Holland types in predicting students' *intent* to participate in diversity activities, Milem, Umbach and Liang (2004) found no direct effect in predicting *actual behavior*. The only positive and direct pre-college predictor of the college diversity participation outcomes in this study was the amount of diverse interaction students' experienced prior to college. However, the amount of pre-college diversity a student reported was predicted by other pre-college characteristics; high family income negatively impacted pre-college diversity and being female and having a social Holland type/major positively affected pre-college diversity. The effects of Holland typology on actual in-college diversity participation were indirect and mediated by course content. This study sheds no light on the role of pre-college characteristics for students of color, but does suggest that for White students the best predictor of diverse peer interactions in college is having diverse interactions prior to college. Gender and major may mediate such interactions.

Summary and Overview of Conceptual Framework

As I originally approached this literature, I considered a broad range of perspectives related to the development of my emerging research questions. Should the focus of the research be on the individual student? on interactions? on learning outcomes? on the residence hall community where interactions take place? Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on learning in communities of practice reminded me that

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individuals, groups, learning processes and contexts are inseparable and, therefore, can only be examined meaningfully together. Using this perspective, all learning is situated within or attached to a particular context and requires participation in social activity such as the interactions between diverse peers in residence communities which are the focus of this study. Complex and interconnected relationships between individual learners and the communities in which the social interaction occurs are required for learning to take place. While individuals participate in learning, learning is not an individual task; learning takes place in and is shared by members of a community.

Lave and Wenger (1991) challenged me not to look at individual parts of interaction and learning, but instead to ask what types of environments and social interactions "provide the proper context for learning to take place?" (Lave & Wenger, p. 14). Lave and Wenger's approach confirmed my philosophical belief that peer interactions cannot be studied apart from their context and must be studied as part of the complex systems in which they exist. Consequently, the conceptual framework for this study synthesizes and uses multiple concepts found in the literature rather than considering the problem divorced from its institutional and social context or from one single perspective.

The framework, graphically displayed in Figure 1, borrows freely from the ideas and models presented in the literature review. Elements of Astin's (1977) college impact or I-E-O model (reflected in pre-college characteristics, diverse peer interactions in residence halls, and learning) are evident in the conceptual framework. Also evident are elements from the work of several authors who suggest that *compositional diversity*

impacts the frequency and quality of diverse peer interactions (referred to alternately in

the literature as *racial diversity*, *interactional diversity* or *behavioral diversity)* (Chang,

1999; Chang et al., 2003; Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al., 1999; Hurtado,

2001; Milem, 2001, 2003; Milem et al., 2006). In turn, interactional diversity impacts

the *individual learning outcomes* of students in informal college learning environments

such as the residence communities (Astin, 1993; Chang, 1999; Gurin, 1999; Milem,

2003). The relationships between compositional diversity (racial and ethnic make up of

the residence hall floor), behavioral diversity (the actual diverse peer interactions on the

floor), and subsequent diversity outcomes (perceived individual learning outcomes) are

represented by the three shaded boxes in Figure 1. These relationships are documented

in the literature, less is known about the process and content of those relationships.
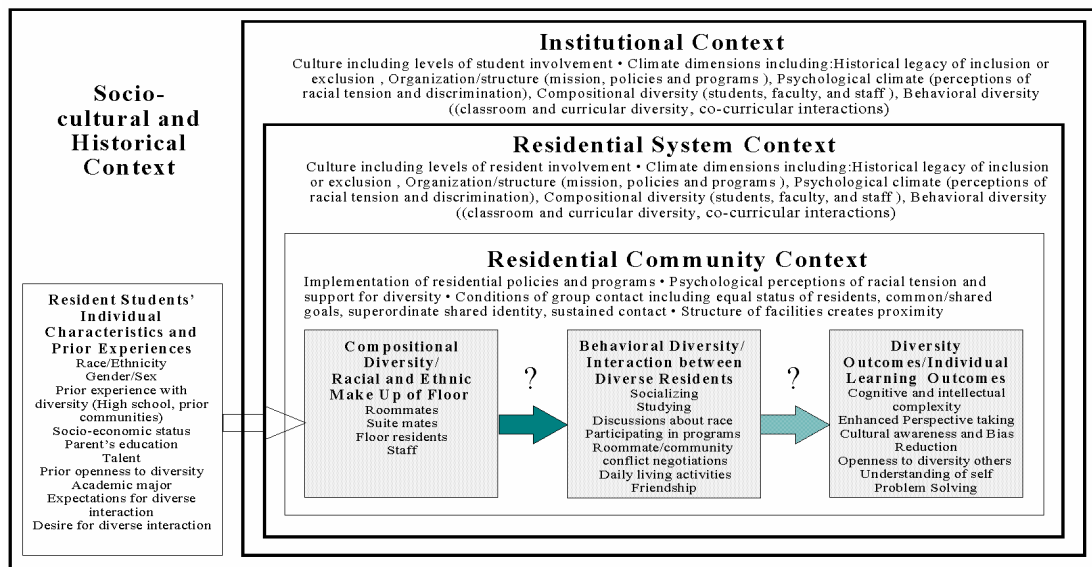
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to *understand the arrows* between these shaded boxes with greatest focus on the first arrow. The first arrow represents the mechanisms by which interactions between diverse peers form and are maintained. The second arrow, the processes by which diverse interactions facilitate learning, focuses attention on the types of peer interactions most critical to producing important college outcomes. Possible insights into these mechanisms are suggested by multiple sources explored in the literature as well. The arrows, representing questions about how diverse peer interactions take place and how such interactions lead to learning, are embedded within the residential, institutional and larger societal contexts. Elements of cultural models (Chickering & Reisser; Kuh et al., 1991), campus racial climate models (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2006), and the conditions for positive intergroup of contact (Allport; Pettigrew & Tropp) provide clues to focus the investigation of the characteristics and conditions that facilitate and shape diverse peer interaction.

The literature confirms that racially and ethnically diverse residence halls provide a rich and important context for understanding the conditions that facilitate the diverse peer interactions which lead to learning. Understanding these conditions is necessary in order to harness a powerful source of co-curricular learning. For reasons described in the next chapter, case study provided an appropriate method to explore the complex phenomenon of interest, diverse peer interaction and learning in compositionally diverse residence communities.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

As introduced in the first chapter, this study explored how college students interact with and learn from one another in compositionally diverse residence communities in order to suggest contextual variables which support or impede diverse peer interactions and learning. Emerging from the literature on diverse peer interactions and learning presented in the second chapter, the research questions suggested both the general approach to the research - case study - and the specific methods of data collection and data analysis proposed. The study was guided by the following research questions introduced in chapter 1 and expanded upon below.

1. How do students and staff who live in compositionally diverse residence communities describe their experiences and the nature of their interactions with other members of the community?

2. What characteristics, conditions, policies or programs support or impede the development of diverse peer interactions in compositionally diverse communities?

3. Do the interactions between peers in compositionally diverse residential communities impact their learning? If so, how do students describe these effects?

While student perceptions are the focus of these questions, staff descriptions of diverse peer interactions serve as an additional source of data to confirm, disconfirm or deepen understanding of resident student perceptions.

Design and Methodology

Case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with-in its real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p.13). Specifically, I employed a collective (Stake, 1995) or multiple case study design to investigate diverse peer interactions and learning by describing, analyzing and comparing interactions in two distinct residence communities or units of analysis (Yin). While the first and third questions could suggest a narrative or purely descriptive study, the second question suggested the need for a case study approach that expands the focus of the study beyond the generation of "thick" description common in qualitative study (Yin). Descriptive data generated in response to the first and third questions was analyzed to explore what happens in diverse residential environments and how students are affected by these happenings.

Case study methods are well suited to answer process oriented questions such as the interaction focused research questions central to this proposal (Merriam, 1998) and are useful to answer exploratory questions embedded in research settings (Cresswell, 1994, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) Case studies are the "the preferred strategies when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over event, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 1). In general, case study is used to explore complex phenomena when contextual variables are assumed to be an important element of the study and the "boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, p.13). Collective or multiple case study is used to explore a phenomenon when expanding theory is of greater interest than investigating and describing the specifics of a case or

cases. In multiple case study, the cases are "secondary" and "facilitate our understanding of something else" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Because diverse peer interaction is a complex and contemporary phenomenon influenced by a wide variety of contextual variables and because this exploratory study seeks to expand current theory, multiple case study is an appropriate method to understand how diverse peer interactions occur and how these interactions influence learning.

Regardless of approach, as stated above, context is assumed to be a critical element of case study research. My personal assumptions are consistent with the pragmatic philosophical view that reality cannot be separated from the experience of individuals and the interpretations these individuals make of their experiences (Cresswell, 2003; Lawson & Koch, 2004). This again means that the interactions and educational outcomes explored in this study are assumed to be tied to the specific residential context in which they occur and that individual residents perceive their interactions and learning based on the utility of these interactions for them in that context. Case study methods are appropriately used to investigate peer interaction in educational contexts (Merriam, p.37). In summary, multiple works identify and confirm case study as an appropriate method for investigating the proposed research questions.

Case study methods are appropriately used with both objective and interpretive research approaches. While Merriam and Stake influenced my thinking about case study, I relied most heavily on the work of Yin to suggest the general approach and specific structure of the case study. Yin's more objective methods rely on the construction of a specific a priori theoretical frame and provides a structured approach. The work of

Strauss and Corbin (1998) influenced Yin's specific strategies for data collection and analysis as did their constant comparative method of data collection and analysis. Their work is cited by Yin and provides complimentary detail for the general approach he outlines.

Figure 2 presents a graphic summary of the case study designed employed in this dissertation. The remainder of this chapter describes the elements of the design including site selection and selection of units of analysis, strategies for data collection (including interviews, observations and documents), and strategies for data analysis. The chapter closes with discussion of issues related to trustworthiness, ethical considerations and limitations.

Multiple Case Study Design
Peer Interaction in Structurally Diverse Residence Communities

University Institutional Context

Documents and Materials: Reports, Retriever Articles, Program Curriculum, Policy Handbook, Mission Statements, Departmental Postings, Orientation and Welcome Week Materials

Residence Hall Context

Building Documents and Materials: Program Curriculum, Policy Handbook, Mission Statements

Community #1	**Community #2**
Floor Program Reports Benchmarking Survey Floor Plan Demographic Reports	Floor Program Reports Benchmarking Survey Floor Plan Demographic Reports
CD Interview	CD Interview
RA Interview	RA Interview
Resident Interview · Resident Interview · Resident Interview	Resident Interview · Resident Interview · Resident Interview
Resident Interview · Resident Interview · Resident Interview	Resident Interview · Resident Interview · Resident Interview

Figure 2 Multiple Case Study Design

Site Selection

The residence community at a compositionally diverse campus, University of

Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), a four year, public research extensive university in

the Mid-Atlantic region, was the site for this study. UMBC has approximately 12,000

students, of whom 9,000 are undergraduates. The university welcomed 1,432 new first

year students in the fall of 2006 (OIR, 2006). Nearly three quarters of these first year

students live on campus and half of all full time undergraduates live in university

housing. Approximately 43% of the freshmen class for fall 2006 identified on their

admissions application that they were members of racial or ethnic minority populations.

The specific cases in this study were selected from two racially and ethnically diverse

residence halls located in UMBC's residence system. Both communities house primarily

first and second year students.

The site was selected because UMBC provides a research setting potentially rich

with contextual variables identified as important to shaping both diverse peer interaction

and its outcomes as described in chapter two. First, the university is compositionally

diverse compared to many other institutions in its geographical region. Compositional

diversity is a key dimension in "conceptualizing the campus climate" (Hurtado et al.,

1999, p. 3; Milem et al., 2006) and a necessary precursor for behavioral dimensions of

diversity also referred to in the literature as interracial interactions or interactional

diversity (Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al.). Second, African American students starting

as first time freshmen are retained by the institution and graduate at rates higher than or equal to White students (Tinney, 2005) and generally report equal or higher levels of satisfaction with university housing (Educational Benchmarking [EBI], 2003; EBI, 2004; EBI 2005). The institution is nationally known for programs supporting underrepresented minority students in science, technology, engineering and math many of whom enter graduate and professional programs following graduation. The higher levels of success and satisfaction of African American students as compared to their White peers distinguish this institution from other possible sites. Important in its own right, the success of minority students may also impact or be the result of the psychological dimensions of the racial climate such as perceived discrimination. The psychological dimension of racial climate is hypothesized to influence diverse peer interaction (Hurtado et al.). Third, founded in the late sixties, after both *Brown v. Board of Education* and the passage of civil rights legislation, UMBC's history begins after segregated education was made illegal. Therefore, UMBC has always been open to students of all races and ethnicities and has always assigned students to housing after law and court decisions prohibited discrimination. While this history does not eliminate an historical legacy of exclusion, another key dimension of campus racial climate (Hurtado et al.), the university is likely to have a unique historical context when compared with similar institutions founded in earlier periods of time.

UMBC is my current workplace. The site was also selected because of access to the communities of interest. In depth knowledge of the site allowed me to gain a more complete understanding of the case and participant experiences than might otherwise be

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possible for a study of short duration (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). However, conducting

research in "one's own backyard" can present challenges (Cresswell, 1998, p. 115).

Given my role in Student Affairs, I anticipated that participants might not be forthcoming

in interviews. Alternately, I feared participants might share behavior that would present

ethical challenges. I believe that student participants were cautious and attempted to

please me in the first interview. However, in second and third interviews, participants

appeared to be both honest and open. For example, I needed to remind multiple

participants not to share names or specifics when referring to drinking incidents. One

participant invited me to join her at a local bar to see residents interact off of the floor.

When I reminded her of my identity, she laughed and indicated that she'd forgotten my

role. Another participant shared openly about a friends' pregnancy. (Because the

participant asked me to record only handwritten notes and not to record this part of her

conversation, this information this data is not included in analyses.) In second and third

interviews, some participants challenged my questions and even became angry at my

interest in their jokes. Multiple themes shared with participants in the third interview

were discarded because of participants' direct challenges to emerging findings. While

initially concerned that participants' might try to please me or respond cautiously, I

quickly became more concerned with the fear that participants might share too openly.

For example, I was presented with information that led me to believe one of the

participants was engaged in risky drinking behavior. Fortunately, I did not need to

intervene when I also discovered that the participant was already receiving help from

resident staff. These interactions led me to believe that despite initial reticence, participants were in most cases quite forthcoming after the first interview.

Case selection or identification of units of analysis

Because students living in campus residences report more frequent interaction with peers than commuters (Astin, 1993), diverse residence communities are sites where it is likely to find the phenomena of central interest, diverse peer interaction. Two compositionally diverse residence hall floors housing primarily first year students were identified as the cases for this multiple case study. To select these cases, demographic data were generated for all floors in residence halls housing first year, first time students. Floors considered for selection were co-ed living units housing more than 50% first year students with 33% or more of residents identifying on admissions forms as a member of a racial or ethnic minority group. Twenty-nine floors in five residence halls fit the demographic criteria for case selection. Staff members in these buildings were asked of their willingness to participate. Potential cases were narrowed to those floors with both a Community Director and Resident Assistant indicating willingness to participate. Two cases were then selected from the available pool of residence hall floor units open to first year, first time students by picking the most racially and ethnically diverse floors while minimizing differences in the physical structure of the living unit, the total number of residents in the community, and the percentage of first year students. While qualitative inquiry does not require controls for confounding variables (and it should be assumed it would be impossible to do so), minimizing the differences between cases on variables with known impact on interaction and learning (such as unit size or structure) better

focused the inquiry on diverse peer interaction, the phenomena of interest, and the possible policies and practices which may influence it. The cases were bound by physical geography (a single floor or living unit) and time (the 2006-2007 academic year).

Data collection

Overview and general approach

Yin (2003) provides three principles to guide the collection of data in case study research. First, case studies should collect data from multiple sources in order to triangulate or confirm findings through multiple sources. Therefore, data collected and analyzed for this study included: individual resident interviews, individual staff interviews, results of satisfaction surveys, aggregate demographic and retention data and archival documents such as articles from the student newspaper, resident department manuals and reports. (Figure 2 graphically displays the data collection strategy for the multiple case study.) Second, the raw data generated during data collection should be stored independently from the researcher's narrative report to provide evidence for the case's conclusions. Therefore, an NVIVO project database was developed to store transcripts and documents for each case. NVIVO is a research software program designed to store, organize and provide tools for analyzing qualitative data. Third, the data should be collected and stored in a way that documents the chain of evidence leading to the researcher's conclusions about the cases. NVIVO records also documented adherence to proposed methods and protocols.

Interview data are considered critical to case study research (Yin). Therefore, the primary source of data for this study was semi-structured interviews with residents living

in the residence communities selected as cases for study. Individual interviews with six or more residents were conducted for each case. Both men and women were selected from the pool of participant volunteers on the floor. Care was also taken to insure that the resident participants were from multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds in an attempt to reflect the demographic diversity of the floor. Although not a primary source of data for the case, the RA and CD for each case were also interviewed during each time period as a piece of the triangulation required as part of qualitative case study (confirming or disconfirming the student data with alternate data.) Documents including room assignment and floor plan records, programming records, resident survey results, demographic reports, retention data, Residential Life publications and articles from the student newspaper were collected and reviewed. With-in case and cross case comparison of the descriptive data was used to respond to the research questions.

Issues of Access and Entry

Access to the site was supported by the Vice President for Student Affairs and the President of the institution. Specific access to the communities selected for study was arranged with Community Directors and Resident Assistants. My relationship to the site made entry physically easy, but posed challenges as an inside participant (as described in later sections of this chapter). While I had the authority to enter these communities at my will, I chose not to do so until I had solicited approval from individual participants and appropriate notice had gone to participants and building staff about dates and times of my initial visits. Direct observation was not a specific strategy of data collection for this study, but I visited the buildings housing the cases in order to conduct interviews in

community studies (located on ground floors or in between wings of floors). Conducting the interviews on site allowed me to observe the physical living environment. Spatial understandings (students' room location, lounge set up) helped me to more accurately analyze the student interview data and frequent interaction lists provided by participants during interviews.

Case *Selection*

The selection of cases and participants targeted diverse communities composed largely of first year students for three reasons. First, the literature suggests that interaction with racially and ethnically diverse peers in residence halls is prevalent during the first year of college (antonio, 2004). As students attempt to become established socially and academically in their first year away from home (Chickering & Reisser993), they may meet and share living space with students of different races and ethnicities for the first time (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999; Hurtado, 1999). Second, like many colleges, most student attrition at this institution occurs between the first and second year of college (OIR, 2004). Therefore, interviewing upper-class students would only explore the experiences of students in diverse environments who "fit" or chose to stay at the institution following the first year. Finally, first year students at this institution are less likely than upper-class students to be involved outside of their residence hall in complex social networks and multiple activities (OIR). As a result, the experience of the living environment may be less "muddied" by participation in other campus experiences.

As stated above, racially and ethnically diverse floors housing first year students were identified using demographic summary reports generated from residential and

admissions databases. I visited staff meetings during the first weeks of October 2006 to

make staff aware that I would be conducting research in one or more of their buildings. I

distributed an information sheet outlining the purpose and structure of the study

(Appendix A). Following these meetings, RAs and CDs in residence halls received a

letter via e-mail asking if they would be willing to participate in the study. As requested

by UMBC's IRB, responses to the e-mail solicitation were accepted by an employee at

UMBC not affiliated with Residential Life or Student Affairs. Names of five RA staff

members meeting the selection criteria were forwarded to me by this staff member. From

these five potential cases, I selected two racially and ethnically diverse cases with similar

(though not exact) physical structures. Demographic data for the residential system and

Selection of Interview Participants

Interview Participants by Race and Sex	Case A: Campbell		Case B: Bigwind		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Staff					
Asian	0	1	0	0	**1**
White	0	2	0	2	**4**
Residents					
Asian	1	1	1	1	**4**
Black	1	1	3	0	**5**
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	**1**
White	0	1	1	3	**5**
Multiracial	0	1	0	0	**1**
Total	**3**	**7**	**5**	**6**	**21**

Table 1 Participants by race and sex

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both selected cases can be found in Appendix B. Through out the remainder of this text, I refer to these cases as *Case A* or the pseudonym, *Campbell Hall,* and *Case B* or the pseudonym, *Bigwind Hall*.

Community Directors and Resident Assistants from the selected cases agreed to participate. Student participants from their communities were solicited by letters distributed directly to them in their rooms or on their floor on an evening and time predetermined by the Resident Assistant. Seventeen first year residents expressed interest. One volunteer, a White female, did not continue after learning the content and structure of the interviews. The remaining 16 volunteers participated. Participants are displayed within case by race and sex in Table 1 above. Two residents participated only in the first interview. Two residents did not participate in the first round of interviews, but participated in subsequent interviews. In these cases, interview questions from both the first and second interviews were asked during the second interview time period. Five staff members also participated. One RA graduated mid-year after participating in the first interview. The new RA assigned to the floor completed the remaining interviews. A more complete description of the participants and participation times is included in the case descriptions in the next chapter. All participants were self selected. In addition, it is important to note that only those residents present on the floor when the solicitations were distributed. Therefore, the participants are likely to be those residents most involved in floor interactions. Less involved residents who spent time off the floor or behind closed doors on the floor are less likely to be participants in this study. On Bigwind Hall,

no member of the pre-existing lacrosse group participated in the study. On Campbell Hall, two members of the pre-existing Meyerhoff Scholar group were participants.

Resident and Staff Interviews

Resident and staff Interviews were conducted for each case at three intervals during the 2006-2007 academic year: November 7 - 10, 2006, December 5 - 19, 2006 and February 12 – March 3, 2007. Staff interviews were conducted following each participant round. Interviews were 60 minutes in duration. For the convenience of the participants, resident and RA interviews took place in a closed community study room near the residence floor where the student lived or in the ground floor study room of the residence hall (not to be confused with the floor lounges present on each floor). Interviews were all conducted while seated at small study tables with the interviewer and participant sitting on adjoining sides of the table (rather than across from each other). At the request of the participant, one interview took place in the University's Student Union. Community Director interviews took place in the CD office.

Written consent was obtained from each participant prior to the first interview. The consent form was approved by the University of Maryland Human Subjects Review Board and the research site's Institutional Review Board (Appendix C). Because of my role with the university, I spent significant time prior to the first interview explaining my role and cautioning participants about information they may not want to share with me (alcohol, risky behavior). I also spent time talking about the difference between anonymity and confidentiality because I did not think most 18 year olds would think clearly about the implications that a confidential, but not anonymous study might suggest.

I talked to them about the various ways someone might figure out who they are even though I would do everything in my power to protect their identity including not recognizing them or talking to them in public settings unless they spoke to me first or were introduced through alternate channels. I also talked with them about my race and age and recognized that it might be tempting to be polite while assuring them that I'd worked at UMBC with students of their age and that there was little they could say that would shock or offend me. While this elicited laughter and comparisons to their parents' ages, the conversation appeared to be effective in setting an open tone for interviews. Semi-structured interviews began with structured questions, but allowed for informal exploration of participant's responses. Interview guides were created and used to structure data collection (Appendix G; Appendix H; Appendix I). As noted in the guides, these questions were individually tailored for each student. The first interview was fairly structured, but later interviews became more conversational using the guide as a roadmap to insure that the same content areas were covered while allowing for information important to individual participants' to surface. Reflective listening and probing was also used to elicit additional information and to understand participant responses. While structured questions provide a foundation, unstructured follow up questions are necessary to accurately capture and verify participants' responses. Initial questions in the first interview were general and broad in order to provide minimal direction for participant response. Questions in the second and third interviews were designed to collect information about changes in interaction across time and to dig deeper into themes emerging from previous interviews. Questions in interview two and three also served as a

form of member checking to verify that data from earlier interviews were captured accurately and that multiple members of the community confirm or disconfirm themes emerging from individual interview data. Each student participant was also asked to provide a list of the students he or she interacted with most frequently on the floor. During interview three, students were also asked to provide a list of people they interact with outside of the floor and to identify the race or ethnicity and sex of each person on their lists. These lists were used to establish patterns of interaction on the floor and to compare participant statements about their diverse peer interactions with the diversity of their peer interaction lists on and off the floor. Students also completed a demographic form during the final interview (Appendix J).

Interview data collection and storage

Interview notes were taken during the interview. Interview notes were reviewed and maintained in individual participant files following the interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcription documents were stored in an NVIVO database. IRB consent, transcriptions, tapes and NVIVO files are stored off site and were accessed directly only by the researcher, transcription service and faculty auditor. Tapes and paper transcripts will be destroyed following the public defense of this research and digital records of transcripts will be kept not longer than ten years after the interviews. Signed consents and interview notes will remain offsite in the researcher's home. Digital NVIVO records of data and analysis will be transferred to a thumb drive and stored in the researcher's safe deposit box.

Documents

While secondary in importance to the interviews, documents are used in case studies to "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (Yin, 2003, p. 87). Room assignment and floor plan records, community programming records, and room change records were examined. Though room change records were examined, no room changes were initiated by any resident during the course of this study. Similarly, Community Directors were asked to share judicial statistics for cases, but only one minor judicial infraction occurred during the course of the study. Therefore, there was little to discuss related to many community records. These documents are still noted here simply to confirm that the absence of information affirmed residents' descriptions of their communities as relatively problem free. Data from ACUHO-I/EBI Resident Satisfaction (EBI, 2006) survey were reviewed as well. The EBI survey contains specific questions related to peer interaction, diversity and self reported outcomes. General institutional materials were also reviewed to provide contextual background for the case. These documents included results from the National Study of Student Engagement (Tinney, 2006), marketing materials, demographic reports, retention and graduation data, Residential Life publications and articles from student newspaper. These documents formed the foundation for the contextual analysis provided in chapter four.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method of data analysis articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is a method of data analysis for use in generating new theory from data grounded in real life experience and observation. Even when not intended to generate

theory, constant comparison methods provide an appropriate strategy for the analysis of qualitative data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) refers to Glaser and Strauss' constant comparative method as an appropriate tool to code and analyze data in case study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) reshaped original grounded theory methods into a structured, step-by step process. They describe how to apply the early steps of their coding methods to elicit themes or patterns from qualitative data without intention of generating a formal, grounded theory. Therefore, I used this process (which includes simultaneous collection, comparison and coding of data) in order to identify themes from individual interview data as each interview proceeded. Descriptive data for both cases were summarized. Data from participant interviews were then analyzed for themes across cases. Consistent with case study, patterns and themes are identified independently of and in response to the extant conceptual frameworks.

Strauss and Corbin's (1990; 1998) step-by-step instructions provided an invaluable guide for initial phases of data analysis. Initial or open coding was used to generate conceptual labels for the actions and events that emerge from data. While all interview data was stored and coded using NVIVO qualitative software, the first interview transcript for each participant was also printed and analyzed line-by-line before formal coding in NVIVO began. Line-by-line coding is considered critical in early stages of analysis to help the researcher see beyond preconceived categories developed from experience or rooted in literature. During this process, categories were created by recognizing and then labeling similar or related patterns and concepts.

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Coding and comparison of all transcripts was then followed by using NVIVO, the qualitative software program for data storage and analysis previously mentioned. NVIVO's node labeling and query tools were used to search and label text for data that confirmed, refined or disputed patterns emerging from earlier interviews. Coding notes document the early coding process. NVIVO records document the more formal coding process used to generate the descriptions and findings presented in later chapters. Memo's were also generated and attached to interview documents in NVIVO to capture more impressionistic conclusions not easily captured through formal codes. Themes and concepts emerging from the analysis were also compared to the theoretical framework under girding the study to search for confirming and disconfirming data and concepts as part of the discussion, conclusions and implications drawn from the case study.

Following coding the use of NVIVO allowed for easy sorting and manipulation of data. From the beginning of my work, NVIVO also allowed me to collect and organize all of the coded data related to a particular theme into a string of participant quotes or data list. Unlike hand coding, this comprehensive data list instilled confidence that I was summarizing evidence and then presenting findings that emerged naturally from these lists, rather than creating impressionistic themes and then returning to the evidence to find evidence to support the theme. As the researcher, my subjective impressions still shaped and influenced the coding. Still, having hand coded data in previous work, the use of NVIVO was an extremely useful tool for identifying evidence based themes from the text. This feature of NVIVO was particularly helpful when returning to the data sets to search for disconfirming data.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the standard of qualitative research to produce "valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (Merriam, 1998, p.198). Trustworthiness includes attention to four areas: credibility, reliability, transferability, and dependability. Methods used to establish trustworthiness in this study are described below.

Internal validity or credibility

Internal validity or credibility can be established through prolonged engagement, triangulation (use of multiple sources of data or methods of analysis), member checking, peer debriefing, and revealing researcher's bias. Cresswell (1998) recommends that two or more of these techniques be used. While the design of this research provides for prolonged engagement through multiple interviews, the time frame for conducting research remains limited. Therefore, attention to establishing trust with participants was a high priority in order to encourage openness from participants. Maintaining early confidences related to alcohol and announcing my visits was critical to gaining trust. Because I investigated issues related to diversity, I was also aware of how participant perceptions of me might influence trust and, subsequently, responses (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Therefore, I addressed my age, race, sex and position directly at each interview. At the end of interviews, I also asked each participant if there was anything they withheld in order to be polite or to avoid offending me. While this question does not insure honesty, two participants expanded on earlier statements and other participants seemed convincing that they had spoken freely. During the second and third interviews, participants spoke freely and needed reminders of my role with the university. Other

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participants challenged my questions in ways that led me to believe they were not just saying what they thought I wanted to hear.

The case study method used is dependent on collection of data from multiple sources. Therefore, triangulation is an inherent feature of the inquiry. Multiple sources of data were examined to confirm or disconfirm findings from resident interview data. Comparison of resident data, staff data and existing documents were performed to establish the credibility of findings. Live-in staff members were in a unique position to observe resident interactions on a daily basis; their observations and interpretations of diverse peer interactions were used in this study to confirm or counter the reports of resident students and were not considered a primary data source. While live-in staff can verify student perceptions, staff participants may have been uncomfortable sharing information that reflected poorly on their performance or compliance with policy enforcement. Therefore, programming records, roommate changes, satisfaction surveys and recontracting records were reviewed to verify staff interview data as well. RA data were highly consistent with student reports. RA data provided greater understanding of interactions described by residents, but in no case was staff data used to generate themes. CD data were often too general to add additional insight about specific cases, but were helpful in understanding context. Staff interviews were used primarily to verify or question resident data and were not the primary data of analysis for this study.

Two additional methods of establishing credibility were also used: peer debriefing and member checking. A peer debriefer was used to explore the evolving themes and findings. A doctoral candidate, an African-American male from another higher education

graduate program, was simultaneously conducting research related to the experiences of Black students (Baber, 2007). Interview collection periods for this study mirrored mine. Perceptions were shared and tested with this colleague informally following the first round of interviews and again more formally during the third interview period. During both the second and third interviews, resident participants were also asked to respond to emerging findings and conclusions. In the final minutes of the third and final interview, index cards with themes developed from the first two interviews were shared with each participant. Participants were asked to respond to each theme with a true or false response and to offer examples or corrections depending on response. Where participants objected to my analyses, findings were eliminated, changed or reported as disconfirming data. Member checking was not conducted following the third interviews.

Reliability and confirmability

Reliability and confirmability (or dependability) of the research was established by creating NVIVO and paper files that allow audit. All coding memos and field notes are available for audit by my advisor until data collected for this inquiry is destroyed as outlined above and in the consent. Reliability is also served by triangulation as described above. Paper records were shared with an on site member of my dissertation committee following initial interviews. NVIVO records were shared following final coding of data.

Transferability

Transferability cannot be established by the researcher, but the researcher is responsible for supplying information that will allow others to assess if the findings can be applied to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I have provided descriptions of the

site, contextual variables, data collection and findings in sufficient detail that readers may make appropriate judgments about other contexts where the findings may apply. A detailed description of institutional context is provided in chapter four.

Dependability and ethical issues

Ethical issues are the final element of establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Trustworthiness in qualitative research requires maintaining appropriate boundaries and levels of disclosure while attempting to establish a trusting relationship with participants. Despite concern at proposal stage, few issues created conflicts between my role as researcher and role as staff during interviews. Students did describe information related to both alcohol use and sexual behavior as anticipated. However, the disclosure of my insider role as an employee of the university prior to interviews encouraged participants to share such information in ways that protected the identity of individuals. Disclosure included information about my role with the university, my obligations as a member of the staff, and requests for participants to protect the identity of other residents if they choose to discuss sensitive information. This disclosure was presented in the solicitation for participants, in the consent form, and in my verbal introduction to interviews. On each occasion that a participant revealed such information, I verbally reminded the participant of my role. In all instances where infractions of rules (such as alcohol) were reported, I was able to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participant without compromise to my staff role or risk to the student. In one situation, a participant asked that I not record her discussion related to a friend's pregnancy. I complied with her request that I take only hand written notes

during this part of our interview. This conversation was, therefore, not coded or included in NVIVO analysis.

A more challenging issue was protecting the location of cases and the identity of participants. I did not anticipate how freely participants would share the content of their interviews with others in their communities. The behavior of these participants increased the likelihood that university staff could identify the particular building or floor under study and subsequently identify individual participants. While there was no ethical violation on my part – I did not share students' identities nor did I promise institutional anonymity and I specifically described the risks of being identified to all participants – I struggled more when attributing data to specific individuals knowing that their identity would be more easily deciphered since others, including staff, knew the floors involved in the study. In two instances, I made conscious decisions to sacrifice supporting data or rich descriptions that might reveal students' identities or make public information that might leave participants open to harmful judgments from should their identity be determined. For example, I coded, but removed from the evidence presented in this paper a descriptive passage about the racism of a participant's parent, a participant's negative and potentially inflammatory description of neighbors on the floor and data related to a participants' alcohol abuse. With these considerations in mind, descriptive institutional data is presented in chapter four. This information provides the background necessary to provide context for the thematic interview findings presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR: CASE CONTEXT AND CASE DESCRIPTIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides information about the larger university as well as

descriptions of UMBC's residence system and the two specific communities studied,

Campbell Hall and Bigwind Hall. Physical descriptions of the residence facilities, floor

demographics and background information about interview participants for each case

follow the descriptive information about the broader institution and residence system.

The literature presented in chapter two suggests that institutional context plays a critical

role in shaping diverse peer interactions. Contextual information about the mission,

demographic composition, history, leadership and culture of UMBC, the university

housing the residential communities selected as the cases for this study, provides

background information critical to interpreting the case data and analyses presented in

chapter five. Contextual information also allows the reader to assess the potential

transferability of findings to other settings.

Institutional Context

Mission and focus

UMBC is a selective four year, public research extensive university in the

Mid-Atlantic region located just outside of Baltimore City in the near suburbs of

Baltimore County, Maryland. UMBC is one of thirteen public universities and

research institutions governed by the University System of Maryland's Board of

Regents. Attaching the tag line "an Honors University in Maryland" to its name,

UMBC identifies as an honors university focusing on preparing academically

talented students for graduate and professional work. While the mission emphasizes liberal arts foundation at the undergraduate level - evident in UMBC's strong Visual Arts, History, Theatre and other fine arts and humanities programs - the emphasis on science, technology and engineering (STEM) at the graduate level is prominent at the undergraduate level as well. UMBC's web site advertises undergraduate majors in "physical and biological sciences, social and behavioral sciences, engineering, mathematics, information technology, humanities and visual and performing arts" (About UMBC, n.d). The mission statement also explicitly states a commitment to cultural and ethnic diversity by stating "UMBC is dedicated to cultural and ethnic diversity, social responsibility and lifelong learning" (UMBC Mission, n.d.). The combined emphasis on STEM programs, graduate preparation, and diversity explicit in the mission manifests in UMBC's national recognition as a predominantly White university with unusual success recruiting, graduating and preparing minority students, particularly Black students, for graduate and professional study (Hrabowski, 1999). The university's president, Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, is a nationally recognized figure in higher education and is well known for successful efforts to support achievement of underrepresented minority groups and women in science, technology, engineering and math (Fain, 2007; Kinzie, 2007). Hrabowski initiated the widely recognized Meyerhoff Scholar program praised as a model for facilitating the success of minority students and particularly African-American males (Fain; Hrabowski; Salter, 2002). Both Hrabowski and the

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Meyerhoff program play a significant role in UMBC's identity and culture and are addressed again later in this chapter.

UMBC's mission statement is typical of statements found at similar universities. UMBC's institutional peers, 10 public research universities with similar institutional characteristics used by UMBC's research staff for benchmarking and research comparisons, are University at Albany, University of Arkansas, University of California Riverside, University of California Santa Cruz, Clemson University, University of Delaware, Mississippi State University, Oklahoma State University, University of Rhode Island, and University of Wyoming (UMBC Peers, n.d.). These institutional peers all share Carnegie classification as research extensive universities and have similar missions for public education. Still, truly comparable institutions within this group are difficult to identify. Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2006, UMBC is young compared to many research universities and, offering only 40 undergraduate majors to less than 10,000 undergraduates, UMBC offers fewer degree programs and enrolls fewer students than many more established research universities (About UMBC). Further, although public research universities are more likely than other four year colleges to be racially diverse, UMBC's student body is even more racially and ethnically diverse than other public research peers (Tinney, 2006). Explicit inclusion of diversity in the mission along with the racially diverse composition of UMBC's student population suggests a potentially unique institutional backdrop for the study of diverse peer interactions.

Enrollment and Student Demographics

UMBC's enrollment is smaller than many other research institutions. UMBC

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participated in the National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) in 2001, 2004 and 2005, a survey study that collects data about institutional characteristics and college experiences related to the quality of undergraduate education (Tinney). Benchmarked against NSSE data from other public research universities, UMBC's undergraduate enrollment was only half that of participating peer institutions. Average undergraduate enrollment for participating peers was 18,000 (Tinney). In the fall of 2006, UMBC's undergraduate enrollment was 9,416 undergraduates (About UMBC). Total enrollments at UMBC, including 2,382 graduate students, remained below 12,000 in the same period. Numbering 1,432, the fall 2006 cohort of entering freshmen was also much smaller than the average class of 3,300 students at other public research universities participating in the 2005 NSSE survey (Tinney).

While half the size of peers, UMBC's minority participation of 38% was significantly higher than peers participating in the NSSE survey in 2001, 2004 and 2005 with minority enrollments ranging between 20 and 28 percent of their undergraduate bodies (Tinney). Minority and foreign student enrollment (combined) at UMBC exceeded 40% in Fall 2006; African American, Asian American and Hispanic students comprised 15%, 21% and 4% of the UMBC's undergraduate population respectively (About UMBC). Multi racial and other minority populations added additional, but small, numbers to the minority student population (About UMBC). The first year first time fall 2006 cohort contained more minority students than the overall undergraduate population at UMBC, but contained fewer African American students and larger percentages of Asian American students than the total UMBC population. African American, Asian

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American and Hispanic freshmen represent 12%, 27% and 4% of the first year class respectively. An additional 4% of the freshmen class joined the university from foreign countries (frequently African and Asian nations). Just over half of entering freshmen, 53%, were White Americans not of Hispanic origin. Fifty-six percent of the entering class was male. The average freshman in this diverse class of 2006 had an SAT score of 1190 (higher than the average scores of 1129 - 1158 for NSSE peers) and a freshmen in the top quartile of the entering class had an average SAT score of 1370 (UMBC Profile, n.d.; Tinney). In summary, UMBC enrolls fewer students than many public research universities, but those students are more racially diverse and have higher SAT scores than many peers.

Despite recent growth in national reputation and expansion of the residence community, the overwhelming majority of UMBC's students hail from nearby counties in Maryland. Maryland residents comprise 85% of the fall 2006 first year cohort and 87% of the total undergraduate population (Enrollment by State, 2006). Many of these in-state students list addresses from the nearby central areas of Maryland including Baltimore, Howard and Anne Arundel counties on admissions applications. UMBC students also arrive from Prince Georges County and, increasingly, from Montgomery County, both Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. located 30 minutes to the south of the University (Total Enrollments, 2006). These counties are amongst the most racially and ethnically diverse in Maryland, a state with a population already more diverse than that of the larger nation (Maryland State Data Center, 2007; Planning Data Service, 2006). Less than sixty percent of Maryland's citizens identify as both White and not of Hispanic or Latino

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origin (Maryland State Data Center, 2007) with 41.6% of Maryland's total population composed of racial or ethnic minorities. Forty-five percent of the state's college aged population is comprised of individuals identifying as Black, Asian, Native American, Hawaiian, Hispanic or Latino (Maryland State Data Center, 2007). At first glance, UMBC's 40% minority enrollment appears reflective of Maryland's racial and ethnic diversity. A closer look reveals that Blacks remain underrepresented as compared to the state's population, while Asian students enroll in percentages greater than the state's population. UMBC also drew 202 out-of-state students to campus in the fall of 2006 with largest percentages of students from New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Students from foreign countries comprise 4% of the first year class, many from countries in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. The diversity of the state's population plays a major role in providing an applicant pool that is racially and ethnically diverse. Out-of-state and international students add to the compositional diversity of the student population central to this study.

A note about other background demographics. Race, ethnicity, sex and talent levels based on standardized testing were easily found in institutional records. Because institutional databases do not yet share data, socio-economic status (SES), parent background and other variables found to be significant in previous studies of peer interaction were not available to me. Several of the participants in this study were first generation Americans with immigrant parents. SES also appeared to vary. Unfortunately, I can give no comparisons for UMBC to other schools without access to admissions and financial aid databases.

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History

Opening its doors in 1966, UMBC's history is short compared to other universities. Perhaps as a result of this relative youth, no comprehensive historical work could be found to reveal the details of the university's history. While it is beyond the scope of this research to do the extensive work required to identify and summarize primary historical sources, one such source, the UMBC Founders Oral History Project, provides important glimpses into the institution's historical background. Started for the university's thirtieth anniversary and revitalized in 2001, the UMBC Founders Oral History Project captures and preserves interviews with founding members of the UMBC community including the institution's early chancellors or presidents, deans, faculty, staff and students (Tatarewicz, n.d.a). From these interviews and documents, a brief history of UMBC's beginnings emerged (Tatarewicz, n.d.b.).

In 1963, the Maryland state legislature approved the development of a public university in Baltimore to alleviate pressure on existing campuses created as Maryland's baby boomers headed to college. Despite political pressure to place the campus in Baltimore city, UMBC was eventually built in nearby Baltimore County. UMBC was conceptualized as a commuter arm of the University of Maryland tied to both University of Maryland's College Park (UMCP) and University of Maryland's Baltimore (UMAB) campuses. Administrators from UMCP headed the development of the new campus (Tatarewicz, n.d.b.). Concurrent to UMBC's development, the administration at UMCP faced protests from students and legal suits from civil rights groups demanding action to rectify the legacy of segregation (Ting, 2004). With civil rights demonstrations taking

place at UMCP and anti-war protests occurring across the country, UMBC developed during a unique period of "sweeping" social change. As a result, the "early atmosphere at UMBC was decidedly nontraditional and somewhat experimental" (Tatarewicz, ¶ 3). UMBC's leaders intentionally created a university unlike others. Unlike many universities founded during segregation, UMBC "was founded as a 'historically diverse' institution" where "any qualified student of any race has been admissible" since the university's founding (Hrabowski, 1999, p. 36).

The admissions statistics necessary to confirm claims of early minority enrollment at UMBC were unavailable to me. However, photographs, video and interviews compiled for the celebration of UMBC's 40th - images spanning four decades of the university's history - portray a student population racially integrated from the beginning (New Streaming Media, 2006). These images, selected as part of UMBC's public Institutional Advancement efforts, may or may not present an accurate representation of minority student numbers or minority involvement in early campus life, but the pictures do confirm that some level of compositional diversity and interaction between students of differing races and ethnicities has existed at UMBC from the beginning.

Although UMBC has always admitted students of all races and ethnicities, the institution was not always successful at recruiting minority students nor was the institutional climate perceived as welcoming by many minority students (Michel, 1986). In an early seventies interview, William Hardy, Director of Institutional Advancement at that time, stated that 3% of the student population was composed of Black students when the second Chancellor of the university, Calvin Lee, took the helm in 1971 (Roggero &

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Morais, 1973) [2]. In his first campus address Lee dedicated his presidency to increasing

the total number of students at UMBC as well as the percentage of minority students.

Hardy also reported that Lee created a minority recruitment office dedicated to this end.

By 1973, the student population had almost doubled, Black student enrollment had

increased to 13% and an additional 2% of the student body was comprised of other

minority students including Chinese students (Roggero & Morais).

Increasing minority enrollment did not lead to an environment perceived as

equitable or inclusive for all students. Black students at UMBC protested against

discrimination in the early seventies (New Streaming Media), an action repeated multiple

times in the mid eighties (Hrabowski; Michel, 1986; Fain). As the earlier literature

review pointed out, the 1980's were challenging times for higher education related to

issues of racial equity. UMBC was no exception. In the mid 1980's the student

newspaper reported student concern with failure to increase the numbers of Black faculty

and frustration stemming from perceived racism in the residence community (Polchin,

1986; Ward, 1985). As UMBC's third Chancellor, John Dorsey, was ending his tenure,

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[2] In this video clip, William Hardy appears to be a Black male and references are

made to Calvin Lee's Chinese background. By omitting descriptions of their race in the

body of the text, I seek to avoid assuming an undocumented link between Hardy's

interest in and Lee's success in increasing minority enrollment. However, in a research

study related to race, it is important to consider the possibility that minority leadership

played a role in minority enrollment. It is independently significant that two executive

positions (including the presidency) were filled by people of color in 1973 since senior

leadership positions were, and still are, dominated by White men (ACE, 2007).

racial tension was fueled by the judicial removal of a Black student from campus housing following a fight with a White student; the White student was not judicially charged or sanctioned for his involvement in the fight (Fain; Polchin; Scalfani, 1986a). Black students rallied in the spring of 1986 to protest this incident as well as other university actions perceived by students as racist (Michel; Ordonez & Edwards, 1986; Scalfani, 1986b). Dorsey deferred action on the student demands telling protesting students that he would recommend that incoming Chancellor Michael Hooker convene a committee to consider the advancement of "minority affairs" (Scalfani, 1986b, p.10). As Hooker took office, he established a campus task force to investigate the charges of racism raised by student protests the following fall, but a year after students initially made their concerns known, Black students again voiced discontent by taking over the new Chancellor's office in the spring of 1987 (Fain; Hrabowski).

Following these protests, Hooker made the success of minority students a priority for UMBC. Working with the newly hired Vice Provost, Freeman Hrabowski, Hooker's administration created the foundations for a more supportive diversity climate. Strategies were developed to support all students' success by encouraging group study, reexamining admissions standards and strengthening tutorial and orientation programs (Hrabowski). Perhaps most important to the current institutional context, the Meyerhoff Scholar program was born during this time period. Under the leadership of Hrabowski, this effort, originally designed to foster the success of academically talented African-American males through scholarships and academic support, would eventually draw national attention and be credited with UMBC's success in creating a climate where all students

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including underrepresented minorities are encouraged to excel. Following the targeted recruitment of minority students in the 1970's and the intentional responses to charges of racism levied in the 1980's, UMBC emerged better prepared to respond to the needs of the state's growing minority population and to foster a positive educational environment for students of all races and ethnicities. Ten years later, the campus climate had "shifted dramatically from one that routinely included Black-student protests to one that now celebrates high achievement among all of our students, including African-Americans (Hrabowski, 1999, p. 36).

Institutional Identity, Culture and Climate

The early historical context and non-traditional atmosphere at UMBC gave birth to a unique set of institutional values and an organizational culture that have remained consistent across time. In preparation for 40th Anniversary celebrations, past and present members of UMBC's community gathered in 2006 to participate in a day long retreat to identify UMBC's defining characteristics and values. Students, faculty, emeritus faculty, staff and alumni segmented by different eras in the university's development were asked to share stories of their experiences and then together create lists of institutional characteristics that defined their common experience of UMBC during their time at UMBC. Five characteristics captured the essence of UMBC across all eras: family, growth and opportunity, pioneering spirit, diversity and superior academic achievement (Akchin, 2006). The theme of family rose from participants' experience of UMBC as a nurturing, flexible and comfortable community where members felt included and supported. It is interesting to note that respect, not always a characteristic of family, was

also seen as an important aspect of UMBC's family. Shared perceptions of UMBC as a ground breaking university painted a picture of UMBC as a place of growth and opportunity for members – a place where members made connections that supported them to go beyond expectations. The theme of pioneering spirit embodied the institution's propensity for entrepreneurial development and progressive programs as well as the avant garde nature of the institution. Interestingly, participants saw inclusivity (a concept that might more readily be associated with the family or diversity theme) as a critical element of pioneering spirit. In other words, members of the UMBC community from all generations saw UMBC as a pioneer in creating an inclusive environment. The diversity theme denoted a welcoming, open minded atmosphere with a focus on diversity experiences and the promise of all students. Finally, participants saw UMBC as a place where it is cool to be smart and where students are taught to reach beyond their grasp, a place that is question driven, a place where both students and staff are encouraged to be curious and to ask and solve important questions. The consistency of experiences over time and across students, faculty and staff suggest that these characteristics are a core part of the institutional fabric or culture. Institutional culture provides the foundation for the more malleable racial climates influencing interactional diversity. Therefore, knowing that UMBC's members characterize their shared culture by a sense of family where diversity and achievement are part of a forward thinking and opportunistic culture is important in understanding the context that fosters or inhibits diverse peer interactions.

The NSSE data described earlier in this chapter measures students' perceptions of engagement and experiences in multiple aspects of campus life (Tinney). Though not

intended specifically to assess racial climates, the NSSE survey data includes measures that assess levels of perceived support and diverse peer interaction, both elements central to racial climate. Within UMBC, African-American students had the highest mean score of any racial group on the supportive campus environment scale, a scale measuring perceptions of academic support, social support and relationships with other students, faculty and staff (Tinney). Tests of significance were not run to compare the means of demographic groups, but the fact that Black students perceive the campus academic and social climates to be as supportive as (and perhaps more supportive than) their White and Asian peers perceive it to be, is a practically significant finding on a predominantly White campus. When UMBC's NSSE results are benchmarked against other research extensive universities, UMBC's students were more likely to perceive that their university encourages contact among diverse peers than students at other research peer institutions. UMBC students also indicated more frequently interacting with peers different from themselves. UMBC freshmen had more frequent interaction with peers both from different racial, ethnic or religious backgrounds and with peers with different political opinions. First year students and seniors also indicated that they had engaged in serious conversation with students of different races or ethnicities more frequently than benchmarked peers. UMBC seniors scored significantly lower on measures assessing the quality of their peer relationships when benchmarked against seniors at research peers. However, UMBC seniors that lived on campus as freshmen had significantly higher scores than others seniors at UMBC suggesting that resident students may benefit both from better quality relationships and from more diverse peer interactions compared to

commuting peers. Finally, first year students at UMBC also sensed more emphasis on spending time on academics and felt more support for academic success than students at other research universities. At first glance, emphasis on academics may not seem related to peer interaction, but (as we will see in the next chapter) first year students at UMBC cited the need for academic support as a reason for diverse peer interactions. Though not a substitute for a climate assessment, UMBC's NSSE results point to an academically focused climate where students of all backgrounds engage in serious conversations across differences more frequently than do students at other research extensive universities. Results also point to a supportive climate for African-American students as compared to benchmarked peers. However, the lower overall quality of peer interactions (as assessed by seniors and compared to peer institutions) raises interesting questions related to the impact of diversity and academic focus on the quality of those peer interactions. This brief look at institutional identity, culture and climate establishes consistent and discernible support for diversity that appears to foster the diverse peer interactions of interest to this study.

Leadership

Sustaining cultures and creating racial climates supportive of constructive diverse peer interaction and learning requires perceptible support from authorities within the institution (Schofield, 2001). The history of UMBC reveals that at least two previous president's, Calvin Lee and Michael Hooker, made increasing minority enrollment and improving the climate for minority students explicitly stated, public goals of their presidency. Following Michael Hooker, Freeman Hrabowski became president in May

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of 1992 and continues to serve in that position (Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, 2006). Hrabowski's support for programs and climates in which underrepresented minority students excel is widely known both on and off campus (Fain, 2007).

Hrabowski is unusual compared to leaders at other research institutions for at least two reasons. First, with 15 years as president and 20 years at UMBC, he has served as president for nearly twice the average term of his peers and has served in leadership roles at UMBC for half of the institution's life. This longevity has allowed him to have a profound impact on institutional identity and culture. Second, in a field where most college presidents are White men, Hrabowski is an African- American male (Fain; Freeman A. Hrabowski, III). Jailed at age 12 for participation in civil rights protests led by Martin Luther King, influenced by the loss of a childhood friend in a racially motivated church bombing, and earning his doctorate by the age of 24 in mathematics and higher education, Hrabowski emerged as a leader for minority education in his later professional life. Hrabowski's personal history as both a civil rights leader and young scholar is part of campus lore and serves as inspiration to faculty, staff and students (Kinzie, 2007).

Hrabowski's supportive undergraduate experience at Hampton Institute, a historically Black liberal arts college, stood in sharp contrast to the loneliness of his graduate experience at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a predominantly White research university. These contrasting experiences provided the inspiration and ideas to create the Meyerhoff Scholars program at UMBC, a program for minority achievement embedded in a predominantly White university (Meyerhoff Scholars

Program, n.d.). The success of this program propelled UMBC to the national view and "branded the university as a place where Black students can succeed in science and engineering" (Fain, p. A30). Following the student protests of 1987, Hrabowski began the Meyerhoff scholarship program aimed at supporting high talent (SAT scores typically above 1300) African-American males in engineering and sciences (Fain; Salter, 2002). The program is now open to students of all races and genders with a continued commitment to supporting underrepresented minority success in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. When the program started, Black students at UMBC performed poorly as compared to White and Asian peers (Fain). Eighty percent or more of those beginning the Meyerhoff program go on to attend graduate school and, as mentioned in other parts of this chapter, Black students (on average) currently perform on par or above their White and Asian peers (Salter). The Meyerhoff Scholars program has become such an integral part of the university's identity that the mission statement includes specific references to the program and to its goals of supporting minority achievement. Specifically,

> UMBC is committed to diversity at all levels and seeks to create a campus community rich in intellectual, cultural, and ethnic diversity. The University is committed to the success of each of its students and seeks to attract well-qualified students through special scholarship initiatives in the humanities, arts, and public affairs and through the nationally recognized Meyerhoff Scholarship Program for talented high school graduates in science and engineering. UMBC expects to continue to

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attract private and public funding to facilitate the success of minority

students in the sciences and engineering" (Mission Statement, 2000, ¶5).

The program is credited not only with improving the climate for underrepresented

minority students, but for fostering high standards for academic success in all students.

Hrabowski reminds people that despite its reputation for minority success, UMBC is a

predominantly White institution. He stresses the importance of not "pitting" groups

against each other, but rather recognizing the potential and contributions of all groups

(Fain). Hrabowski has also encouraged campus leaders to focus efforts on access to

higher education for women, first-generation college students, older students, and those

from low-income families (ACE; Fain; Hrabowski).

<div align="center">*Residential Context*</div>

Mission and Values

More narrowly focused and pragmatic in nature, the mission of the residence

system grows out of and contains elements of the university mission. Residential staff:

foster the personal, social, academic, and leadership development of

resident students and prepare them to be active and responsible citizens

within the UMBC community and beyond. We seek to accomplish this

mission by: [..] promoting education for all students and being

purposeful and intentional in departmental decisions, services, programs,

and facilities in order to foster a community where the diversity of all

members of the community is respected. (Community Living Guide

2006-2007, p.5)

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At UMBC community is defined "as a place where people [..] respect as well as celebrate and appreciate individual differences…" (Rights and Responsibilities, n.d.). The Community Living Guide (2006-2007), UMBC's resident student handbook, opens with a copy of the mission accompanied by the following statement related to diversity.

> Community living exposes students to individuals and experiences that will help them learn about themselves and others, and how the differences and similarities they discover impact their everyday lives. UMBC is a community composed of students, faculty, and staff of different genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, religions, races, sexual orientations and levels of ability. We take pride in that diversity. [..] We believe that there is a great deal to be learned, taught and shared by each of us (Community Guide, 2006, p. 1).

These statements are the first things a student sees when reading this publication. The diversity pride statement was developed following the racial tension described previously and has appeared on the inside cover since the first comprehensive Guide (1987) was published twenty years ago. In more recent years, the cover of the Guide also displays Residential Life's Community Living Principles (CLPs), developed by students to highlight the expectations residents have of other residents. The CLPs are: take action to improve your community, cooperate and compromise, seek to understand others, and live and study with integrity. While all of the principles have the potential to influence peer interaction, the expectation to understand others directly addresses the differences students encounter in the residence environment.

Seek to understand others. No one is just like you. We all have different

experiences, needs, and hopes for our time at UMBC and the future.

These differences create opportunities for learning - and for conflict.

Celebrating what makes us unique and discovering what we have in

common makes it easier to see things from others' points of view and

make the most of our relationships. (Community Living Principles, n.d.).

These principles emerged from resident focus groups designed to identify the shared

values and community standards resident students believe are important aspects of

community at UMBC. Therefore, these principles capture the ideas and perceptions of

recent residents and attempt to make existing cultural assumptions explicit to new

residents. As a newer initiative these principles are less visible, but like the diversity

statement have high visibility in the Guide, and also on staff t-shirts, in posters and other

items displayed throughout the halls. Student and professional staff are trained to

integrate the CLPs into their daily work with students and, as interview data presented

later reveal, some RAs may reinforce these principles through their actions and words.

Most salient to this case study, the CLPs were developed by students. Therefore, these

principles represent the shared values of the residents who lived and created them.

History and Growth

UMBC was entirely a commuter campus until the first residence hall opened in

the Spring of 1970. Without a large resident population, the university's campus life was

low-key compared to other campuses. By the mid -1970s when a significant portion of

students were resident, the large anti-war and other movements were already winding

down (Tatarewicz, n.d.b). As the campus grew, the residence system grew as well, but it was not until the late 90's that rapid growth began, nearly doubling the number of students living in residence halls earlier in the decade (Young, 2005a). This growth was prompted by an increased focus on the needs of academically talented students, students more likely to desire campus housing and enrichment programs such as living-learning communities (Young & Nevins, 2004). To meet the needs of this population and to deliver on the promise of an honors university, new residence facilities were designed and made possible by a private donor.

By the fall of 2006, the resident population had grown to 3,800 students. Approximately 40 % of all undergraduate students and nearly 50% of full-time undergraduates lived on campus at the time of this study. Like the larger campus, the racial and ethnic composition of the resident population is diverse with approximately 42% of all residents identifying as Asian (20.2%), Black (18.2%), Hispanic (3.3%) or American Indian (.4%) and 56.2% identifying as White (with 1.4% not identifying race on admissions applications). Also like the campus, UMBC's residence halls are more compositionally diverse than peers (Butler & Young, 2005; Jones & Butler, 2004). Compared to total campus enrollment, the resident population is disproportionately male. Almost 56% of all residents were men in fall of 2006. Thirteen hundred twenty six first year students, nearly three quarters of the entering freshmen class, begin their college experience in campus residence halls; these students composed the population of interest for this study (About UMBC, n.d.; UMBC Profile, n.d.). Freshmen composed more than 35% of the resident population. (Also see Appendix B).

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Residential Life Description

The residence halls and apartments are geographically contiguous to one another occupying two quadrants of campus land adjacent to a playing field, academic buildings, the Library and the Commons, the campus center or union. Four traditional halls with double loaded corridors of suites housing are clustered on the lower edge of the housing community and surround the resident dining facility. Super suites and apartment housing are located in the center of the community with newer apartment housing on the opposite edge of the resident system.

Although UMBC has no designated freshmen buildings, most first year residents are housed in one of four older, traditional halls. Each of these halls houses between 315 and 350 residents a piece. Each building contains four floors divided into two separate wings. This structure creates seven to eight sub-communities in each building. A typical community houses 48-52 residents on a straight, double loaded corridor. Most rooms in these buildings are standards double rooms with a small number of single and triple rooms scattered throughout the buildings. Built after 1970, there are no community bathrooms in these buildings. Two rooms share an adjoining bath giving residents more privacy than older, traditional residence hall rooms and less reason to leave the room. Each floor or community has one or more public study rooms or floor lounges and a small kitchen area. Each building has a lobby and service desk on the first floor and a large community room on the ground floor.

Returning residents select their room and roommates during the spring semester using a process referred to by students as recontracting. During recontracting, upper

class residents typically fill apartments and super suites (suites with a shared living room area in addition to the shared bath found in traditional halls) spaces first. Therefore, vacancies in the traditional halls are filled primarily by sophomores and incoming freshmen. First year students may request a roommate or, as the majority of freshmen choose to do, be assigned to rooms by residential assignment staff using response to a short Roommate Questionnaire (RQ) submitted as part of the housing application. The RQ contains multiple choice questions related to lifestyle preferences and habits including smoking preference, tolerance for noise, preferred bed times, need for cleanliness and order and desire to use room for socializing or studying. Housing applications used by assignment staff have only name, e-mail and sex of applicant. Other demographic data such as race or ethnicity is collected by the admissions office and merged into residential databases at a later point in time to be used for reporting purposes. Therefore, the assignment staff members do not see admissions information related to the students' race, ethnicity or religion when making assignments.

Staffing

The residential facilities and educational programs are managed by a full-time and graduate staff with offices located in the residence halls. In addition to central staff responsible for facilities management, programs, operations, assignments, technology and business services, each of nine halls or apartment communities houses a full-time live-in staff member with a Masters degree in Counseling, Student Personnel or other related field. Numbering 36, the residential life staff is composed of 3 Asian or Asian-Americans, 13 Black or African-Americans, 2 Middle Eastern-Americans and 18 White

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Americans. Within this group, formal leadership is provided by four Black and seven White managers. In addition to live-in professional staff, a Resident Assistant (RA) lives on every floor or in each apartment building. RAs are responsible for living units ranging in size from 17 to 54 with the typical community housing 48 students. RAs are selected from their undergraduate peers and are required to participate in both pre-service training and a 3-credit academic psychology course for paraprofessionals. Training and coursework includes skill, attitude and knowledge components related to diversity with emphasis on understanding how culture impacts community, communication and other aspects of the RA responsibilities. The RA staff is also compositionally diverse. Specific demographic numbers are not available, but staff interviewed as part of this research report that the student staff is racially diverse and representative of the student population with White males underrepresented as compared to the general resident population. Benchmarking data (based on sample of staff) confirms staff reports of RA diversity (Young, 2005b).

Resident Satisfaction and Peer Interaction

UMBC participates annually in the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International Educational Benchmarking Assessment (ACUHO-I/EBI, 2006). The Resident Benchmarking Study collects residents' perceptions related to satisfaction with residential programs, services, facilities, community and, more recently, learning outcomes. Institutional results are benchmarked against over 250 participating schools and the smaller group of research universities amongst them. Factor analysis yields 13 factors including the factor *interaction with others*. Regression analysis with

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satisfaction as the dependent variable consistently finds the factor interaction with others to be the most important variable influencing resident satisfaction. In other words, positive peer interactions predict overall satisfaction more than any other factor on most campuses. UMBC's scores are on par with or slightly lower than peer institutions on the interaction factor. However, when looking more specifically at the individual questions composing the factor, UMBC's scores differ from its peers. Four questions make up the factor interactions with others including satisfaction with meeting others, living cooperatively, improving relationships and resolving conflict. UMBC results from 2001-2005 show that students at UMBC are less satisfied with the degree to which residence life helped them to meet other people, but significantly more likely to be satisfied with the degree to which living in the halls helped them to live cooperatively with others, to improve their interpersonal relationships with others and to help them resolve conflict with others. In other words, residents at UMBC (as compared to benchmarking peers) find it more challenging to meet other students, but are more satisfied with how they interact with and resolve conflict with others in their community. Staff members attribute this finding to the suite style living at UMBC as well as the studious nature of the student body. UMBC's resident population is more diverse than both research peers institutions and all participating colleges and universities as well. Scores on satisfaction with peer interaction do not differ significantly between Asian - American, Black, Hispanic or White residents (EBI, 2003; EBI, 2004; EBI, 2005). This is in contrast to national data indicating that minority students are less satisfied with interaction as well as multiple other factors (Butler & Young).

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Case Context

Two cases were selected from the residential community described above. Cases A and B were named and are referred to throughout the remainder of this work as Campbell Hall (or Campbell A) and Bigwind Hall (or Bigwind B) respectively. Both cases are floors in the traditional residence halls at UMBC. Descriptions of the physical structure and a demographic summary for each floor or case complete the contextual background provided in this chapter.

Campbell Hall

The first case, identified by the fictitious name Campbell Hall Case A (Campbell A) houses 54 students on one continuous floor. The floor contains one triple (indicated by crosshatch shading in Figure 3) and three single rooms (indicated by striped shading). All other rooms are double occupancy rooms connected to another double room by an
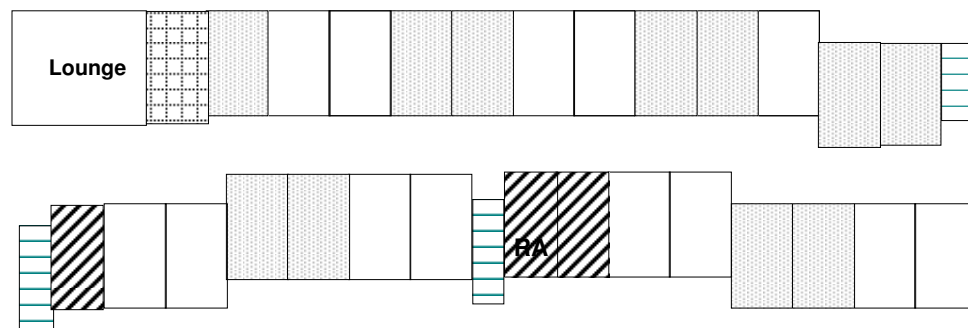
Figure 3 Campbell Hall Case A

adjoining shared bathroom. A typical resident of this floor has one roommate and two suitemates from the adjoining room. Four people share a bathroom. The RA has a single

room located midway down the hall. To enter the building residents enter a central

staffed lobby area, show resident IDs and then enter a stairwell off of the lobby to travel

to their floor. Although there is a rear fire stairwell, residents most frequently access the

floor through this central stairwell creating a common entry point and a beginning and

end to the hallway. A shared, community floor lounge with kitchen, lounge furniture,

and study tables is located across from the main entrance to the floor.

Table 2
Campbell Hall Case A: Race or ethnicity by sex as reported
on admissions application

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
American Indian	1	0	1
Asian	5	8	13
Black	8	2	10
Hispanic	1	2	3
White/Caucasian	10	15	25
Unknown	1	1	2
Total	26	28	54

At the time of case selection, 54 students were assigned to the floor. A

breakdown of residents by race and sex appears in Table 2. In addition, 70% of the

residents housed on Campbell Hall Case A are first year, first time students and nearly

88% are Maryland residents. Demographic data for the floor as compared to the

residential system and the larger Campbell Hall are found in Appendix B.

First year recipients of the Meyerhoff Scholarship program are all housed in

Campbell Hall and are scattered throughout the building often with Meyerhoff

roommates, self selected following a required residential summer bridge program for Meyerhoff scholarship program participants. These students are scattered throughout the building and several scholars are housed in Campbell A. First year members of the Honors college are also housed in Campbell Hall. These students are primarily clustered together on another floor in the same building. The placement of Meyerhoff Scholars and Honors College students in Campbell Hall gives the building a reputation for scholarly focus and serious students even though most students in the building are unaffiliated with either program.

Bigwind Hall

The second case, identified by the fictitious name Bigwind Hall Case B (Bigwind B), houses 51 students on one continuous floor. However, unlike Campbell Hall, Bigwind's floor bends at a 90 degree angle halfway down the hallway effectively creating two smaller communities within the larger floor. The floor contains 24 double occupancy rooms. Each double room is connected to another double room by an adjoining, shared bathroom creating 12 suites of 4 residents. Therefore, a typical resident of this floor has one roommate and two suitemates in the adjoining room. Four people share a bathroom. The floor contains 3 single rooms (one of the three occupied by the RA.) The RA occupies the single room located midway down the hall in the center of the L shaped floor. The floor plan for Bigwind Hall is displayed in Figure 4. Each unlabeled box represents a double room. Adjacent rooms are shaded in the same gray or white to indicate rooms sharing a bath. Singles are indicated by shaded boxes.
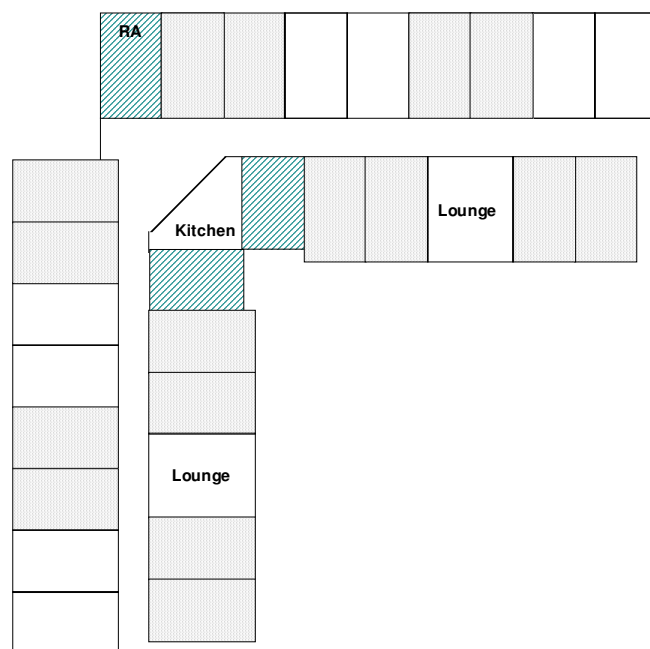
Figure 4 Bigwind Hall Case B

Built in the early 1990's, Bigwind hall is the youngest of the traditional residence

halls housing first year students. As a result, Bigwind is the only traditional hall built

after fire code required self closing mechanisms on room doors (a fact that seemed

unimportant until participants continually pointed it out to me). Like Campbell, to enter

the building residents enter a central staffed lobby area, show resident IDs and then enter

a stairwell off of the lobby to travel to their floor. Although there is a rear fire stairwell,

residents most frequently access the floor through this central stairwell creating a

common entry point and a front and back to the floor. Two small study lounges are

located on the floor, one on each branch of the floor. A small kitchen is located at the

bend of the hall across from the RA room. Where the floor bends, a widening in the

hallway provides a natural gathering space outside of the RA room.

At the time of case selection, 51 students were assigned to the floor. A breakdown of residents by race and sex appears above in Table 3. The floor is disproportionately male; over two thirds of Bigwind Case B's residents are men. Just over half of the floors residents identify as White Americans. Eighty-eight percent of the residents housed on Bigwind B are first year, first time students. With most upper class students housed in singles or double rooms at the end of the hallway, Bigwind B is a floor

Table 3
Bigwind Hall Case B
Race or ethnicity by sex as reported on admissions application

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
American Indian	0	0	0
Asian	3	7	10
Black	7	5	12
Hispanic	0	1	1
White/Caucasian	6	22	28
Unknown	0	0	0
Total	**16**	**35**	**51**

with little upper class influence compared to other communities approaching 20-25% returning students. Just over 78% of occupants are Maryland residents. Demographic data for the floor as compared to demographic data for the residential system and Bigwind Hall are found in Appendix B.

As the system's continuous occupancy building, unlike other residence halls, Bigwind Hall opens early to supply housing to students transitioning from summer school housing and to welcome early arrivals. Bigwind also remains open during break periods

while other halls close. Therefore, Bigwind is home to any Division I or scholarship athlete required to practice during break periods. While athletes are not clustered in specific areas of the building, coaches encourage new athletes to request roommates from their team, so student athletes often request team groupings. Bigwind Hall Case B houses one of these self requested athlete clusters. Eight of the residents assigned to two suites at the entrance to the floor are all new members of the lacrosse team. Bigwind also houses many international students who can not leave campus during break periods. Bigwind is often seen as the athletes building with a significant international student population.

Summary

In conclusion, the mission, history, culture, leadership and compositional diversity of both the institution and residential community provide a unique context for the study of diverse peer interactions. Founded as an historically diverse institution and younger, smaller, and equally or more selective than many of its research extensive peers, UMBC's leadership has across many years intentionally sought to create an inclusive and supportive environment for the academic success of all students. Though clearly not always successful, the end result of these efforts appears to be a racially and ethnically diverse or compositionally diverse campus where students of all races report feeling supported and succeeding at similar levels. Where differences occur, minority students (particularly Black students) not majority students are retained and report support at higher levels than majority peers. This unique institutional context provides the environmental and cultural influences supporting and challenging first year students as they interact in racially diverse residential communities.

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The two cases selected for this study are composed primarily of first year students and are compositionally diverse at equal or greater than levels found in the larger residential and university contexts. Both cases house similar number of students in similar facilities with double occupancy rooms with shared bathrooms. Both floors house members of pre-existing scholarship groups together in clusters, but differ in the types of scholarship students housed; Campbell houses academic scholarship students while Bigwind houses athletes. The number of male students is notably higher in Bigwind Case B than on in Campbell Case A. Bigwind also had a higher percentage of first year students than most floors. While both cases share the same institutional and residential contexts, the small differences between building structures and types of students housed are important background distinctions to be aware of when investigating the peer interactions shaped in these similar, but different case.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

Introduction to Interview Findings

The findings presented in this chapter are organized in sections responding to one of the three research questions guiding this study (see chapter three, p. 89). Data related to participants' interactions in Campbell and Bigwind halls reveal both how students initiate and sustain interactions (process) in their communities as well as the nature of these interactions (content). Next, the characteristics, conditions, policies and programs that facilitated or hindered interactions with others on the floor are presented before closing with themes related to the perceived learning outcomes reported by students and the experiences prompting learning and development. Before presenting the findings related to the three research questions just described, background information for the participants in each case is introduced to acquaint the reader with members of the community and to provide additional context for the findings. Throughout this chapter, I present participant interview data to illustrate and support the findings. While most data are exact quotes from participants, I have taken liberty to remove words such as 'like," "you know," or "um" when doing so did not change the meaning of the sentence. Likewise, I have occasionally corrected minor grammatical flaws and repetition of clauses when it did not change meaning.

Participant Background Information

The cases for this study are the two residence communities described in chapter 4. Thus, data analysis focused on the patterns of interaction on these floors rather than on the individuals interviewed within the two cases. However, descriptions of the

participants provide critical insight into the interview data as well as the larger patterns of interactions formed on the floor. For this reason, introductions to the participants and their living arrangements in Campbell and Bigwind halls precede findings.

Campbell Hall Case A

When you enter Campbell A, you see a large floor lounge, an area that many residents on the floor spent much time in over the course of the year. Throughout the year residents gathered in the lounge for floor meetings, to study and to socialize. There seemed to be two distinct first year interaction groups on Campbell A influenced in part by study behavior and the presence of Meyerhoff Scholar suites scattered throughout the hall. Although several of the participants denied my assessment, the racial composition of the two groups also differed. Descriptions of the individual participants follow with information that foreshadows a description of the larger case and patterns of interaction. A summary of participant background for Campbell residents can be found in Table 4 on page 146.

Alison and the first suite. Once on the floor, if you turn past the lounge to walk down the hall, the first suite you encounter housed Alison and her suitemates during this study. Alison described herself as an 18 year old, African American female who is very good with people. She attended a racially mixed high school where there were "lots of Black people, lots of White people and everything in between." Her closest friends were Black, but she "talked to White people, too." Campbell A's diversity is very similar to her high school. Alison and her roommates were named Campbell's Residents of the Month. She loved to read, considered herself very responsible and made it a point to tell

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Table 4
Participant Background Information Campbell Hall Case A

Name	Sex	Race	Ethnicity*	High School Type*	Religion*	Major/ Area of Interest	Background Important to Participant*	Inter-view
Seth, RA Fall	M	Asian Indian	Indian	Public Diverse	Hindu		Moved to U.S. from India in middle school	1
Brad, RA Spring	M	White	White	Public White	None	Mechanical Engineering	Born in south; lived in two statesfor 15 years before moving to Maryland	2, 3
Alison	F	Black	African American	Public Diverse	Presbyter-ian	Biology	U.S. born; lived with relatives in Africa until returning to live with parents in early elementary school years	1, 2, 3
Heather	F	His-Panic	Salvadoran American	Public Diverse	Catholic	Undecided	First generation born in U.S.	1, 2, 3
Sarah	F	Asian Indian	Indian American	Private Baptist Black	Christian	Information Systems	Raised Christian, but is of Hindu heritage	1, 2, 3
Davit	M	Black	African American Ethiopian	Private Christian White	Conserv-ative Christian	Biology	Meyerhoff scholar	1, 2, 3
Lucas	M	Bi-racial Asian White	French-Asian American	Public Diverse	Christian	Bio-Chemistry	Meyerhoff scholar; mother born in Vietnam	1, 2, 3
Patrick	M	White	American	Private Catholic White & Black	Catholic	Computer Engineering	First generation born in U.S.to Polish parents	1, 2, 3
Shyam	M	Asian	Nepalese	Public Diverse	Hindu	Visual Art	Moved to U.S. in elementary school years.	1

* Ethnicity, high school type, religion and other background information important to the participant are self reported data and described here as reported by the participant.

me that she does not drink. Alison was born in the United States, was raised by family in West Africa until she returned permanently to the states to rejoin her parents in early elementary school years.

Anyone living on Campbell A had to must pass Alison's suite, so she and her suitemates had many opportunities to meet people. Her suite was a social hub from the beginning. Alison shared a triple room with Amy and Tyra, a White woman and a Black woman (she loves them both). They shared their suite with two White women - Alison never mentioned them during interviews. The two Asian women across the hall appeared consistently on the list of residents she spent time with as did another study participant, Davit, a Black male who lived down the hall. Sarah, an Eastern Indian woman, also a participant, lived across the hall and appeared in Alison's social network early in the study, but disappeared from her list of frequent interactions by February. Another study participant, Heather, and her roommate lived near the end of the hallway and also appeared in Alison's interaction group. Network maps of the patterns gleaned from participant interviews[3], placed Alison in the more studious and more racially diverse

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[3] The unique characteristics of UMBC made it impossible to mask the identity of the institution, so I explicitly named UMBC. As a result, the size of the community and the demographic descriptions necessary to provide context for data analysis made it challenging to offer participants complete anonymity from current residents or staff familiar with these communities. Still, I made consistent efforts throughout the study to protect the identities of participants as much as possible from wider and future identification. Therefore, the interaction maps which contained room numbers are not

interaction group, but there were less studious residents in her interaction circle as well.

Sarah's suite. Sarah lived across the hall and one suite up from Alison's suite. Although she loved music, Sarah declared her majors as biology and information systems since she did not see music as a viable career. Her father was born in India. Both parents are Christian, as is she, though their family is originally of Hindu heritage. She was one of the only Indians in her private, predominantly Black, Baptist high school. Compared to her high school she saw Campbell A as very diverse with "a good mix of each ethnicity" on the floor. Sarah lives with a Black roommate and two suitemates, one Indian woman and one White woman. At the beginning of the semester there was a high level of overlap between Sarah's interaction group and Alison's interaction group. Sarah enjoyed her roommate and suitemates, including her Indian suitemate, despite the fact her older sister told her not to make friends with Indian girls because they are "full of drama." By February, Sarah's frequent interactions on the floor had narrowed to the members of her suite and to one Black woman living toward the end of the hall.

Davit and Lucas, the Meyerhoff suite. A few doors down from Sarah's room, Davit and his roommate shared a suite with Lucas and his roommate. Davit, Lucas and all roommates were Meyerhoff Scholars who moved to Campbell A after spending the summer together at UMBC as part of the first year Meyerhoff bridge program. Describing himself as an Ethiopian African American, Davit is the first generation of his family born in the United States. Davit is a conservative Christian. He attended a

published to protect participants as well as non-participants named by students in the study.

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predominantly White Christian school in California for all grades (K-12) where he was one of "4 or 5 Black students." His graduating class had less than 100 students. Davit was majoring in Biology. Davit's name appeared on many participants' interaction lists, yet his own list did not always reflect the names of participants on which his name appeared. Davit served as a link between the two first year social groups on the floor. Early in the study, he had one of the most diverse friend groups in the study. By the end of the study, Davit's list was composed only of Meyerhoff scholars and, while he still interacted with White peers including his roommate, most of his friend group was Black or Indian.

Davit's suitemate Lucas, also a Meyerhoff, described himself as determined, persistent, focused and goal directed. Lucas liked to travel and was interested in geography and the environment. At our first meeting, he was one of few students already involved in student organizations including the fencing club. His self description contained no demographic material. When asked, he described his race as biracial – French and Vietnamese. Though he is "more French than anything," his mother was born in Vietnam, so he also sees himself as Vietnamese. Others may perceive him as White; Alison described him as German, a perception that may or may not have influenced her assumptions about or interactions with him. Like his roommate, Lucas is Christian. Lucas is a Bio-Chem major who participated in a high school magnet program in science. His high school was predominantly Black, but he experienced it as diverse because he had friends of all races. His floor seemed "pretty similar to high school." Both Davit's and Lucas' roommates were White. Davit described his suitemates as similar to high school friends because they are all Christian and conservative. Davit's roommate had an interest

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in computers shared by the two study participants living across the hall, Patrick and Shyam. As a result, Patrick and Shyam, sometimes spent time in Davit's room.

Shyam and Patrick, computer connections. Shyam moved to the United States with his family during his elementary school years. He lived in D.C.'s suburbs for seven years before coming to UMBC as an art major. People "confuse him for being Spanish, but that is entirely wrong [..] I'm Nepalese." He maintains regular contact with a large, extended family in Nepal. He attended a diverse, public high school. Shyam gets along well with his roommate Patrick, "who is born here and is as different as can be from me, but at the same time he is just like me." He injured his eye during the first week of school, so missed early floor interaction. Shyam was not on campus when I attempted to contact him for additional interviews. Patrick indicated that Shyam's eye injury had again required him to be away from school near finals. When the network maps of Campbell A were complete, Shyam was a connector between the studious, diverse group and the more computer oriented, predominantly White, social group. His name appeared on few participant interaction lists during the second interview, a fact likely explained by his eye injury and absence during this period of time.

Patrick moved in later than other residents, missing the first days of Welcome Week. Appearing noticeably anxious during his first interview, Patrick twisted the bottom hem of his T-shirt rolling the fabric upward until it was bunched and then releasing it. He repeated this action throughout our first interview. He talked freely about himself and his family leading me to conclude his anxiety might be more related to the topic of my research and a desire to please than to an unwillingness to talk. Patrick says

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he is "from a family of immigrants to this country from Poland" though his parents "pretty much grew up here." Patrick tried to please his parents both highly educated by doing well in school. His family moved to Maryland from a nearby state. Patrick grew animated when he talked about his involvement in a high school robotics program. All male, the students at his private Catholic high school in D.C. were "pretty much rich - they were not all White, there were a bunch that were Black and not too many Hispanics, a few, and not too many Indians either, or Asians." While he saw no "real boundaries" between Black and White students at his high school, "it just happened that White people and Black People sat at different tables for lunch." Patrick was the only person interviewed who did not see the floor as friendly at our first interview and the only one to describe disliking other residents. He was bothered by the loud and rude behavior exhibited by two Black women living near him. By our second meeting, he was beginning to examine his assumptions about race. By our third interview, he no longer twisted his shirt. His interaction list was comprised of his Nepalese roommate, the White women in Alison's suite (the ones she never mentioned), the White men living across and next to him, an Asian male and a Black male (who he hadn't thought of as Asian or Black before the interview). Many of his connections were made through interest in computer games.

Heather, bridge to Bigwind. Just a few rooms from the end of the hall Heather, an outgoing "people person," lived with her "40% Greek" White roommate and two suitemates, one Dutch Caribbean woman and one White woman. Heather was an undecided major who was "really bad at science," liked psychology and considered

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herself artistic. She was considering transferring to another college at the beginning of the study, but returned for the second semester. Heather described her race as Hispanic (after saying "I don't know what race means") and her ethnicity as Salvadoran - American. She is the first generation of her family born in the United States. Heather lived with her siblings and her Mom prior to living at UMBC, but she "was pretty much raised by my grandmother for most of my life." Spanish was spoken at home, but her Spanish was not good. Her grandparents and her aunts provided support for her; an aunt financed her college education. Her great-grandfather was European Spanish in origin, a fact she seemed proud of. She knew little about her father as "she grew up without a Dad." Heather attended a diverse, public high school with many Hispanic students. Campbell A is very diverse like her high school, but with fewer Hispanic students, her peer interactions at UMBC were "more different" than friendships at home. She wanted to attend community college like many of her high school friends, but her mother made her attend UMBC. Heather was described by another resident on the floor as a partier. Heather's peer interaction list contained names from the more diverse and studious group on the floor including Alison and Davit, so perception about Heather's partying may have been heightened by the contrast between Heather and her more serious peers. Alison described Heather as White, a description Heather did not apply to herself. Alison's misperception of Heather's racial or ethnic identity is noted here because it may have been important in Alison's labeling of Heather as a partier. Alison indicated that partying was what the White students do. Because students made assumptions about others based on race, the identity perceived by others may have been as influential in peer interactions

as a students' perception of self. Heather reported with delight that her White roommate described her to others as a "Spanish me." At the first interview, the pair seemed inseparable. When her roommate began spending all of her time with a new boyfriend, Heather began avoiding her room. Through Marcie, a pre-college friend and study participant, Heather met and began spending time on Marcie's floor, Bigwind B. Heather's final peer list included many residents from Bigwind B.

Campbell Hall Case A Participant Summary. These participants painted a picture of a floor composed of two fairly distinct first year groups comfortably coexisting. A third, less organized set of students described as "the upper class students" were friendly, but did not socialize or study frequently with new residents. The groups appeared to differ by race and ethnic composition, but participants insisted that membership in the two groups was determined more by interests than race; some interests simply tended to be more prevalent in students with similar backgrounds. They pointed out that there were Black, Indian and Asian residents in the mostly White computer oriented group, just as there were some White residents in the academically focused group containing more Black, Asian and Indian residents. Words used to describe the floor were friendly, social and fun along with words that indicated an academically focused climate including studious, smart, studiers, and academically motivating. Other descriptions included diverse, comfortable, welcoming and "easy to get along with everyone." Patrick added that the floor is not composed of partiers (and sounded a bit disappointed by the fact).

This floor had two Resident Assistants (RAs) during the course of this study. The first RA, Seth, an Indian male, graduated in December. Brad, a White male, took over the

RA role in January. Seth described his residents as a "happy, lively, studious and anxious

group." He had "no problems like the RA upstairs" because "after 10 p.m. people are

quiet" and "they respect each other." Seth reported that students of all races mix on his

floor; diverse residents studied and ate together. Seth saw no one on the floor with

alcohol or drugs, so he assumed most of them don't party a lot. When Brad, the spring

semester RA moved onto the floor he noticed immediately that there were two groups on

the floor, clearly a social crowd and a much less social group. His residents were

friendly, more diverse and more academically disciplined than any floor he's seen. Brad

observed "no maliciousness" on this floor. The group he observed "just hanging around

the most" was a predominantly White group with a few Asian and Black residents of

"computer game guys." Most of the interview participants from Campbell A were

attached to the more academically focused and racially diverse group. Patrick was the

only White participant on a floor that, though diverse, is still predominantly White.

Patrick's participation allowed insights into the mostly White "computer guys" and the

women they socialize with, but I accepted findings related to this group with less

confidence. The observations of staff provided greater confidence that findings related to

Campbell A are credible. A group of racially mixed women were seen frequently around

Alison's suite.

A note about staff data. Both RA and CD interview data was used to confirm or

disconfirm the primary data collected from resident participants. RA data was useful and

with only one exception (on Bigwind B not Campbell A), but was so consistent with

resident data, it offered little that need to be repeated. Therefore, I chose to report and

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focus on the student data mentioning RA data only as a tool for confirming student data. While I anticipated gathering different perspectives from students and CDs this did not happen either. In fact, the Community Directors knew very little about the specific interactions and had difficulty answering many of the floor related questions I asked. For example, the CD of Campbell Hall confirmed that Campbell A's residents had no judicial reports and only one minor roommate intervention, but stated he knew little of the specific residents or the nature of their interactions. The absence of staff interview data is reflective of this fact.

Bigwind Hall Case B

Like Campbell, residents take a central set of stairs to approach their floor and to enter Bigwind Hall Case B. Unlike Campbell, there is no large floor lounge at the entry. Instead, the large entry study is replaced by two smaller study rooms halfway down each section of the floor (see Figure 4 on p. 140). The first study lounge, located just past the first suite, became the central hangout for the dominant or core interaction group on the floor. Most lounge use seemed to be for games or just hanging out rather than study - consistent with participant's descriptions of the floor as highly social. Because the hallway wall of the lounge is glass, the activity and people in the lounge are easily visible to anyone walking by. Unlike Campbell A, there was only one large, social group evident on Bigwind B. Throughout the study, participants described this group as the dominant friends group, the core group and simply "the floor." A smaller group of lacrosse players rarely interacted with others on the floor. No other interaction group was larger than the members of a single room or suite on Bigwind B.

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Table 5
Participant Background Information Bigwind Hall Case B

Name	Sex	Race	Ethnicity*	High School Type*	Religion*	Major/ Area of Interest	Background Important to Participant*	Inter-view
Mike, RA (Hoff)	M	White	Polish, a little	Private Catholic White	Catholic	English		1, 2, 3
Holly	F	White	Italian	Public White	Catholic	Sociology & Psychology	From White rural area not very open to diversity	1/2, 3
Maddie	F	Asian	Chinese (also culturally Japanese)	Public White	None	Undecided	Born in China; lived in Japan for elementary years & U.S. in middle school years	1, 2, 3
Marcie	F	Black	Haitian American	Public Diverse	Roman Catholic	Biology & Psychology	First generation born in U.S.	1, 2, 3
Michelle	F	Black	African American (plus Cherokee, Irish & Greek)	Public Diverse	None	Biology Pre-vet	High school/current boyfriend is White	1, 2, 3
Rachel	F	Black	Ethiopian American	Public Black	Ethiopian Orthodox	Biology Pre-Med	First U.S born generation; High school program mostly White & Asian	1
Sean	M	White	American (No distinction)	Public White	Agnostic	Chemical Engineering	From Republican, White suburbs	1, 2, 3
Jargal	M	Asian	Mongolian	Public Diverse	Buddhist	Economics	Moved to US as toddler	1, 2/3
Nick	M	White	German American (German, Scottish, Irish)	Private Catholic White/ Black	Christian Catholic	Political Science	Sometimes mistaken for Spanish	1, 2/3
Paul	M	White	None specified	Private Christian White	Christian Protestant	Philosophy & Physics	In the Honors College; not assigned to Honors floor	½

* Ethnicity, high school type, religion and other background information important to the participant are all self reported data and described here as reported by the participant.

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Lacrosse Boys. As you enter the floor, the first two suites on the left side of the hall house the "lacrosse boys" as Michelle, a resident who lives in a suite just beyond theirs, labeled them. The lacrosse boys, are first year recruits for the men's division I lacrosse team, who requested to live together. No member of the lacrosse team participated in the study. Students on the floor referred to the lacrosse boys as White although at least one member of the group was Black. Perhaps, this is because, as participants indicated, lacrosse is a White thing. The Black player was the only member of the lacrosse group specifically named by interview participants because he annoyed both White and Black members of the floor by acting so White. The lacrosse boys stayed separate from the interactions on the floor until mid-year. A friendly "What's up?' or a request for quiet provided the most frequent social overlap described during early interviews. According to the Community Director, practice, study hours, volunteer requirements and classes made the student athletes scarce on the floor. Participants speculated that the lacrosse player's pre-existing bonds made it unnecessary for them to reach out to the floor. Differing values and drinking habits were also cited as possible reasons for the alienation. No one in the participant group except Paul saw the separation as particularly problematic. In fact one resident, thought the presence of the lacrosse group made earlier interaction on the floor easier because the lacrosse guys gave the other residents something to talk about.

Nick. Across the hall from the lacrosse boys, the first suite on the other side of the floor housed Nick, an interview participant, and his suitemates. According to Nick, he and his White roommate shared their suite with a White male and a Chinese-American

male in the adjoining room. Nick played sports in high school and worked in the

university's gym as did his White suitemate, Gary (not a study participant). Nick came to

college not knowing what he wanted to do, but was considering "becoming a Poli-Sci

major now" so he can join the FBI. Nick was proud that he voted and considered himself

a moderate Republican. He was also proud of his Eagle Scout status, an identity he

shared with suitemate and new good friend, Gary. His Chinese-American suitemate

appeared on participants' interaction lists for the floor as well. Nick, a male of German,

Irish and Scottish descent, attended a small, private Catholic high school for boys.

Located in Prince George's County, Nick described his high school as a mix of White

and Black students reflecting the composition of the surrounding community. He enjoyed

"talking trash" with Tasha, one of the Black women on the hall, and expressed concern

that most of the Black kids on his floor did not act Black like the students at his high

school – "why do you want everyone to be the same?" Nick considered himself outgoing

and outspoken, the latter a trait that others on his floor tolerated though did not always

appreciate. Nick reported with apparent satisfaction that people sometimes mistake him

for Spanish because he speaks the language fluently. The study lounge separated his suite

from a suite of women housing Tasha and Anne (neither were study participants), a

woman Nick expressed amorous interest in. This was the only reported relationship that

crossed the women's unspoken boundary of "friends only" in the core group. Anne may

or may not have returned this interest during the fall, but residents reported no

relationship between the two as the spring semester began.

Michelle, Maddie and the African Girls. Michelle and Maddie, both participants, lived across the hall from Tasha, Anne and their suitemates. Their suite was adjacent to the lacrosse boys, an assignment that annoyed Michelle, because the lacrosse boys were "loud" and disrupted her sleep, "something that makes [her] hate you for a really long time." Michelle, an African-American female from Montgomery County lived in Maryland her "whole life." Michelle came to UMBC with her high school boyfriend of three years, a White male living in another hall. Michelle was a pre-veterinary biology major with a dream to have her own "clinic or maybe work in a zoo somewhere." She liked to cook, draw and "create stuff." Michelle described her high school as diverse though she "would not necessarily say it was equal in like an equal amount of White people and equal amount of Black people, but there was definitely enough representation" meaning that there "wasn't just like one Black person and one Asian person." Michelle's high school had an international exchange program with schools in Belgium and Spain. She loved accents and expressed excitement at having a roommate from Africa. During later interviews, her excitement was tempered by the reality of living with differing cultural habits. One of Michelle's other suitemates, also African, formed a bond with a third woman in Anne and Tasha's suite, creating a friendship group referred to by some participants as the "African girls."

Michelle's final suitemate was Maddie, an Americanized version of her Chinese name Mei Di. Maddie was born in China, but moved to Japan at elementary school age where she attended school until moving to the United States at late elementary early middle school age. Maddie was "not fully Chinese culturally, a little Japanese mixed in

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maybe." In the U.S. she lived in the Midwest, the south and Washington, D.C. Uncomfortable with the violence and drugs in her D.C. high school, Maddie's mother sent her back to the mid-west to live with a friend for her last two years of high school. Maddie recalled that half of the students in this suburban Washington school "were African Americans and then some White and some Asian. I remember there were a lot of stupid people. More Indian people than I've ever seen in my life." The high school she graduated from was mostly White. Her mother was raised in China as was her father. Though her family was now financially well-off, when Maddie was younger, she recalls that "her father had to work late at night at a ramen noodle stand." Even though very young when she left China, she remembered being taught in school a kind of "brainwashing" that China was the best country and that she should always be loyal no matter where she goes in the world. Her high school friends were often White and occasionally Asian. She saw her floor as more racially diverse than recent environments she's been in and, unlike the cliques in high school, people on her floor are "pretty open to anybody else." She intended to transfer to another school with a business major in her sophomore year. By December, Maddie spent little time on the floor preferring to study and socialize with Asian commuting students.

 Sean. The suite next to Maddie's room housed study participant, Sean. Sean lived in Carroll County, a rural area of Maryland, his entire life. Sean described himself as a White American, agnostic in his religious beliefs. Like Marcie, he told me his parents are not divorced. Sean was majoring in Chemical Engineering. He is athletic and, like Nick and Gary, is an Eagle Scout. Sean attended a small public, high school of 1,200 people

where "sports were pretty big." His high school prepared him well academically. He described his high school as "very predominantly White, you know, like 95%." For Sean, "it was a big shock to be with Black people and Asian people." As a conservative Republican, he was also surprised by the liberal attitudes at UMBC. Sean found it difficult to leave his room during the first days at UMBC until family and friends from home encouraged him to look beyond surface appearances. Before arriving on campus, Sean guessed that his roommate might be Indian based on his last name. Sean interacted little with his roommate due both to initial discomfort and his roommate's frequent absence from the room. Through interactions with outgoing Marcie, who lived just around the corner, Sean became involved in the core interactions on the floor. Despite his initial discomfort with the diversity of the floor, Marcie, a Haitian-American woman became one of his closest friends and remained one of few names on his final interaction list. Sean would later regret the shaky start to his roommate relationship.

Marcie and roommates, core connections. In the center of the floor, where the hallway bends and widens just past Sean's room and next to the Resident Assistant's room, three study participants – Marcie, Rachel and Holly – shared a suite with a fourth roommate, Brittany. Marcie appeared on every participant's peer interaction list and was described as "bubbly" and "outgoing." She played a central role in diverse peer interactions, pulling Sean out of his room and knocking on doors. Born in New York, Marcie spent her high school years in a diverse suburb of D.C. She is the first person in her Haitian family to be born in the United States. Marcie, a biology major, aspired to be a doctor specializing in obstetrics and gynecology. She is Catholic and like Sean her

parents are not divorced. Her favorite color is pink and she loved her high school in "one of the most diverse towns in an already very diverse county. If you think of any ethnicity, any race, any orientation, anything, it would have been represented at my high school."

Before attending her public high school in Maryland, Marcie attended a private Catholic girls school in New York where the "Italian Catholics, Irish Catholics and Spanish Catholics" who composed the school were "exactly the same." She got used to being the only Haitian and feeling like "the odd-one-out." Marcie was drawn to the diversity at UMBC. Marcie was outgoing, so it was surprising that she found it hard to leave her room on the first day of school. Her Haitian parents seemed strict compared to parents of other residents, so she struggled with feeling different from her peers on the floor. Marcie was the central connecting figure on the floor and her name appeared on multiple peer interaction lists. Her roommate, Rachel, shared her "first generation" experience. Her Catholic suitemates, Holly and Brittany, shared religion.

Marcie's roommate, Rachel participated only in the first interview. She needed prompting throughout her interview because she "had to admit it is hard to talk about myself." Transcripts of her interview were characterized by short responses and punctuated by long pauses. I wondered if her failure to respond to later interview requests was related to discomfort. From her floor mates, I know she continued to live on the floor and spent more time with them rather than less as the year went on. Rachel majored in biology and wanted to be a doctor because there are "some doctors, some pharmacists, and many in medical fields" in her family. Rachel's parents came to the United States from Ethiopia. Like Marcie, Rachel was the first in her family to be born in the U.S.

While others on the floor saw her as African American, she described herself as Ethiopian-American. She listed her religion as Ethiopian Orthodox. Rachel liked to read and spend time with her brothers. She attended two different public high schools, both in Prince Georges (PG) County. Like Maddie's parents, Rachel's parents were concerned with the violence that happened occasionally in her first high school. As a result, Rachel transferred to another high school in the same county that "was supposed to be, well is, how do I put this, it's supposed to be the, one of the smarter quote, unquote, schools in PG County." Like the students on her floor in Bigwind B, "most of the students [in her high school] like to learn." Both high schools were "mainly Black people, African Americans." However, the special science program Rachel participated in "was mainly Caucasian and Asian." Bigwind B's racial composition was different from her high school, but similar to her special high school science program.

At our first interview, Marcie's and Rachel's suitemate Holly was not yet 18. Because she was the only White female participating in this study, I waited until she turned 18 and then included her in the study by gathering first and second interview data simultaneously (indicated in tables as 1/2). Unlike most other participants, Holly established relationships with others at UMBC through Facebook before arriving on campus. Most of these connections were with students living on other floors and she continued these relationships after she arrived on campus. She spent time away from the floor with these friends "partying" more frequently than others in the core interaction group. Holly came "from a strict Italian Catholic family." Holly grew up in a rural area in a "house surrounded by farms in the middle of nowhere." She played soccer and ran track

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in a high school "where there were never any other ethnicities besides White or Caucasian." Holly said, "Compared to a lot of other high schools in our county, we were like the least diverse." On move-in day she was very "aware of everyone because I never had been in that environment." She reported that because some members of her family were not open to racial diversity, she purposefully sought to become more open. She planned to major in sociology and described herself as "fairly motivated," "pretty well rounded," and "excited to learn about everybody else." Holly's White roommate, Brittany, also from a predominantly White rural area, seemed like the perfect match for Holly. Yet by the end of the semester, Brittany had closer relationships with her two Black suitemates, Marcie and Rachel than with Holly. Holly continued to spend time off the floor with her more athletic friends and was surprised when she realized that, other than her suitemates, her close friends were all White.

Jargal and Paul, the end-of-the-hall suite. At the end of the hall there was a single room occupied by an upper class student, a suite occupied by sophomores, a second study lounge, and 3 suites occupied by first year students. The presence of a back fire stair allowed residents to enter this end of the hall without traveling through the rest of the hall. Few of the residents at this end of the hall were seen regularly by other residents of the floor and fewer interacted with the core group. One of the last suites at this end of the hall housed Jargal, Paul (both participants), and their suitemates. Jargal has lived in the United States since he was a toddler. He listed his religion as Buddhist. When Maddie assumed him to be Korean, Jargal was distressed. He was amused to find out she was Chinese since he assumed her to be Korean in turn. While neither one said

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so, I got the impression that being mistaken for Korean was not a positive attribution. His father travels a lot, so Jargal lives with his Mom. He did not get into the school of his choice, but he still hoped to transfer there next year. His high school was located in a previously rural area that has rapidly transitioned to a far suburb of Baltimore and D.C.. The school was very large and not very diverse. There "wasn't really anybody that was unique culturally." When pushed to describe what that meant, he said, "It was just like a lot of rich White kids there. A lot of them drove BMWs and Lexus'. Then we had of course the middle class." There were also "a lot of Indians," but there were not many Asians, "maybe 1%." Jargal's high school experience was quite different than his middle school experience where he attended an international school with students from all over the world. Jargal joined the model United Nations club at his high school in Frederick and found it helpful in replacing the experience he had at his more culturally, diverse middle school. Jargal was majoring in Economics, but struggled with the math courses as he also did in high school. Both in high school and on Bigwind B, an Asian student who was not good in Math drew the attention of his peers.

Paul, Jargal's suitemate, was a member of the Honors College and spent more time in Campbell Hall on the Honors floor than on Bigwind B. He attempted to connect with others on the floor to avoid being seen as anti-social. He reported being content with the infrequent, but comfortable interaction he had with the core interaction group on the floor. Paul was pursuing a double major in philosophy and physics. Paul is a a Presidential Scholar. Paul was home schooled until he began attending a private, Protestant Christian Academy in seventh grade in Howard County. He graduated with a

class of 90 students composed mainly of White students and "one Chinese guy and probably around 20 Koreans, [..] and maybe around 3 Black people per grade." He chose to attend UMBC without any awareness of the racial diversity. After looking at hundreds of college brochures he assumed that "everybody says they're diverse. It's probably something they put on there and in reality they're probably just normal." Never-the-less, he enjoyed getting to meet different people and found it interesting to hear the pride people expressed about their cultures. His own suite was extremely diverse housing Paul (a protestant White male), Jargal (a Mongolian Buddhist) as well as a Jewish atheist and an international student from Trinidad. Although he participated in only one interview, his astute and uninvolved observations were helpful in mapping interaction patterns.

Bigwind Hall Case B Participant Summary. While there were many similarities between the residents of Campbell and Bigwind, both the structure of interaction groups and the descriptions of the floor differed in notable ways. While Campbell A had two large, dominant groups, Bigwind B had only one dominant interaction group. This group called alternately the core group, the dominant friends group and simply "the floor" by interview participants was seen as the central and defining group by those both inside of it and outside of it. While there were smaller interaction groups (such as the African girls, the men at the end of the hall and the rarely present lacrosse boys), the core group formed the central hub for most diverse peer interactions and activity. Those outside of the group occasionally participated in their interactions and described them as friendly and inclusive. The core group's central members consistently included three White-American men, three Black-American women of differing ethnic backgrounds (Haitian-American,

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African-American woman and Ethiopian-American), a bi-racial Malaysian-White American woman and a White-American woman of unknown ethnic origin. On a regular basis other members of the floor came in and out of the group including a Mongolian male, a Trinidadian male, an Indian-American male, a White-American male, an Indian-American female, a Greek female, a White (Italian-American) female and a Chinese-American male. The core group coexisted comfortably with the African girls and, by spring, interactions were friendlier though still not frequent with the lacrosse team.

Both insiders and outsiders used similar words to describe the group. Like Campbell A, Bigwind B is frequently described as fun and friendly. Unlike Campbell A, the residents of Bigwind B described themselves as smart, but did not describe themselves as studious. Bigwind residents instead used words like social, talkative, outgoing, loud, active and dramatic to describe their community. Most frequent and notable was the use of the word family to describe Bigwind B. The floor was described as close knit, a brotherhood, like brothers and sisters, a home base, and full of people you can depend on. Even students who spent less time on the floor or as part of the core group indicated that the floor provided a safe home base where they could depend on people for support. Paul, observing these behaviors, described the floor as clingy. On a floor this tight, it remained puzzling that there were still people in three full suites that *no one ever saw* and remained unnamed throughout the study. All of the unseen residents lived at the end of the hall, yet the room at the very end of the hall developed connections to the core group despite its location. On Campbell most of the unnamed were upper class students. On Bigwind two full suites of freshmen remained anonymous.

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The Resident Assistant, Mike Hoffman, a.k.a Hoff, confirmed participants' observations and reports. Hoff indicated that the core group not only connected on their floor, many were actively involved in hall council. Hoff believed the close patterns of diverse peer interaction described by participants were as genuine and close as the residents reported them to be. Hoff had first hand knowledge of many of the stories and tales told by interview participants. Their versions never differed. Hoff encouraged Maddie to seek friends off the floor when she talked with him about feeling a lack of fit with the core group. Even though he reported trying to pull the unseen residents on the back wing out of their rooms, he had little success. He assumed that the students were shy or simply did not want to get to know others. It was not until mid year that Hoff himself began to connect with the lacrosse players. His descriptions of residents allowed me to identify one additional resident from the unseen suites, a male Hoff said the women purposefully avoided.

The Community Director confirmed the participant data from Bigwind B. The only judicial actions on the floor were two minor alcohol violations with no repeat offenses reported. Different from Campbell Hall where the CD knew few residents of Campbell A, the CD of Bigwind knew many of the residents living on Case B through their active involvement in hall activities. The CD observed very diverse groups of residents interacting on a regular basis and was aware of the relationship between Nick and Anne through other residents of the floor. Conversations with the RA and CD left the missing residents still unexplained, but validated the data as reported by participants.

Research Question One:

How do students who live in compositionally diverse residence communities describe

their interactions with other members of the community?

While no uniform pattern of peer interaction existed for all students, there was a sequential nature to many of the interactions between peers in both cases. Students anticipated interactions with roommates and suitemates prior to their arrival. Once on campus, fairly consistent patterns of interaction labeled during NVIVO coding as *latching on, looking in and hanging out* existed in both communities during the first month of classes. After the first month, patterns of interaction on both floors changed, but timing and patterns differed for individual participants. Never-the-less, data from second and third interviews suggested that many students began *branching out* through classes, clubs and friendship networks. As a result some students began consciously avoiding their floors while others just spent less time as they became busy with activities. An overview of this sequence is presented before describing the findings related to the mechanisms originally prompting the first research question. The second part of this section describes three categories of interactions emerging from participants' descriptions of their diverse peer interactions. These descriptions might also be called strategies for interacting with diverse peers and included: 1) participating in neutral activities, 2) finding similarities, and 3) joking.

Sequential Process

Preparing. Three to four weeks prior to move-in, move-in information materials arrived at residents' homes. This information contained building, room assignment and e-

mail addresses for roommates and suitemates. Armed only with this basic information, students arrived on campus for resident move-in day full of excitement, anxiety and in, some cases, fear. Residents arrived at Campbell and Bigwind Halls from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds and hailed from high schools with populations ranging from racially homogenous to highly diverse. Campbell's Meyerhoff Scholars and Bigwind's lacrosse players were already acquainted with one another, but most students arrived knowing no one else on the floor. Before arriving, a few participants had checked out roommates on Facebook or MySpace. Others had attempted contact via e-mail. Using the names she found in her move-in information, Sarah contacted her suitemates through Facebook. Sarah found this information to be a "big help." When asked if she found out anything about her suitemates that either concerned or comforted her during the Facebook exchange, she responded:

> Well I know, like my suitemates, or our group, like my roommate and
> our suitemates, are very diverse. Like I'm Indian, one of my suitemates
> is Indian, my roommate is African American, and my other suitemate is
> Caucasian. So um, I guess getting to know that early on helped in a way.

Sarah "didn't mind what kind of ethnicity" her suitemates were, but it helped to know "what to expect." For reasons she could not fully explain, knowing her suitemates ethnicities in advance helped her to prepare for the face-to-face meeting. For Holly, meeting people on Facebook made her first day "a breeze" because she was less nervous about meeting people. Still most students reported making minimal effort to contact roommates using Facebook prior to arrival or having little success in establishing

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relationships online. Sean exchanged one e-mail and was disappointed when his roommate did not respond. Paul prided himself on not having a Facebook site. Alison could locate only one of her roommates on line. Therefore, most participants in this case study arrived anxious to meet roommates and suitemates they new little about.

Latching on. Anxious or excited and knowing few people in their community, the new residents of Campbell and Bigwind halls began the process of meeting the members of their diverse communities. While the process of initiating interaction varied, Rachel concisely captured the most common pattern of early interaction between first year residents in both cases. For the first three to four weeks of the semester residents' interactions centered first around roommates then on other residents of the floor.

> Number one, our building is mostly freshmen, so we don't really have friends here. It made it easier for us. Pretty much the scene, it went like this. Everybody became acquainted with their roommates, knew everything about them the first few days, and then we kind of mingled. We met our suite mates and did that. And then after a few days, while we were going out for the welcome week, and doing little activities there, we started making friendships with, for example, if the RA took us to dinner, whoever we would be sitting next to. We'd be like "Hi, my name is so-and-so, like what's your name, what kind of stuff do you do?" It was more or less people wanted friends so they got it.

New residents met roommates and suitemates and then clung to these peers as they wandered the floor meeting others. Outgoing residents dragged shy residents out of

rooms and soon residents were hanging out in the floor lounge. As residents gravitated to familiar faces from their residence communities at events rather than approach others they did not know, floor interaction continued during Welcome Week. For the first months of class, interaction depended heavily on proximity and shared space: residents who shared a room, a bathroom or just a seat near each other during Welcome Week were most likely to interact.

Anxious for friends, in these emotionally charged first year environments, shared space facilitated interaction during the first two to three weeks of school regardless of race. As Rachel pointed out in the quote above, sharing a room or suite provided an immediate (although sometimes temporary) connection even if the occupants had little else in common. Italian-American found herself sharing her suite with two Black women. Holly explained how a shared bathroom influenced her connection with racially different roommates:

> Because you're with the person so much and you share like the same
>
> living space and what not and even if you're not very good friends you
>
> share like a respect and it's like a closeness in some ways because you
>
> share a living space with them, so, regardless, like I have a closeness
>
> with my suitemates cause we share the bathroom.

Despite her parents concerns and her own surprise that her roommate was from Africa, Maddie still focused her peer interactions inside her suite during the first few weeks of class:

> Oh, well the first person I got to know was my roommate, of course,

and my suitemate. [..] She's an international student from Uganda. So that was another surprising thing. My parents were worried at first when they dropped me off because they come from a very racially exclusive background where they're sort of, I think they really wanted me to have an Asian roommate, but I told them my roommate and I were getting along very well and she was a very nice person so now they're pretty comfortable. I didn't feel any discomfort at all.

Maddie was not the only resident surprised by a roommate's race or ethnicity. While some students said it did not make a difference, there was no participant in the study that did not mention noticing the race or ethnicity of roommates and suitemates when race or ethnicity differed from their own. Jargal described why he spent time getting to know Tyrone, his "first Black roommate" rather than spending time with others on the floor:

Just because I was still getting used to the idea of getting to know my suitemates and stuff. Tyrone and I did go to a couple of things like the hypnotist and all that. Other than that we didn't really go out too much. We got to know each other and then our suitemates first.

As residents began to venture off the floor either out of necessity – to eat – or to attend Welcome Week events, roommates and suitemates became convenient partners regardless of race. Fearful of venturing out independently or simply not wanting to appear alone, freshmen latched onto roommates and suitemates. The four racially diverse women in Sarah's suite "all kind of dragged each other. You know, if we wanted to go eat and didn't want to go by ourselves." Even though Lucas had been on campus

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previously as part of the Meyerhoff summer bridge program, when he had to do new things he looked to his roommate for company because "We were both going to different things that we hadn't gone to for the first time." Marcie also went everywhere with her roommate. Marcie described her early relationship with Rachel.

> Especially when I'm in a new place, it's very hard for me to go do something alone, so I just dragged my roommate wherever I wanted to go. I'd walk to the park and I'd just drag her, come with me there, come with me to this, because I was too scared to go by myself. In that sense, like we just were always together in the beginning.

Many roommates and suitemates appeared inseparable for the first few days.

Students without roommates did not have built in support when attending Welcome Week activities or reaching out to others on the floor. Unless they wanted to sit alone in their rooms, these students had to seek interaction on the floor. Sometimes suitemates filled the gap. Unfortunately, Shyam found himself not only with out a roommate, but (placed in a self contained double room with no connecting suite) without suitemates.

> Well, that first day was kind of odd for me 'cause my roommate wasn't there. [..] So that was kind of the reason I got to bond with other people 'cause they realized that I didn't have a roommate yet. And that sparked up the conversation and after that there were the orientation activities. So, I clung on to them for a while, cause everybody was with their roommates.

Once connected, Shyam "clung" or latched onto to his new connections as his surrogate roommates. When his new roommate finally arrived two or three days into the semester, Shyam introduced him to others on the floor. Similarly, Michelle connected to suitemates and floor mates in the absence of a roommate and then felt obligated to help her roommate to connect when she moved in.

> I didn't have a roommate, so I was just on my own and I had to go out and meet people on my own. I couldn't go to my roommate and say, "Oh, well, I don't know who this person is. I saw you hanging out with them. Could you introduce me to them?" I didn't have that. I just had to go on my own. But when my roommate did come, I felt obligated to take her around and introduce her to the people on the floor that I had already met.

Sean did not connect with his roommate, nor was his roommate around much during the first days of Welcome Week. Like Maddie, Sean was surprised to find himself living with an ethnically different roommate, but unlike Maddie, the difference was not comfortable.

> It was a really big shock to me since I don't think I'd ever met another Indian person in my life. Then to be living with one you know for the whole year that was a big shock to me. [..] We don't have a whole lot in common. We're very different people. We're very separate which I don't like, but I really had a hard time finding a connection between us. I don't think it has so much to do with his ethnicity, but I think that it

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probably played a part. I probably came in with a little pre-judged view

knowing that I had an Indian roommate.

Sean reported that his roommate was not around much. He was quieter than Sean and
when he was in the room kept the door closed, a social taboo in the early weeks in
Bigwind Hall. Sean continued:

I mean it hindered me in the beginning in that I was nervous. I'd go to

the dining hall by myself. I didn't really know anybody, but then I

think that what it did was let me open up to other people a little easier.

Okay, I don't have a roommate to go hang out with. I need to find

somebody else. So, while it was kind of a nuisance in the beginning it

was a good thing overall, or not a good thing, but it helped me branch

out to people quicker.

Sean at first stayed in his room, too anxious to reach out to his diverse floor mates, but
eventually began to connect with others on the floor. While most residents interacted first
with roommates and suitemates, those students without these connections struggled
during the first days of school, but got a head start on meeting others on the floor. Sean
concurred that most residents focused on roommate and suitemate relationships before
branching out to others on and off of the floor. But, for Sean, Shyam, and Michelle, all
residents without roommate relationships during the first days, branching out was forced
earlier and accomplished without the comfort of an automatic escort for social functions.
Perhaps sensing the discomfort of those lacking roommate support, others on these floors
seemed to reach out to those without roommates during the early days.

Looking in and hanging out. Once over the initial surprise and, in some cases, discomfort of having a roommate or suitemate with a race different from their own, diverse roommate experiences helped residents to interact more comfortably with other members of their diverse communities. During this early time period, residents spent a lot of time on their floors just walking up and down the hall, meeting each other and then hanging out together in hallways and study lounges. Sarah described her experience:

> The first new people that I met on my floor were my suitemates. One is
> Indian and one is Caucasian. [..] Other than that a lot of us like I said
> left our doors open early on so it was always very inviting and always
> felt like you could go to another room and just meet someone
> randomly.

During the first week of the semester residents of Campbell and Bigwind began "feeling the waters" on their hallways in order to find common interests and friends. Paul explained the activity during the first week:

> So there was a lot of going around, trying to figure out, you know, who
> would you probably be friends with and who you were interested in as
> a person. Who you have, I guess, this commonality with - and I'm not
> saying just culturally - but who I guess just feeling the waters.

RAs in both communities actively encouraged residents to have – as Jargal described it – an open door policy. Open doors allowed students to walk by a room and observe the people and activity taking place inside the room. Open doors not only signaled a willingness to interact, but provided residents with the information necessary to initiate

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conversation. By looking into rooms as he walked by, Jargal could ask questions or connect to commonly shared activities.

> I'll walk by certain hallways and if they have their door open, they'll be like, Joe, he's either playing some kind of new video game or he's watching TV. I'll stop by in his room, ask him what he's watching, what he's playing? Then we get to talk about video games.

Walking by and looking in was described by multiple participants as the primary method of becoming acquainted with others on the floor. As Heather pointed out, the open door policy works to meet other residents because:

> if you don't know the person you always look in, and you can at least say hi to them. [..] We would know each other from our doors being open, even it we did not necessarily hang out all the time. It was just, "Oh, I know that person from my floor," and when you see them out on campus, you're like, "Hey," even if you don't know them too well. But the doors really did help because that's how you get to see everyone's space.

Open doors allowed Heather to see the people she lived with on Campbell A. Perhaps, most importantly, looking in provided not only an open invitation, but observations of the room and the activity taking place in the room. These observations provided conversation starters about shared and dissimilar interests. Paul and Maddie had tea together after Maddie saw a teapot in Paul's room. Paul remembered the discovery. "… She stopped by my room and noticed that I had the teapot. I'm just kind of proud of it and then she's like,

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'Well I have real tea leaves.'" An open door allowed others to hear Sarah's music.

> Sometimes I play Indian music and there's even an African American
> student who lives right across from me who is very much into Indian
> music, so they hear - anyone on our floor is able to hear the music
> sometimes during the day – and they'll ask, you know, oh what is this?

After looking in, residents started conversations based on their observations, asked questions about items they saw, and discovered shared interests. Residents not only discovered similarities, but became curious about their differences through this process.

Walking around and looking in was augmented by floor lunches and dinners as well as Welcome Week orientation activities and social events on and off the floor. Every participant except those arriving after move-in day, indicated that the first floor meeting held during Welcome Week provided critical introductions to the diverse residents on the floor. Orientation events provided the opportunity to get to know others on the floor simply by engaging in conversation with those sitting nearest to you at events. The floor meeting and orientation events broke the ice and, thus, facilitated the more informal milling which occurred on the floor. Lucas described how the early interactions with a few floor mates extended to the rest of Campbell A as the first week of class continued:

> There were actually activities that our RA put together and I think
> UMBC put together, like orientation week. [..] People started talking to
> each other and we had different games and different things like that. At
> first there was just that you knew the person's name because like
> speaking we'd get to know their names. But then, after you start

talking to different people, you get to know them better and become
friends. First with a small group of people on our floor, but then after
the week went on, I'd walk around and people had their doors open and
you just talked to them.

Over on Bigwind B, Maddie described a similar process for meeting her diverse peers
through a combination of formal Welcome Week activity and informal hanging out.

We went to dinner together as a group and we tried to go to PlayFair
and also did events together. I think for the most part worked very well.
There's also credit to the RA because he encouraged us to spend time
together hanging out until the late hours of night as long as we kept
quiet.

Because of their supporting role in fostering diverse peer interactions, the first floor
meetings and orientation events are described in greater detail in the second section of
this chapter. Orientation is mentioned here simply to point out that these activities
encouraged the informal interaction of walking by, looking in and hanging out.

Davit indicated that "it was a bunch of small things rather than .. a big event" that
brought everyone together on Campbell A. The informal interactions, the simple day-to-
day floor activity was most essential to developing peer interactions in the
compositionally diverse cases examined in this study. By the end of the first week, as
Maddie hinted in her quote above, walking around and looking in led to hanging out in
rooms and floor lounges. After Marcie started leaving her door open "people strolled in
and we got to talking and then we started hanging out in our common room." Heather

said, "we'll see each other in the halls and a lot of times a whole bunch of like people from my floor will be in the study lounge studying" and Sarah noted that "we do spend a lot of time in the study lounge whether like a lot of times it's not necessarily strictly studying, but we do just sit around and talk and you know." By the end of the first month, social groups had been established in both communities. As residents checked each other out through open doors and sorted themselves based on shared interests and personalities, anyone could say hello or drop into someone's room if the door was open during the first three to four weeks of the semester. By the end of September, anxieties fell, social groups were established and doors began to close. Marcie summarized the change that took place on Bigwind B:

> I think by the first month it was pretty much established just because it would be the same people coming in and out. The same people we eat dinner with, or be in someone's room, or hang out with, or we'd invite to go someplace, and whatever we were doing, it was always together, so it became in a sense understood, this is the group.

Early peer interaction between both diverse and similar peers began with roommates and suitemates then, through informal interactions on the floor, led to the formation of social groups within the floor. On Campbell A, two distinct groups (with some overlapping or bridging membership) formed. On Bigwind B, one dominant friendship group formed. During the early weeks, despite the initial anxiety, diverse peers interacted with those located in close proximity before branching out to others through networks, classes and co-curricular club activities.

Branching out. Three to four weeks into the semester, doors began to close, students began to spend more time focused on classes or study and residents began to spend less time hanging out on their floors. Maddie made a conscious choice to find friends outside of the floor. For most participants, the changes simply evolved as they meet new peers in classes, through clubs or the social networks of friends. After getting into study and joining several clubs and organizations, Lucas' comments were typical.

> There are people who I'm not as close friends as I was at the beginning
> of the year, and who I don't talk to as much anymore. But I still know
> them and it's not because of me not liking them or anything. It's just
> we grew apart because we don't really talk to each other that much. We
> have different classes and are just more busy.

By late November the social groups formed at the beginning of the semester had, as Michelle said, "started to fall apart." By February, participants began to see their floor and floor mates as a comfortable home base even if no longer the center of social life.

Paul initially thought Maddie would be one of the people on the floor he connected with. In our interview he said, "I haven't seen her recently. I think she has found probably other people." After initially spending time with Bigwind's core group, Maddie found that many of the residents did not share her values for constant study and academic endeavor – values she felt stemmed from her Chinese background. While she continued to think the residents on her floor were fun, friendly and open, she simply did not feel close to them. As she saw them getting closer, her RA encouraged her to look outside the floor for more comfortable connections. Through a friend's brother Maddie

was introduced to a group of Asian students who spent time on the second floor of the Commons building. She began to spend much of her time with this group.

> If I didn't feel close to someone by instinct, I felt there was no reason for me to stress myself over it [..] Some people might choose to work through it, but if you don't feel comfortable there are lots of people in the world and you're bound to find someone that you share commonalities with.

Maddie made a conscious choice to seek friends off the floor and used a pre-existing relationship to connect to other social networks on campus.

> Pre-existing friend networks also helped Heather connect to new peers when her roommate's new boyfriend and daytime sleeping habits kept Heather out of her room through much of the day. Heather (living on Campbell A) had been friends with Marcie (living on Bigwind B) in middle school. Heather provided details about how she'd branched out to develop friendships on Bigwind B through Marcie.

> We went to middle school together. You know how people make friends with the people on their floors, and that's basically the group they hang out? Well, through her, I've met her friends and she lives near friends who are in my Psych class. So we've been having lunch together for the past two weeks and they know me because I would hang out at Bigwind.

Heather began to socialize on Thursday nights with one of the residents on Bigwind who shared her social interest in dance clubs. Marcie's network facilitated other connections

as well. Holly also described how she met diverse peers through Marcie's connections.

> I had been [suitemates] with Marcie and we initially became really
> good friends and then I would have a connection with any friends that
> she made that she shared her background with that are similar. I feel for
> some people that probably helped the interaction between the different
> ethnicities.

Davit met people through networks as well. Initially he developed friends "geographically" but explained that "as you kind of branch out and you [meet] people through different connections, you start to spread out."

Club participation and classes were others ways of branching out and meeting peers. Lucas met some of his new friends through "through Meyerhoff and some of them I met through my classes and there is one person that I met through friends that I knew." Heather indicated that residents of Campbell had developed new interests or had "met different people this semester that they might not have known all that well last semester and now maybe they have class together with some of these people…" Patrick said, "I do spend a lot more time with people that I didn't really know at the beginning of the year, like the people from the Newman club."

Patrick started spending less time on the floor in December, but was "not exactly sure why [he was] staying away." Davit was puzzled by the changes in his behavior. "I find myself staying more in the library or the Commons with some of my friends just studying and talking. I'm not sure of the reason why, but I just feel more comfortable around different people when I'm outside of my dorm." Sarah was also more comfortable

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off of the floor. "I'm comfortable with it because my preference is to not be as social as I was before." As residents developed more relationships with people outside, participants from Campbell A indicated spending less time on the floor. Residents of Bigwind also spent less time on the floor, but were more likely, as with Heather, to invite new friends to Bigwind B. The group on Bigwind grew larger than smaller even while spending less time on the floor. Jargal indicated that he and several of the residents at the end of the hall also began spending more time with the core group toward the end of fall semester.

> Within the first week I knew my suitemates and my roommate pretty well, but then there was like, as the weeks went on, through my classes I branched out. But I didn't branch out to my floor until later in the semester. [..] I'd say maybe in the middle of the semester.

Having spent less time with the floor earlier in the semester, shared classes and study brought him back to the floor because "everyone who's here is more friendly than the other study groups I attended." For Jargal, branching out meant coming back to the floor.

As Sean examined the diverse peer relationships he'd developed earlier, he realized that some interactions were based on shared space rather than strong bonds.

> I'm still really close to Nick and Marcie and Brittany. That's about it. They're just people that were the strongest friends at the beginning. I would have been friends with them even if they didn't live on the floor. Some people on the floor I'm only with because they live on the floor.

The floor remained Sean's comfort zone despite changing relationships.

> You have your roommate and then you come for dinner, then you have

your suitemates and they come to dinner, and then you expand out to

the floor and then they're your comfort zone and then you find out

more kind of expand your comfort zone. [..] The floor is like my

comfort zone, but I want to go out and meet people you know, in my

classes and other places.

Though relationships changed on Bigwind B, for most participants in Case B, the

floor remained a comfortable base. Michelle expressed an often shared sentiment:

We still love each other, but I think we can handle not being together

all the time now and we realize that it's okay to not be together all the

time, because we live together, so nine times out of ten you're going

see that person that day, so you don't have to spend every second with

them.

Michelle attributed the change to "a combination of things, like more work, meeting new

people, people conflicting and not wanting to deal with the conflict." While more evident

in the data from Bigwind B, as residents from both floors started the spring semester and

adjusted to the changes, their diverse floors became home base even if just to connect

with roommates for a few moments before sleep. Different schedules and interests

separated residents during the day, but Michelle indicated "at the end of the day we all

still like will come back and like talk to each other and go to late night together or go eat

together." Patrick still has dinner with others on his floor "because what happens is they

normally just find me somehow."

The word home surfaced repeatedly in later interview data. Jargal liked "the fact

that you can come in and out of these rooms, talk to people about anything and [be] at home." Holly described the comfort of returning to a floor where she knew people:

> This is a new semester so I'm meeting new people in my classes and stuff, but I can go to class and go do my stuff in class, but then when I come back it's just this is like my home. Like I come back to like the same people that are in my floor.

Angered earlier by the changes on the floor, Nick still felt the sense of family many residents had described at the beginning of the study.

> The cool thing I know - if I ever need someone, they're always going to be there. It's kind of like your family. You don't want to hang out with them, but you know if you need something, you're family's always going to be there. So I don't always hang out with them, but I know one night we're going to hang out all together, just our whole group and its cool. I can notice the diversity now. At the beginning everyone kind of tested the waters of what they wanted to do, and then they didn't want to ruffle any feathers. But now I kind of found out who I want to be here at college. So, I'm going to start adapting that more into how I'm interacting with people.

I asked Nick if he agreed with this summary of what was going on with his floor. I reflected back what I heard from him and others.

> The floor is my family. Even if we're different, we put up with each other because this is where we live and we like each other because this

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is home, but we may also be finding different interests outside because

of the classes we're taking or the different clubs we've joined.

Nick nodded, "It's actually exactly what I'm saying."

A note about diversity. With the exception of Holly, peer interaction lists

remained diverse during these time periods. Davit's list included more Black and Indian

peers, but was still diverse. During later interviews references to race and ethnicity

decreased unless in response to a direct question. The anxiety and excitement related to

encountering diverse peers was present primarily in reflection on earlier times. The

relative absence of comments about diverse peers in this section reflects that change.

Mechanisms or Strategies for Interacting with Diverse Peers: Neutral Activities

The content of most conversations on these diverse floors was mundane.

According to Heather her conversations with other residents of Campbell A were about

"school mostly, how are we doing in some classes, exams that we aren't studying for,

what we're going to do on the weekend." How Heather spent her time was equally

ordinary. "We'll sit and watch a TV show, we'll like hang out, we go out and grab dinner

on weekdays, if we need to study we'll probably study together, we make plans, we sit

down and watch movies." Repeatedly residents of both cases studied mentioned movies,

games and studying as shared community pastimes. Still these simple interactions

between diverse peers led to friendships and learning. Quite simply these everyday

neutral activities (a phrase used by Holly to describe these activities and later tested with

other interview participants) provided common ground for diverse peers to safely spend

time together and to observe differences and similarities. Holly helped to crystallize this

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emerging theme when she said, "I think a lot of the activities that they do are very, neutral things that a lot of people like." Upon questioning, she clarified that a neutral activity was:

> something that you don't necessarily have to have a specific interest in, something that is a general interest in music, something that has food any college student will go to, something that is a board game, something that reminds you of home and you don't need to be in a certain group to do it.

The term neutral as described by Holly captured the essence of the activities most frequently described by participants. By the third interview, residents were involved in many unique activities through clubs, but they still most frequently described games, movies and meals as the activities they shared with the diverse peers on their floors. The term neutral resonated with participants when asked for their feedback on emerging themes. Michelle replied:

> I think it makes sense [..] It was Hoff, our RA who had the movie and if we'd had any people that we didn't know they could have just come to that. I think [neutral activities] are very helpful, because like, everybody gets hungry, everybody wants to go to dinner, so why not go meet somebody and try to make a friendship?

Similarly, when I asked Sean about neutral activities, he said "I think that almost everything that we've done has been fairly neutral, but I hadn't thought about it before." Asked if neutral was word that fit for him, he continued, "Yes, because you're just trying

to find one that fits everybody and doesn't favor one group of people over the other."

Sean described how movies brought the floor group together. "If we watched a movie, usually we would talk about for an hour afterwards. Not just talk about the movie, just talk about something after that. So, that would be one of those neutral activities that would help how you meet people and talk." Participants described board games, bowling, trips to the mall and work outs at the gym as neutral activities that brought diverse peers together early in the year. Games with names like Munchkins, Encore, Apples to Apples and Magic made the list. Computer games also played a role in connecting diverse peers. Maddie reflected on early activities of the floor.

> A lot of the boys, they're into computer games, so they would talk about that. One of my suitemates, her boyfriend and also her dad, they like to play computer games, video games, and I also like to play video games. I remember the first couple of weeks, we would play together in her room and that was the peak of my spending time with people on my floor.

One of the two social groups on Campbell also revolved around interest in video games. Computer and video games came up more frequently for male participants as did the occasional mention of watching sports or playing instruments.

Davit called attention to a less desirable neutral activity, smoking. Describing diverse peer interactions in Campbell Hall, Davit shared his observation that the group of smokers who hung outside of the residence hall sharing cigarettes was very racially and

ethnically diverse. When specifically asked to identify neutral activities that brought

diverse peers together, Davit expanded on his earlier observation.

> There are certain things that don't have prerequisites, like you have to
> be of this skin color, you have to have this background. Anyone could
> smoke, like the smokers on the porch. Like I told you last time, that's
> probably one of the most diverse groups I've seen. Rich, really, really
> rich, very poor, Black, White, Indian, everything you can think of you
> have there. That would definitely be neutral, a neutral activity.

Neutral activities provided shared experiences to stimulate conversation (even if just

about the content of a movie) and provided opportunities for spontaneous discoveries

about others in their residential communities (such as Michelle's similar iPod play list

discovered by Jargal during a floor game.) Neutral activities allowed diverse peers to find

similarities which helped them to span differences.

Mechanisms or Strategies for Interacting with Diverse Peers: Finding Similarities

As participants and other residents of Campbell A and Bigwind B met

roommates, roamed the halls and participated in orientation events and neutral activities,

they discovered differences, but also found similar interests and values they shared with

the diverse peers on their floor. Participants repeatedly stated that shared interests were

critical to initiating and sustaining diverse peer interactions. For Davit, "the first thing

that I look for is interest, like interests in other people that are similar to mine." Rachel

was also clear that race was not central to the interactions in Bigwind's compositionally

diverse community. Though few participants were as absolute in their assertions, many

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shared the central belief of Rachel's position - similar interests and preferences

influenced diverse peer interactions more than racial or ethnic diversity. Rachel reflected:

> To me the student's race doesn't have anything to do with it.
> Everybody is social to everybody. It just depends on your personality,
> if they don't like your personality, they're not going to talk to you. It
> really doesn't matter if you're White, Black or anything. Pretty much
> the way I see it is, everybody's friendly, everybody wants to be friends
> with everybody else on the floor or anywhere, but it's the things like
> some people are really shy and they really don't like talking to others.
> That's why they might not talk to them. Some other people, they don't
> have the same taste, no, they don't have the same characteristics, not
> characteristics, their likes and dislikes. They don't have the same likes,
> so there would not be anything for them to talk about.

On floors where so many students appeared to be different, residents had to look below

the surface and work harder than they might have in high school to find these similarities.

Having attended a predominantly White Christian high school, Davit explained:

> In high school I could kind of count on personalities being similar, but
> when I came here, when I interacted with people, I couldn't count on
> similarities, so I had to be forced to get to know people on a deeper
> lever because I knew they weren't all going to be the same.

In a diverse community, finding similarities required purposeful effort. Sean said the

structured activities during the first floor meeting were helpful because shared interests

and experiences were not noticeable when he moved in. Sean thought "talking about and finding common ground between people is important here, because once you find a common ground to talk, it's almost like half the battle in making a friendship." Finding this common bond helped diverse roommates and suitemates to connect and created opportunities for conversation and shared experiences that allowed friendships to develop. Common ground gave diverse peers something to talk about.

For suburban, Haitian-American Marcie, religion helped to bridge more obvious differences with suitemates from predominantly White, rural communities. Marcie was excited when she learned her suitemates were Catholic. Sharing religion helped her to "integrate better." Attending church together "helped to strengthen bonds" by giving the women "a reason to have to be together." Finding even simple similarities fostered connection. Jargal admitted that some of his Trinidadian roommate's differences required compromise, yet they became good friends. When asked how, Jargal answered:

> The similarities that we do share, music, food, sports. Me and Tyrone
> we both have Macs. I've had mine for about a year now. He just got his
> when he moved in here. He had problems getting used to it -because
> it's a different operating system than Microsoft. So I helped him out.
> Pretty much that's how we got a stronger relationship.

Something as simple as owning the same computer with a less common operating system provided opportunity to interact. Computer and gaming connections aided the early interactions between Patrick and Shyam as well. Shyam, born in Nepal described Patrick as both very different and very similar to himself. Throughout interviews Patrick shared

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stories of staying up late and simply messing around with their computers and computer games. The roommate pair also shared an interest in music. Patrick described their relationship as "very, very close."

> We talk about pretty much anything that comes out. He's mostly on his computer with his music, you know, and we share music. [..] So we're basically on our computers a lot inside our room. We do go to dinner and we do talk, we got a T.V., a super Nintendo. We were thinking about starting a somewhat of a band or something, just for the fun of it. Like he has a keyboard and [..] I have two guitars.

Shyam and Jargal both recognized that they were different from one another, but also shared similarities. Despite differing ethnic backgrounds, Heather's roommate thought Heather was so like her that she "told her parents like 'She's the Spanish me.'" Heather said:

> We do things, but we're different at the same time and my roommate would describe me as the same as her, like we're very similar. Sometimes, you know, we do like different things, but most of our interests are the same. So, it's not too surprising I'd say because I would definitely kind of gravitate towards people who are like you in some sort of way.

The close proximity of roommates and suitemates provided opportunities to find and then connect through shared interests and similarities. In his role as distanced observer, Paul offered this opinion on why the dominant friendship group of Bigwind B formed. "I think

they're the people that are cut from the same cloth." By the end of the semester, the core group included students who identified as African American, Chinese, Ethiopian American, Greek, Haitian American, Indian-American, Italian American, Mongolian, Trinidadian and White as well as other students with unidentified racial and ethnic backgrounds. I noted these differences and asked Paul to clarify since the group might appear diverse to others. He replied, "Visually, but not culturally." Describing her racially diverse group of friends on Campbell A, Sarah noted the similarities and differences between them. It was interesting to note that when describing the other Indian student on the floor she pointed out differences, while when describing racially and ethnically different peers she noted similarities. Sarah said:

> Our floor has two Indians, so we're Indian, but we are, she's Hindu and I'm Christian, which is where we're different. One of the girls [a Black woman] I had gone to high school with so we have a lot of things in common based on that. Another girl, she is Christian and sometimes we go to church together. One of the other girls I have a class with her. [..] So, we each had a few things in common, but we were very different.

With diverse peer groups evident on both Campbell A and Bigwind B, it seemed reasonable to believe participant assertions that similar interests and not race had prompted interaction and facilitated relationships across difference for these mixed race clusters. However, when the predominantly White video players on Campbell A appeared to be composed of students from like racial backgrounds, this assertion seemed less convincing. Still, students insisted that interest played a greater role than race. Davit's

roommate, also a Meyerhoff, had begun hanging out with the predominantly White video game players on Campbell A. Asked if the division between groups was one based in race, Davit said the division was a comfortable one. The presence of a few Black students in the group confirmed to him that "it's not racially divided, it's definitely interest." Lucas shared Davit's assessment that the gaming group had developed around the shared interest in gaming. Citing the presence of a few Asian and Black students in the predominantly White video group, Lucas defended his conclusion. "If it was exclusive, they would not be hanging out there at all."

Multiple participants insisted that race and ethnicity did not determine who would be friends in their communities. At the same time, most participants recognized that race and ethnicity impacted interests and personality. Maddie summed up her conclusions about racial diversity and similarities between people based on her own life experiences.

I realize that people can be very similar even if they're racially and ethnically diverse. So you just have to find what fits best with you in terms of getting along with people and race and ethnicity doesn't really come in to play with that. It might affect their personality because it's part of their background, it's a part of their person, but it doesn't have to tie to race.

Sarah shared Maddie's belief that racial background impacts interest. Students of similar race or ethnicity may hold similar interests, but does not preclude students of differing races from sharing those interests.

Since different races have different requirements of their families or

just different interests, that is the significant part of race and background or just culture in itself. So that would be the reason why the majority of the students in one group are of one race, but there could be someone from a different race who has that interest just because that's their preference.

Regardless of the degree to which participants thought race mattered in friendships, all agreed that diverse friendships were based primarily in similarities and common interests. In the diverse communities of Campbell and Bigwind, Shyam found that one of the similarities he shared with everyone was difference. Shyam said of his floor mates, "They're different, but because they're different they're similar to me because I'm different from them as well." When everyone is different, everyone is similar.

Mechanisms or Strategies for Interacting with Diverse Peers: Jokes rooted in stereotypes

Participants consistently said race did not matter in their interaction with others on their floors, yet jokes related to race and ethnicity repeatedly surfaced in the interview data. Joking appeared to be a strategy for managing the differences participants claimed did not matter. If residents connected by finding similarities, they maintained relationships across race by joking away differences. These jokes normally took place through light hearted banter in racially inclusive groups. Descriptions of jokes rarely revealed them to be intentionally mean spirited even when rooted in ugly stereotypes. Rachel's short comment was characteristic of many similar statements. "I don't see race affecting the friendships, but they know that there are different races, so they sometimes make jokes about it or something, but, it's not anything serious." Participants also denied

that there was any tension or conflict related to race on their floors. Yet the most consistently and frequently used word related to joking was *comfort* and some participants suggested that the jokes relieved tension (even after denying tension existed.) Participants seemed to say that racial differences did not matter, but concurrently believed racial differences existed and could not be ignored. Perhaps this incongruence remained unresolved and unconscious because, as Maddie portrays, most participants had not thought about it.

> Oh, I'm getting confused. This is very thought provoking. Ultimately I really can't figure out how these stereotypes and differences in ethnic background play into our lives. I guess we've never really given it thought.

Describing the use of ethnic labels to distinguish friends (Martha the Jew vs. Martha the Brown), Heather reflected on the role of race in her friendship group.

> I don't think [race] really matters to people, but at the same time when we do put these labels, I guess, we're doing it in a subconscious way. We don't really know that we're doing it. We don't really mean anything by it. It's just something that we've doing for so long [we] get used to that. It doesn't really mean anything to us anymore if we say the Jew or Brown.

Instead many of these unconscious and unaddressed issues played out in the jokes and labels that developed in diverse peer interaction groups. Three types of jokes surfaced in participant interview data: 1) jokes based on stereotypes made about an

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individual's own race or ethnicity, 2) jokes based on stereotypes made about another's race between diverse friends and 3) teasing based on racial labeling and congruence or incongruence with racial and ethnic stereotypes. They all shared common roots in widely known stereotypes about the various racial and ethnic groups present in these communities. Participants were adamant that such jokes were all in fun and rarely offensive. These jokes always took place in light hearted, inclusive social contexts lending credibility to this assertion. Further, the jokes were most common between friends. (While it is likely that racist jokes were made within same race groups about other groups, only Davit mentioned these.)

Descriptions of Jokes. Jokes were used by students to make fun of themselves or of their racial or ethnic group. When Shyam talked with friends, "I'll make fun of myself. I like curry. Everything I have smells like curry 'cause like it does." Heather has a "friend who makes fun of him[self] for being Hispanic and I take it like it was a joke, I know he's not serious." Nick, a White male, makes jokes about his Whiteness by doing freestyle rap "because I know I'm pretty White, and that'll be funny." As Jargal noted, these jokes serve as "icebreakers" or invitations for others to interact comfortably. Sarah provided insight about the role of self directed humor on Campbell A:

> There's another Indian boy from the third floor who always jokes around in an Indian accent. It's really humorous and entertaining so others don't feel like they can't ask a question about our culture or can't be curious about anything. It just makes the atmosphere more inviting and friendly.

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Students on Campbell A and Bigwind B often used racial jokes to make fun of themselves or a stereotype about their own racial or ethnic identity group. Residents tested the waters by first making self directed jokes and then, as Sean described them, making "gentler racial jokes" after the first few weeks when people started getting comfortable. Once comfortable enough to test boundaries, residents used jokes to cross unspoken racial lines, to avoid serious conversation about race and to reduce tension through jokes. These jokes were funny to Sean in part because "it's kind of funny that we're trying to cross cultures when we really can't." After calling Marcie "Sista" without incident, Sean went on "to joke about how she was raised on the streets when clearly, when you know her, you know she isn't, but I just made that stereotype." While Holly disagreed that the jokes covered discomfort, like Sean she recognized their roots in stereotypes.

> Here I feel like it's just very lackadaisical, it's never meant in a bad way or to cover up anything uncomfortable, it's just playing up and laughing about typical stereotypes of different people. [..] It could be anything like about someone being Italian or someone being Jewish or being Indian or you know, any of that, anything.

In their diverse communities there were stereotypes about everyone. No race or ethnicity was immune. Jargal and an Indian friend "stereotype" each other for entertainment.

> I'll make fun of him that he smells like curry and he'll mention the fact that I suck at math - I suck at Math, my eyes are small. We both are kidding, nothing serious.

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Holly was subjected to stereotypes about Italians from the popular television show The Sopranos, but to her the jokes just seemed "like observations and a joke about what a normal stereotype for Italian people would be." Observations of behaviors and tastes prompted other jokes as well. After discovering how different their taste in music was, Alison joked about her White roommate's music by singing her White songs when she was around. Sarah described how "random things" like a walk outside prompted a racial comment meant in humor. "Some of us would be like, 'Oh it's so cold," and 'Oh, you're Indian, that's why.'" Similarly, when other residents including other Black students told Rachel she could not do something she liked to respond, 'It's because I'm Black isn't it?' A chosen major could also be the source of jokes if your chosen field of study violated cultural stereotypes. Since stereotypes dictate that Indian students become doctors, an Indian Psychology major a friend of Sarah's became the subject of jokes, "What are you doing in psychology? You're supposed to be a Bio major. You're disgracing the Indian culture." A frequently referenced racial joke on Bigwind involved Black women calling Sean and Nick, both White men, "Massa" and making slave jokes toward them. As reported by Lucas, a fellow Meyerhoff scholar referred to Lucas jokingly as "such a cracker" and said about himself "I'm a filthy Indian."

Joking was also an important sign of inclusion. Patrick joked with his Hindu roommate, "Try the frankfurters, by the way they have beef in them. I joke around with him like I joke around with anybody else." Joking the same way he joked with others was important, because these racial jokes also indicated belonging in social groups of diverse peers. As Michelle concluded, "that's kind of what separates us from other people, is that

we can make those jokes with each other now." Perhaps that's why Paul was one of the few students who reported being unaware of racial jokes on his floor, "probably because I don't really know that many people."

The jokes described thus far were often triggered by observations of behavior that conformed or failed to conform to stereotypes. Participants also described humor that labeled diverse peers based on racial stereotypes. Despite numerous protests that race does not matter, racial labels were used to identify each other both in humorous and serious ways. Labels also became the source of jokes when a student clearly acted like the stereotype of another racial group or violated a racial stereotype of their own group. Maddie described this type of joke in her community of Asian friends.

> I've heard people make jokes about my own friends about how they're, quote, unquote, 'Black Asians' because they're into hip hop and they act sort of ghetto [..] I guess race is something you can be, you can be White and act Black, or you could be Asian and act Black or White, or whichever way and that's sort of normal to us because we have second and third generation people living here. A lot of my friends they're,- the term that we use is 'twinkie' they're yellow on the outside, but White on the inside.

Maddie described an Asian peer group located outside of Bigwind B, but Davit described similar labeling jokes on Campbell A. His roommate joked about him:

> being the Whitest person he knows and me and him we joke a lot about our races, so it's kind of hard. But sometimes I get that - it was more in

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my high school - even with some of my White friends who'd say, you know, I just didn't fit the stereotype. [..] I have a White friend that I would say acts Black a lot, the opposite way that you say I act White.

When encountering stereotypes in their diverse residence communities, students could choose to take them seriously or they could laugh. Sarah described this choice.

I mean there are always stereotypes, whether we choose to accept that or not, about everything. Stereotypes, when they're made fun of, they're just really funny and I mean you can't help but laugh at them unless you're taking everything in life so seriously that you have no time to laugh. I choose to have friends that make me laugh, because I like to laugh.

With the exception of Heather and Paul, most residents chose to joke.

Using jokes to find comfort and relieve tension without serious conversation. In a racially and ethnically diverse community, participants could not avoid differences. Put in plain words by Sarah, "We can't escape it, so instead of, making it a serious issue or having conflicts result from it we just tend to approach it in a humorous way. That makes it comfortable for everyone." In multiple ways, participants said that race does not matter, but the differences in people that come from being raised in different racial and ethnic backgrounds mattered a lot in tight living quarters. Alison initially said race does not stand out when interacting with diverse peers, but also said:

I can't just ignore the fact that this person's White because as you get to know them there [are] different things that you get to know about

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each other. That's when people are joking around with each other. It's like, 'Oh, you're so White' or 'You're the White whale' or whatever. But it's not like to bring you down or anything, it's kind of just a laughing way…

Living together on Campbell A and Bigwind B residents became aware of and had to live with cultural differences stemming from racial and ethnic background. When asked if diverse peers on Bigwind B talk about race, Maddie gave this response.

The answer would be no, because I guess, growing up in a multi-racial country, race and ethnicity isn't really a topic that [we] would talk about seriously. It was just so incorporated into our everyday lives that we don't think of it as an issue that we need to talk about. People just make jokes about it. I guess it's just because people are comfortable with it, comfortable enough to make jokes about it.

But when asked if she meant that race was not an issue, Maddie replied, "Ultimately, no, but race and ethnicity, I guess it contributes a lot to a person's personalities, like the way they were brought up." These differences (and the stereotypes related to racial and ethnic differences) sometimes created tension.

Comfort was created and restored by joking about these differences without direct confrontation. When the residents of Campbell A joked with Davit about race "that means that I can joke back with them, there is less tension." Participants were in agreement that few residents want to talk seriously about race. Sarah indicated that residents of Campbell A:

> …don't talk about [race] on a serious matter. We're just joking about it
> which means that we're all aware of each other's backgrounds and
> everything, but since we're joking about it, it's taken very lightly and
> it's just, I guess, just like an added bonus to the friendships that we all
> share.

Like Davit, Marcie thought jokes kept the environment on Bigwind B light. Like Sarah, Marcie did not want to engage in serious conversations about race even though she recognized race as a serious issue.

> I think race is still a serious issue in this country in some, a lot of the
> areas, most areas and so that in order to lighten the mood… I actually
> don't want to sit around and have serious hard conversations. [..] It's
> easier for us at our age to just joke about it, to say, "Oh, it's so funny."

In fact, it would make Marcie uncomfortable if someone could not joke about race. If anyone new to Bigwind B tried to turn a light hearted racial joke into a serious discussion, "they would not really be part of the core, because when you just want to let your hair down and let loose and be at home with your friends, they wouldn't be comfortable the way we do that." Being comfortable was more important than challenging stereotypes.

Jokes were not only a way of keeping interactions around race light hearted, jokes were used as an efficient short hand to lower tension and to communicate serious messages without unpleasant confrontation. Davit said a joke could diffuse an awkward situation without creating tension.

I think if you can joke about something, then you can pass it off and it's not a big deal, [jokes] say so even though this isn't directly stated, but if you make a joke about a racial group or something, it's kind of implying that the person who created that stereotype doesn't really know what they're talking about or is just invalid.

As a follow up, I asked Davit why he did not just say the stereotype was invalid if that's what he meant.

Not very funny (laughs) …and it comes out a lot less awkwardly. And I think it's more efficient to joke about some things because you don't really need to introduce the topic and have the decency to say that this stereotype is offensive and it's not true. It can just be more integrated into everyday talking. [So is it a way to avoid the hard conversations?] Yeah. You're still in a way having them, you're just not communicating them verbally. Like if you say something, then everyone kind of thinks it, so I guess you're right, you're avoiding the conversation, but you're still kind of having it, you know, words aren't necessarily exchanged.

Despite the desire to avoid them, there were occasionally serious conversations about race, ethnicity and culture on these floors. For example, Marcie's preference for being called Haitian-American led to real conversations about the differences between being Black, African-American, Haitian and Ethiopian. This conversation broadened to include differences in Asians and the desire to be seen as Chinese or Taiwanese. When the topic

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first came up between everyone on the floor Michelle said, "Like, the first time they did not understand, but now they joke about it, like "Oh, you're Black, ha ha." Even a serious conversation could be turned into a joke on Bigwind B.

Rules about joking. As participants talked about these jokes told on or outside of their floors, unspoken rules emerged. Musing out loud during an interview, I said to Michelle, "It's almost as if there are rules about it." She replied, "There are." Despite Rachel's declaration that "there are no boundaries" to jokes about race she went on to say, "Except you have to know them, of course. It can't be one of those people that doesn't come out and talk to you, it has to be one of your friends from the floor." If you make racial jokes about someone you don't know, Jargal was clear that "they're going to be offended because you don't know them, but if you're doing it to somebody you know and you've been friends with for a while, they tend to think more of it as a joke." If about a race or ethnicity other than your own, jokes were only funny and acceptable when said in the presence of people you know. Describing racial jokes that might offend someone, Michelle warned "that you wouldn't make [them] with someone that you just met. You'd have to make those kind of jokes with someone that you know." Davit agreed, "I mean you have to be within a group that are friends or they know each other well. They spend a lot of time with each other."

A comfortable friendship with a person of the same race the joke has been made about is also an important precursor. Lucas indicated "if they do make it about different race, they'll be friends with somebody of that same race. They're not making a joke about some race that isn't present and it's all just friendly, chatter." Similarly Paul

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observed that in order to make racial jokes, "You must have really known the person well or [be] the same race as that person." Asked to make the unspoken rules explicit, Davit gave the following explanation governing jokes in ethnically and racially diverse groups:

> So if we have students A, B, C, D, and they are all different races and they all get along, then a joke can be said about any of the races, ABCD, without it being too offensive, or without any one in that group being offended. But now lets say there's racial group E, but there's only ABCD. One of those members may feel obligated to speak out saying, "Oh, that's not right," or "Oh, it's not that funny."

By saying the joke in front of someone of the targeted race, the joke teller is indicating that the joke is obviously not true. Participants were clear that when making a potentially offensive racial joke based in stereotypes, it must be obvious that the stereotype is not true or is not believed by the teller (unless as Shyam said it is obviously true like the fact that he does eat a lot of curry.) For example, when Sean makes "Black stereotypical jokes" with his friend Nick about Marcie and Michelle, he tries not to sound serious. Finally, it is important not to make jokes about race or ethnicity after a serious racial incident or when someone's had a bad day. Heather usually does not mind the jokes, but "sometimes when I'm tired or have had like a rough day, stuff like that will get to me." Nick learned to ignore his urge to tell a joke when someone is a "little bit depressed." Similarly, a joke also can not be told following a serious racial incident or hurtful interaction. Even though Michelle and Marcie joke regularly about being slaves, Michelle would never joke about slavery with Marcie after someone said something derogatory

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about Marcie's race. A White student probably could not make a joke about Marcie and slavery either. Davit concurred with Michelle, "It seems like Black people or minority groups are able to get away with jokes about any race. All White people seem to be able to get away with jokes about White people."

Still, amongst friends who were in good moods, students of all races (including White students) joked with each other inside their comfortable circles. What they all agreed to is that as long as no one crossed a line, nobody "took offense." In fact, Lucas had "never heard it where it seemed offensive." Describing jokes made about an Asian male on her floor Rachel said, "Nobody really takes offense to it at all." Davit also did not "for the most part take offense to it" when people make jokes about him acting White and Marcie "never took any offense" to Black History Month jokes. While most participants could imagine situations where jokes went too far, few had experienced joking which went beyond their comfort zone. Sarah had "heard stories telling me how it can get too far, but I've never been in a situation where it's gotten too far." Lucas tried to think of jokes that went too far then said, "I think it's possible. I don't think it has." Patrick would know if a racial joke made someone uncomfortable because "they start looking sad, or they don't look like they're laughing as much, but it really hasn't gotten to that point at all." Even if a joke went too far with friends Maddie "would sort of give them a 'are you retarded' look, but I wouldn't be as offended. I wouldn't be seriously offended, maybe play offended."

Participants were in accord that it was not okay to be hurtful because, as Michelle pointed out, "while we all can joke with each other we don't want to make anyone feel

bad or hurt anyone's feelings." According to Heather, if you know someone, "it's okay to maybe push buttons, but when you're really being mean and really genuinely mean and hurting someone's feelings that's not okay." Like Patrick, Sean said "You can tell when someone gets offended. I mean there's no [excuse] - you need to stop." Davit was certain he would confront someone who crossed the line and made offensive jokes about Blacks and welfare. "I would definitely approach him about that, and tell him it was incredibly offensive and then we'd probably lead into a serious talk about it, depending on how much that he thought of that stereotype is true or not." He was confident that they would work through the conflict "because most of the time the jokes are meant as light-heartedness, they aren't really meant to like represent someone's true feelings." When an Indian friend crossed the line Heather "just [went] along with it" because she did not "take it too seriously. I think in a friendship, those kind of things are, they're not like always good, but they're okay." Michelle thought that if someone crossed the line on Bigwind B "We'll probably all kind of like shut them out and be like okay, you know what you did." As long as the offender apologized, the friendship would be maintained. In fact, Michelle found the ability to be reasonable about jokes comforting because:

> if we can joke with someone about their race and they won't get offended, or if they do they'll just calmly be like, 'Hey, I don't find that funny. I really take offense to that' that shows that you're on a level with that person where you can be level headed about things and either they can take a joke or they can tell you when they can't take a joke. And it just kind of makes your bond stronger, because you found a

person that you can actually talk to and not have to be afraid of or walk

on eggshells when you're around them. So, the jokes, we reassure

ourselves through them, like, 'Hey, I can still joke about this with you,

right? We're still cool.'

In the only situation described by participants involving a racial joke that went too far, apologies were offered and friendships continued. Marcie described the incident involving Nick and Sean which led to conflict with Sean. Michelle hurt Sean's feeling by going around the floor and calling the White men "Massa." Sean took the joke as an indication that Marcie and Michelle thought him to be racist, a sensitive spot for a White male from a rural area. After a serious conversation and apology, Sean understood it was a joke and Marcie learned she needed to be sensitive. Sean reported no lingering offense. Nick thought the "Massa" joke was not too funny, but was not really offended. All four participants involved in the joke mentioned it, adding credibility to Marcie's assertion that the joke did no permanent damage and might have brought them closer.

Although race was still considered a touchy subject, most participants in this study agreed that there was nothing wrong with their jokes. Several participants noted that their parents saw their jokes more like I did (or they thought that I did based on my interest in jokes they saw as unremarkable.) Davit did not think jokes were a big deal, so my questions seemed off base to him. Alison wondered,

I don't know if this could be a new generation and we didn't really

have a chance to experience a 'don't talk about it' kind of thing. People

speak openly about different things like that, so I feel like if I say it in a

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good way, like in a way that I'm trying to tell you that I'm either joking

or I'm not trying to bring you down or anything then it's okay.

In simple words, some participants suggested that they had not been taught to be polite about race like previous generations. As participants slowly made the rules for joking explicit in response to my many questions, still no one could describe where the rules came from or how they had learned them.

Although participants couldn't say where they learned the rules about joking, as interviews continued into the spring, residents reported that they were learning to be more careful or polite about what they said. Nick indicated in his final interview that "I've learned to watch what I say. And that I can't always joke." Politeness was a fourth strategy used to interact with diverse peers, but because participants frequently talked about politeness as a learned behavior, it is discussed in the third section of this chapter.

Research Question Two:

What characteristics, conditions, policies or programs support or impede the development of diverse peer interactions in compositionally diverse communities?

Individual characteristics such as prior experience with diversity in high school and individual expectations for diversity at UMBC influenced initial comfort with diverse peers, but had no patterned or predictable impact on interactions after the first weeks of school. Individual motivations and emotions drove interaction with diverse peers as did characteristics of the community including the concentration of first year students in the community, a racially and ethnically diverse mix of residents and a shared focus on academics. Physical structure of the facility such as doors, lounges and floor lay-out also

encouraged or hindered the patterns of interaction in the cases studied. The first floor meeting played a critical and early role in the facilitation of diverse peer interaction as did Welcome week, a series of orientation activities for new students. Finally, stereotypes both helped and hindered interactions between students of differing backgrounds.

Participants' Background and Individual Characteristics

Prior diversity experience/high school. Individual student background characteristics such as diversity of high school and prior diversity experiences affected the ease with which participants transitioned to their diverse living environment, yet interview data revealed no predictable pattern of influence on diverse peer interactions after the initial weeks of school. Students from diverse high schools often shared Alison's view that:

> if you're the kind of person that's been interactive with different races, you learn new things, you find out new stuff and you see that people are different and you like them better being different. When you're among a whole bunch of Black people I would still be comfortable, but it would get annoying after a while, because I've seen these people before, there's nothing new about them. I just want to, let's say, meet a White person or meet an Asian person. Just have a little bit of diversity in it just because life doesn't look too nice if it's just dull.

However, unlike Alison, Rachel was at first unnerved by the personal and open interaction between diverse peers on Bigwind B despite the diversity she experienced in her high school science program. For students attending schools composed of students

primarily from one racial group, patterns of influence were also mixed. For example, Sarah reported that having been one of the three Indian students in her predominantly Black high school class, she "wouldn't have been comfortable" in a group of students only like herself. She was wary of relationships with other Indian and Indian-American students. But, Davit, having been one of the few Black students in his predominantly White school was anxious to interact with diverse peers, "I was actually almost deprived in high school, just like a lack of culture, a lack of differences of diversity and when you're deprived of something you just want to jump right into the first opportunity you get to change that." Holly and Sean, both White, attended predominantly White rural high schools. Sean was at first extremely uncomfortable and resistant to interacting across race. But after he figured out he would not have friends if he did not interact, he "gave it a shot and it worked and I was hanging out with a lot of different people." Alternately, Holly sought out diverse experiences on her arrival. "I easily could have gone somewhere that was just like my high school where I would have been stuck in my little group, but I decided that's not what I want." Recognizing the biases she was raised with she "just knew that [she] was going to try to be more open minded." Yet after initially spending time with diverse peers on the floor, unlike Sean, Holly's friends were all White by the end of the semester and she spent little time on her floor. High school background and individual motivation might seem to explain Holly's homogenous friend group, but does not explain why her roommate's (also from a predominantly White rural high school) friendship group was one of the most diverse in the study. Prior high school diversity experiences influenced initial comfort level for most participants, but each participant's

transition story was unique and not fully predictable based on prior diversity experiences.

Individual expectations and heightened emotions. Participants held a wide range of expectations related to the diverse student body found at UMBC. Despite marketing materials that describe the university's diversity, many participants were unaware of the institution's racial diversity before arriving. Some students knew of the campus' diversity, but indicated that the racial composition of the student body was unimportant to them in the admissions process. Still others knew it was diverse, but found the diversity to be greater than expected. Only four participants, three Black students and one multiracial student, indicated clear expectations for interaction with diverse peers prior to arrival at UMBC. Even these students found their pre-college expectations were off base.

Participants reported that the emotional responses (ranging from fear to excitement) they experienced when encountering the compositional diversity of their residence floors influenced their willingness to interact. Regardless of background, students were sometimes mildly surprised and occasionally shocked (both good shock and uncomfortable shock) by the compositional diversity encountered on their floors. Even Davit, who chose UMBC for its national reputation for minority achievement in the sciences, was shocked by the diversity he encountered. As students made the transition to their diverse communities, their heightened emotional states (anxious, fearful, lonely, shocked and excitement) served as catalyst for the diverse peer relationships developed during the first weeks of school. Like several participants in the study, Heather was motivated to develop diverse friends because "it's always fun to have like friends who are somewhat different from you just to make it more exciting so you get introduced to

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different things." Trying to explain why the diversity of his floor excited him, Davit said, "At this age, I feel like I always want to try something new and I think that's common among many young people." Excitement was associated with newness, discovery and learning, so while some students attributed excitement with motivating their diverse peer interactions, it also stimulated the learning outcomes presented later in this chapter.

Fear of loneliness and exclusion were common feelings expressed by participants in response to the first weeks of the school year. Attempts to alleviate or moderate these powerful emotions first hindered then pushed students to interact in their diverse communities. Not knowing how to interact in the racially diverse community he encountered, Sean initially stayed in his room. Starting to feel left out, Sean summoned the courage to make diverse friends, because he did not "want to sit in my room by myself. And I knew that I was living with these people all year and I wanted to be part of a group." Seeing himself as different from many of the residents of Bigwind B, Paul said, "the only thing that really encouraged me was the fact that I didn't want to be, not excluded." Prior experience with diverse peers did not necessarily help students to manage their first weeks on the diverse campus. Jargal had attended and international middle school with students from all over the world. Still, Jargal remembered being "more afraid than really necessary" on his first day at UMBC. He was not alone.

While fear and anxiety initially discouraged peer interaction for some, their fear of exclusion and loneliness quickly became compelling forces in the formation of cross race relationships. Rachel remembered "being scared being around these kinds of people," but also felt the fear "made me more social." Marcie explained how so many

diverse people became friends so quickly. Interspersed with laughter, she said, "We were desperate. I can only speak for myself here, but when the first day, the second day, I wanted to cry...I wanted to go home - I was so lonely." Like others, the fear of ongoing loneliness prompted her to reach out to others on the floor.

> I had to force relationships in a sense because I wasn't going to get the chance to go somewhere else. So that in itself was a driving force because I didn't want to be here for four years and be miserable, so I had to make friends. [..] I think other people on our floor also had to do the same because they weren't used to a certain type of people and were forced to just get over it because we just needed each other so badly during those first few days to make the transition.

The driving force that encouraged multiple students to harness their sense of fear, anxiety and loneliness in order to interact with diverse peers was the desire of many first year students to make friends. For the students in this study, the need for connection fueled by loneliness and a fear of exclusion drove students to interact with peers across a variety of perceived differences.

Composition and Characteristics of the Residence Hall Case

 Concentration of first year students. Both Campbell A and Bigwind B housed populations dominated by first year students. The shared experience of entering an unfamiliar environment with few or no friends created intensity and a sense of urgency to form relationships. Comparing first year buildings to those housing more upper class students, Paul made the following observation, "I've been a lot to other dorms and to me

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what I see the most in the freshmen dorms is the sense of an endeavor to make the community [..] just real will to make a community." Entering as freshmen with few connections to campus, the need to make friends encouraged residents to interact with their diverse floor mates despite observed or imagined differences. Rachel explained this drive, "Primarily because we're freshmen, we didn't really have friends. [..] For the most part they really want friends, even if they're different." The high percentage of first year students in Campbell A and Bigwind B placed a diverse pool of students - largely without campus connections and with urgent desires for friends - in close proximity. Regardless of background, participants reported that if you wanted to have friends you had to interact with others in the diverse pool of freshmen living on your floor. The first year desire for connection was a frequently mentioned reason for interacting with diverse others. In a racially diverse environment, failure to interact across race might mean you had no friends. As Marcie said, "in the beginning we were all each other had."

A good mix: Racial and ethnic composition of the floor. Once students made the decision to interact with others (either as a conscious choice or as a natural step in their new home), the compositional diversity of these floors made it difficult to do so without crossing race and ethnicity (as well as gender, region of origin, religion and other differences[4].) As Maddie said, it did not really matter if "you like them or not." Michelle summed the sentiments of many participants when describing their diverse communities.

[4] Gender, area of origin and religion surfaced throughout interviews in both subtle and direct comments from participants. Because the focus of this study was on racial and ethnic diversity, these differences were not the focus of interview questions and were, therefore, left largely unexplored. These differences are noted here to draw attention to

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> If you had to live in France, you'd need to know French so you could
> survive and I guess if you're here at UMBC you have to be able to live
> with other people to survive. Because otherwise you're not going to
> have any friends. If everybody else is accepting of everybody and
> you're the only person that hates a certain group of people, they're not
> going to want to hang out with you. And you're going to be very
> lonely.

Michelle's observations capture both the influence of compositional diversity and the subsequent influence on climate. Words like *good mix, pretty well mixed, balanced, enough of each group,* or *well mixed* were used by students to describe the racial and ethnic composition of Campbell A and Bigwind B. Not only did compositional diversity mean residents were forced to encounter people racially or ethnically unlike themselves, but, since no one group had clear dominance on the floor, the presence of many different peers contributed to a more welcoming racial climate, particularly for minority students. Sarah affirms the importance of a floor where no racial or ethnic group dominates.

> It's very diverse, much more diverse than I've been used to in high
> school. There's a good mix of Indians, Caucasians, African Americans,
> Asians, so it's a pretty diverse floor. [..] I'm a very friendly person, I
> enjoy getting to know every person and when there's not one over-

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the fact that in these racially and ethnically diverse communities, differences stemming from race were often intertwined with or influenced by differences rooted in sex, gender, religion and areas of origin.

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ruling ethnicity sometimes it's easier for me to get around and interact

with everyone.

Marcie explained that, like her high school, when there is a good mix "the race element was kind of erased because there were too many races to really segregate. Both Sean and Patrick, White students initially uncomfortable with diversity, concurred that the racial mix of the community forced them to interact with people different from themselves. Comparing UMBC to schools he described as predominantly White, Sean speculated:

When you tend to be around people that are like you, I guess you feel

more comfortable, right? So here at UMBC, it's not like that. I'd say

there's [sic] a lot of White people and there's a good group of Asians,

good groups of this, but it's still mixed. I mean the other [schools I

considered attending] were more one group than another group, but

here it's pretty well mixed where you have to learn how to deal with

people because the real world isn't all the same. [..] You got a lot of

Asian kids, a lot of Indian kids, a lot of White kids, a lot of Black kids,

and then, you know, your Hispanic kids, and everything kind of mixes

together. It's a melting pot and you have to learn how to succeed.

Patrick was up front that he had not deliberatively or willingly sought diverse friendships. Given the environment of Campbell Hall, he really felt he had little choice.

I was kind of forced to interact with them. It wasn't something that I

could just get up and run away from. I think that's what helps me to

become friends with people like that. [..] When you're forced to

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interact with people of different races, you become friends with them, but it's not like you go out to become friends with them. You go out to be friends with the people that you are more comfortable with, because it's a lot easier that way, and then try to go out and become friends with the people that you normally don't blend in well with or you're not used to hanging out with.

While facilitating diverse peer interactions, the compositional diversity of Campbell A and Bigwind B also facilitated connection with same race peers if they were present. Many first year students found comfort in connections with one or more other students of similar racial and ethnic background as well. The support of same race friends was mentioned as critical relief from the effort required to cross race by both the Black women of Bigwind B's core group as well as the Campbell A's predominantly White video game group. While all participants agreed that the diverse mix at UMBC compelled students of all backgrounds to interact with one another, not all students found supporting same group connections on their floors. When asked why some students choose to interact with peers different from them while others do not, Jargal responded.

I guess because at UMBC there's more of everyone than most other places and not just one race. UMBC is actually really mixed, so you're not going to avoid it, but if you're that kind of person that wants to meet them, and then actually greet them, be friends, be nice, that's just how it is. I'm like one of two Mongolians that like go to this school, so I don't have a choice.

Some students like Michelle and Sarah had same race friends, but also expressed concerns about befriending "stereotypical" Black or Indian women even though the women identified as Black and Indian respectively.

While most first year residents in diverse or mixed communities like Campbell A or Bigwind B are forced to interact, the degree to which students are forced varied by race and ethnicity and was influenced by the numbers of other students on the floor and at the university who shared the students' racial or ethnic identity. As evidenced by Holly and Maddie, some participants who did not find similar peers in the floor environment focused their effort to find friends outside of the floor. Though evidence is less compelling, the lack of similar peer connections within the floor community actually discouraged some cross race connections by pushing residents to seek those comforting same race connections outside of the floor or off campus.

Despite the negative tone language like *forced* might conjure when used to describe the influences which encouraged residents to form diverse connections, most students saw forced interactions as positive. Students thought the University could encourage diverse peer interactions by forcing people to live together through purposeful room assignment process. Some participants assumed that the Residential Life staff had deliberately created diverse suites and communities based on race and ethnicity. Nick thought a "diverse hallway is always good" and suspected that this diversity "may be one of the plans of the hall here at UMBC." Paul recommended that assignment staff "could to some extent mix up who rooms with whom" in order to encourage greater interaction. Holly believed that diverse suitemate assignments facilitated connections with diverse

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peers outside of the suite as well. By assigning students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds together, Sean thought that UMBC "did a very good job of breaking the barrier so we at least, when you live on the same floor with them, you have to interact."

Stuck in close quarters for the long run. The perception that community members were unable to do anything to change the composition of their floors was also a motivating factor in the development of diverse peer interactions. Participants' emotions were first fueled and then soothed by the realization that residents were stuck with each other for the year. The simple anticipation of long term contact motivated residents to interact with others in their compositionally diverse communities. Patrick and Paul both reported feeling stuck on the floor, a fact Patrick saw as positive. "There was nothing else to do. You were stuck here and so you pretty much had to make friends with everybody. That was really helpful." With a more positive tone, Lucas told me interactions on the floor were really pretty easy to understand. "You know, they're like your neighbors, you're going to be living with them for a while and you get to know them." Anticipating a full year on Bigwind B, Maddie suggested that diverse peers tried hard to get along because "we're all going to be on this same floor for a year [..] it doesn't matter if you like them or don't like them, they will still be on your floor." As Davit concluded, it is almost impossible to avoid diverse peer interaction in quarters so tight that while in bed "you can hear someone walking down the hallway, and you know who they are. And it's just closeness that really does it." Stuck with each other in the close quarters of both Campbell A and Bigwind B for an extended time frame, residents' motivation to develop both same and cross race relationships increased.

Academically focused students and challenging academic environment. Shared academic focus and the need for academic support and study partners also encouraged diverse peer interaction. As a school for "smart people" Alison pointed out that to succeed academically at UMBC, diverse students helped each other with classes and provided support to deal with the stresses of college.

> There's [sic] a lot of different races in this school and they do tend to get along, because with the classes that you're given you can't just do everything by yourself. You have to have help from other students - help from different programs they give you to get through everything you're handed. I feel like this school is - it's not a challenge - it's on a different level by itself. It's different from going to Flagship U. Most of the kids over there tend to party a lot. [..] You have to find other people who you can study with, find other people who you can hang out with when you need to get away from all the amount of things that you got [sic] to do, from all the stress of college.

Shared academic goals and focus helped to both encourage interaction and to mediate differences. Sarah explained how she sees this work on her floor.

> Our primary reason for being here is our education. So, I feel like a lot of us on our floor don't really want to let other things factor into our education. [..] Our differences don't matter because we're focused on getting our education not on looking at differences trying to find

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problems. We're all trying to get along so we can have a good education.

These thoughts were more prevalent on Campbell A, but were also mentioned by residents of Bigwind B. Michelle thought connections were established because "people are going through the same things and a lot of the people on my floor have the same classes." She went on to describe how residents shared notes, peer reviewed papers, reminded each other of deadlines, and made sure late sleepers woke up for exams. Students also quickly identified areas of expertise. People went to those good at math for math help and visited the art students to check out their work when they needed a study break. When major tests approached in large, first year classes such as Chemistry, the floor lounge provided the site for study activity and the equal amount of socializing that occurred in between review and problem sets. Shared academic focus encouraged diverse peer cooperation.

Physical Characteristics of the Residence Hall Floor: Doors, Lounges and End of Hall

Room doors: One of the simplest findings was the sheer number of times participants mentioned the role that room doors played in encouraging or discouraging peer interaction. Open doors, closed doors, and often self closing or propped doors were reported as key variables influencing interaction on Campbell A and Bigwind B. Participants told me that an open or closed door during the first weeks of school could literally determine inclusion in floor activity for the rest of the semester. In fact, doors were so important to participants during the first weeks of school that Marcie interpreted her rapidly closing door was a sign that she should leave school ("It would almost shut in

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my face and I'd feel like they don't want me out there, I should just go back home.") and Paul thought doors worthy of their own research study ("actually you should probably write a thesis on that - the influence of doors that close themselves.") As he put it, "There's nothing more scary than a closed door."

Despite official directions from Residential Life staff and police to avoid propping room doors for both security and fire safety, Marcie reported that her RA encouraged her to prop her door. After discussing her loneliness with Hoff, the RA on Bigwind B, he "was just like if you want to get to meet people you have to leave your door open." She listened and "people strolled in." Within days she found herself at the center of Bigwind's core group. Open doors sent the signal that you were interested in meeting people. Michelle explained, an open door was a way of saying "come on in, I'm not doing anything, I welcome talking to you.'" An open door also made it possible to walk by, see who was in the room and say hello without risk of intruding on the occupant. An open door was a sign to Patrick that he could meet the occupants of the room without having "to prod my way in by knocking on the door." Heather indicated that she did not think she would not "knock on anyone's door just to say hi, because they might not be there, they might be doing something and I don't want to be intrusive."

In a floor composed largely of first year students hungry to develop connections, an open door was critical during the first weeks. Alison left her door open from the beginning. Jargal had an "open door policy" for the first week so he could say "Whassup?" as people passed. Paul observed that for the first three weeks of class "a lot of the doors were always open." Maddie and her roommate:

tried to leave our door open in the beginning two weeks, because our

RA encouraged us to do that as just as a way of encouraging us to get

to know one another, because if the doors are open then you could see

inside the room and see what they were doing, and then it would just be

easier to go in there and say, 'oh, hello, how are you doing?' or 'I was

just' or 'I just came from…' and just start conversations that way.

While participants reported different periods of time ranging from one to three weeks for

the open door period, most would agree with Sarah when she said:

I guess it was more important in the beginning than it is now because in

the beginning we didn't really know each other so we kind of had to

open our doors. If we wanted to make friends, our doors should have

been open. If you didn't, then we all assumed that person is not very

social.

If an open door created an invitation, a closed door presented a physical boundary that

residents interpreted as "leave me alone." Lucas shared his view:

I think that it's really true about how people are closing their doors and

probably just opening them really does make a difference in terms of if

those people are contacted or if they're more social or not. It just seems

like [a closed door] really is a physical barrier, it's also a social barrier.

They close their doors. A lot of people generally think that this person

really doesn't want to talk, okay, and we'll just leave them alone.

This symbol presented particular problems for students in rooms with self closing door mechanisms and for shy students who just never thought to open their doors. Built after fire codes required all room doors to have self closing mechanisms, Bigwind resident Paul complained about hallway doors, "Everybody was trying to keep their door open which is a pain in the neck because we all have these spring doors." Marcie described her experience with the room door, "The doors of Bigwind close instantly and it felt like mine was closing more and I didn't know anyone else's closed, so I thought it was just my own and I would get into my door and it would seriously leave just enough time for me to get in without shutting." Students on Bigwind had to figure out how to prop their doors before they could comply with the RAs advice to do so. Students from Bigwind thought the presence of fire closures hindered their ability to meet others on the floor.

In two cases shyness, not a desire to avoid friendships, provided the motive for closing doors, but most participants imagined little reason other than anti-social behavior to keep your door closed. Shyness was not considered a reason someone might close the door nor was it deemed an acceptable excuse. Sarah said:

> If you're shy, all I can say is, you know, the least you can do is open
> your door and people should come around and at least wave at you and
> that's a start. But if you leave your door closed, I mean you're
> essentially saying that you're not open to meeting anyone.

Sean, who identified himself as shy, agreed with her. In fact, opening the door made it easier for shyer students to meet people by waiting for more outgoing students to drop in.

I was pretty shy and then it was just that I didn't want to see people, I was just kind of just shy. I didn't want to go out and meet people but I didn't mind if people came to me, so I would always leave my door open and people would come in. And that was how I got into the group.

Unaware that his peers might think his closed door indicated an unwillingness to be social, Lucas frequently kept his door closed. After hearing other participants talk about doors, I was interested that Lucas had not raised this issue and raised it with him. In a later interview, Lucas reflected on my earlier question about doors.

If we hadn't talked about it I wouldn't have noticed, because I wouldn't have thought about it as much. I think that's helped me out because sometimes I do close my door and I don't really notice it. [..] I like to be social and talk to people, but I usually just close my door anyway, because it's like a habit for me, but I know that doesn't really matter. [..] I didn't notice that I may have been like closing people off.

Describing his efforts to join in the open door culture of the floor, he said "at first, I was kind of shy about it," But in the end, "It's not hard, after a while you get used to it." Lucas, originally one of the only participants not to mention the merit of open doors, became a believer in open doors.

As illustrated, students repeatedly told me that one of the best ways to meet diverse peers was to open your door. In fact, Alison's most important advice to new students wanting to interact with diverse peers was "Keep your doors open." The things that discouraged Patrick from interacting with diverse peers (or as he said 'repelled him')

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were quite simple: "Doors closed, people who had no smiles." Given Sarah's comments on the importance of doors, I joked, "So if we want people to get along all we really need is an open door campaign." She replied, "It really is that simple. It really is. I guess from things I've heard before, it's just seemed so much more complicated, and impossible to make good friends, but it is pretty simple." The Community Director shared that RAs had asked to buy doorstops for the hall (a request denied due to safety.) While interview participants lauded open doors, no conclusions could be drawn about residents who chose not to do so. The residents no one sees, were not represented in the participant sample nor did anyone know them to represent their views.

Lounges and End of the Hall Rooms (Bigwind only). Two other structural characteristics, lounges and end-of-hall rooms (in Bigwind B only), mentioned by multiple participants, but with less frequency than open doors. Participant data identified floor lounges as important neutral ground for peer interaction on their floors. Davit described the role his lounge played in encouraging diverse peer interactions. "We have on each floor a study lounge and random people would show up there and start talking and now it's like clockwork around 10 o'clock you see groups of people go there and get to know each other." While I can provide few specific quotes identifying the lounge as a structure encouraging diverse peer interactions, many stories about diverse peers took place in the lounge. The floor lounge was mentioned as a place used for hanging out with friends, playing games and study. On Campbell A the lounge was frequently used for study. Equipped with two smaller lounges, only the lounge at the front entry to Bigwind B was used as a place to hang out with others from the floor. Foot traffic past this

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lounge, made it easy for residents to drop in or to see who was in the lounge on the way in or out of the floor. Therefore, it may not be solely the presence of a lounge that encouraged interaction, but the location of a lounge at the entrance to the floor.

Participants on Bigwind B reported that residents at the end of the hall were less connected to the floors main activities. Unlike Campbell A, Bigwind Hall had a bend in the center which made the end of the hallway impossible to see from the front of the hall. Sean observed that "about half of the floor interacts together that I'm in and then there's another half that doesn't really interact so much." Michelle indicated that she did not know as many people at the end of the hall "because our floor is kinda in like an L shaped" and most of the people she knew had rooms "up to like the big bump." Paul, a resident at that end of the hall explained the lack of connection between people at his end of the hall, "We are [isolated]. Well we don't get the through traffic and [..] I think it's a combination of the lack of through traffic and how similar the people are to one another, the way that they're paired, you know and it is all guys." The RA agreed that it is harder to pull people in from the end of the hallway and the Community Director indicated that he observed similar patterns on other floors.

Programs and University Interventions

Floor Meeting and Icebreakers. The lounge played host to the most frequently mentioned and most consistently described influence on developing diverse peer interactions in both communities – the first floor meeting. When participants were asked to identify things that encouraged them to interact with others in their diverse residence communities, no program or event was spontaneously mentioned more frequently than

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the first floor meeting. On both Campbell A and Bigwind B, the RAs gathered members of the floor together to go over basic information about residential living and to facilitate ice breakers designed to help students begin the process of getting acquainted. This meeting was one of the first group events of UMBC's Welcome Week activities and took place immediately following student's first dinner in the community's floor lounge.

On Campbell Hall A, the RA facilitated a name game where students had to use the first letter of their name to assign themselves an alternate food name beginning with the same letter as their first name, a mechanism designed to help others remember floor mates by name. Several participants recounted with great enthusiasm the food names of all the people they remembered - artichoke Amy, tangerine Tyra, Sammy Soup. The name game mentioned so many times, that I began to think of Case A as the Sammy Soup case. For Lucas, this floor meeting was his most memorable cross race experience.

> I'm going to remember when we played that game I was telling you
> about at the orientation. [..] the RA and the Welcome Week leader told
> us how like a couple years later they still know people and they call
> them by their food and at first I didn't believe them, it's not completely
> true, but for some people I still remember them like that. So I liked that.
> I thought it was pretty welcoming. I think that's the memory that I
> have and it was a racially and ethnically diverse background or group
> of people.

For Alison, the name game helped her to recognize residents of her community by both name and face, two actions necessary for initiating interactions and friendships.

I think the floor meeting's important, too, because that's how you remember people's faces and you know who's on your floor. That fruit game where you give your name to like a fruit or something. That was actually interesting I probably remembered most of the people after. Tyra Tangerine, or whatever her fruit name was.

For Heather Hamburger, not only did the game help her to learn people's names she began to learn things about others on the floor that helped her to connect with them later.

I was Heather Hamburger and it went around like that. The way it helped us remember was, it would start off with the first person, she would introduce herself - he or she- and then the next person would have to remember the person before them and then introduce themselves and it just went like a chain around the room. Besides introducing out names we also talked about what each of us was there for, some of our interests, the guy [RA, Seth] he was really good at trying to get everyone involved and trying to be like outgoing, share a little bit about themselves.

Over on Bigwind B, the RA had equal success involving residents in an icebreaker requiring them to discover similarities with others on the floor. The icebreaker, The Big Wind Blows, encouraged students to find common personal characteristics or experiences. The student in the center of a group circle would announce a characteristic he or she possessed and anyone with that background would identify themselves by running to the inside of the circle while vying for spaces left vacant in the circle. A new

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student found him or herself in the center of the circle and the process began again. Discovering unseen similarities comforted Sean.

> I remember the first night I said I'm an eagle scout and there's [sic] a
> lot of people that are closed about being a boy scout and I just said it
> and I met Nick and Greg just like that. I met Brittany 'cause I said I was
> from Carroll County and she's the only person from Carroll County.
> You find something in common.

Marcie not only met her floor mates at the first floor meeting, the ice breakers gave her suitemates a starting point to discuss more than the bathroom schedule. She'd met her suitemates, but had done little more than discuss bathroom use prior to the floor meeting.

> When we went to that meeting and played the icebreakers I got to know
> more about them and as well as about the other people that were on our
> floor. I remember that night we had a really good time playing our
> icebreaker games. So that night we went to my suitemates' room and
> we were just talking and laughing about some of the things that some
> people had said and some of the things that we had said.

Like Campbell, students recounted stories of discoveries made at this event with enthusiasm. I began to think of Case B as the Big Wind Blows case. Early analysis revealed few discernible differences of note between the two cases chosen for this study; the icebreakers became an easy way to distinguish between them. The first floor meeting figured so prominently in the interview data that when naming the cases, Case A - the soup case - became Campbell A. Case B - the Big Wind Blows case - became Bigwind B.

Throughout the interviews, students sometimes volunteered vague information about experiences or had difficulty remembering how, where or when events occurred. (For example, one of Patrick's early memories about meeting people was, "Um, but the first day I was here… It was the second or third day. I think the third day. All I remember is that the, um, we got dinner me and my roommate. I think we got dinner. Oh, my gosh.") The detailed descriptions of the first floor meeting painted by participants seven or more weeks it took place confirmed how important and memorable the meeting was to these first year students. Participants grew animated and often laughed spontaneously as they recalled the activities. The icebreakers were particularly helpful in reducing barriers and helping residents reach out to others they might not normally approach.

Even those who described the icebreakers as *dumb* or *lame* valued their utility in facilitating interactions with others on the floor. Rachel gave credit to her RA for encouraging the diverse residents of Bigwind B to socialize via the meeting.

It was with the RAs, they brought us together, I think it was the first night or the second night. But they got everybody on our side of the floor to play games. We thought they were really dumb games, but, you know, it really brought us together. Because when that happened we actually socialized.

Lucas described why he thought his floor was able to create connections when not all floors did. In addition to outgoing residents, Lucas credited the RA for getting interaction started and mentioned the floor meeting as an example.

I think our RA has really helped us out with that- helped get it started

[..] Well, I told you about when we played that game and they had

different activities where we hung out together and did different things,

and at first I thought it was going to be kind of lame, because I didn't

think it was cool at first, but it was. It actually was, and I had a lot of

fun.

From participant's interview data, it was at first difficult to assess if the floor meeting or

the RA was the central variable encouraging diverse peer interaction. The bulk of

evidence suggested that the floor meeting was central. However, there is enough data to

suggest that an approachable RA comfortable with facilitation and outreach was a

necessary component of floor meeting success. (This was also true of open doors. The

doors appeared to be the critical variable, but it was the RA that encouraged students to

keep them open. In other words, the floor meeting and doors were critical, but the success

of these strategies depended on an RA to make it happen. The Community Directors

confirmed that the RAs on both of these floors were skilled and, particularly in Bigwind

B, encouraged residents to get involved.)

Perhaps the most affirming endorsement of the first floor meeting's importance in

facilitating diverse peer interactions and interactions in general was Patrick's assessment

of his own slow transition to Campbell A's connected community. When asked if there

was anything the University could have done to help him connect with others on the floor

more quickly, he blamed himself:

for not being here on the first move in day. I guess I did reach out, I

met people, but I guess this is the way it ended up [..] I wasn't there

and it's a possibility, but I don't think there would have been any other

way, except for, no, I wasn't there for the first community meeting.

For Patrick to provide this assessment, others on the floor had to have told Patrick about

the utility of the meeting – an indicator of the meeting's value to other residents. The first

floor meeting encouraged diverse peer interactions by providing an early setting where

diverse peers participated in structured interaction, exposed hidden similarities and

created shared experiences used to initiate later interaction. Both participants and RAs

assessed the meeting as an important first step in breaking boundaries between diverse

residents and establishing an interactive and welcoming community.

Welcome Week Activities. When asked what experiences or activities helped him

to get to know the other people on Campbell A, Patrick said it had a lot to do with "how

our Woolie [Welcome Week Leader] would take everybody on the floor together in our

hall to breakfast, or lunch, or whatever. That's how I know a lot of people." Like Patrick,

most participants mentioned Welcome Week when describing university interventions

that fostered diverse peer acquaintanceship. Welcome Week is an orientation program

comprised of multiple activities for new students including both mandatory and optional

events. Beginning on move-in day, Welcome Week events were held for the four days

immediately prior to classes (Saturday through Tuesday) and continued through the week

as classes began. Mandatory programs included the first floor meeting, Playfair (a

structured large scale icebreaker for the entering class), a national speaker on diversity,

first year book discussion, and convocation. A variety of social and entertainment events such as outdoor movies, a hypnotist and hall socials were scheduled during evening hours. Also available throughout the week are a host of smaller receptions and workshops targeted at the varying needs and interests of diverse students. Students are given a Welcome Week guide listing the week's events as well as highlighting those events labeled as mandatory. During this time period RAs and upper class Welcome Week Leaders, known as Woolies, are assigned to floors to support students, organize groups for meals and accompany students to sessions.

As Marcie described, the formal and informal activities listed in her Welcome Week book provided opportunities to interact and encouragement to do so.

> The activities in the welcome handbook played a big part in getting to
> know people. [..] The first friend I met, well it happened because I went
> to this S'More thing and right after they were showing Mission
> Impossible III and I'd have never known about that if I hadn't read the
> book. It was for Big Wind Hall. I think it was supposed to be like a get
> to know people, it was right outside the hall. We were making our own
> S'Mores and I went and there was someone from my floor there and we
> got to talking.

The experience Marcie described was typical of descriptions of getting to know other residents from their floor at an orientation event off of their floor. Because Woolies gathered residents from the floor to attend, people from the same floor often found themselves in close proximity with one another at Welcome Week events, too. When

residents went to targeted events or social events independently they were relieved to see a familiar face and used the opportunity to introduce or get better acquainted with people from their floor rather than reaching out to new people. So, while residents met (or had previously seen) each other on the floor (by keeping doors open, passing in hallways or attending the floor meeting), orientation events provided safe opportunities to get better acquainted. Sean explained that he "didn't meet people" at the Welcome Week book discussion, but he "got to know people better at that faculty talk." Similarly, what he recalled about the formal convocation ceremony and the faculty-student picnic that followed was "sitting with people and talking for that whole time. Seeing people there. They had like a picnic and stuff outside. You just go and talk to different people."

Beginning with the first floor meeting, most of the events students described were intentional icebreaker activities, such as Playfair, or social and entertainment events such as an outdoor movie and a comedic Hypnotist. Following the first floor meeting described above, all new students were encourage to attend an all campus icebreaker held in the campus athletic center (RAC). Run by the Playfair group, this event labeled "Extreme Socializing" in their Welcome Week booklet brought students together for an evening of structured interaction activities designed to introduce the new students to campus and to each other. Like the floor meeting, the event required people to mix, meet and interact with individuals they might not have chosen to interact with on their own. Playfair helped Heather to meet different people.

I would say probably through the activity for Welcome Week. It was just this big old gathering in the RAC. That helped. We separated by

birthday months, and then you went around and did these different

activities and got to meet different people and I guess that helped like

getting to know different people. I would say that helped.

Davit described his experience with meeting people during and after Playfair:

They would have different icebreakers, so we were kind of forced to

say hi to people. And then when you'd see someone, "hey, that

person's from orientation" and you wave. The next time you wave and

you ask how they're doing. And before you know it, you're pretty good

friends with them. There was one where we all found people we had

similarities with, like similar t-shirts, similar hair, similar interests.

There was a big room with 1000 maybe 800 freshmen in the RAC, so

we got to meet a large group of people. It was extreme socializing.

Like being forced to live together, being forced to talk to each other was also seen as

positive and helpful even if sometimes annoying or *dumb*. Rachel described Playfair as a

memorable event that encouraged diverse peers to interact because it encouraged them to:

find people with the same characteristics. That was the biggest one. [..]

I guess it was trying to get us new friends. We had to link hands with

somebody and then we had to link hands with somebody else, and then

we were just going around, and at the same time we were talking to

each other about how dumb this was, but, it was still socializing. I

think that was the whole idea. They knew everything was dumb, they

just wanted to do that so we could say something about it.

Like the floor meeting, Playfair helped students to find similarities with others in the room and then form groups to learn more about each other. While described as superficial by Lucas, these events provided introductions to others and helped students to identify similar interests and values not immediately visible on the surface.

Residents also mentioned the evening entertainment components of Welcome Week as opportunities to get to meet and know different people in their floor. As Sean's data suggested earlier, the value of these events was often just meeting and talking with the person or people you found yourself seated next to – a person most likely to be from your floor. Patrick went to see the hypnotist with his roommate and after arriving "then we like sat next to those people, sat next to Mary Jo." Describing how he met others at a variety of orientation activities he also attended with his roommate, Lucas said, "Like we were told to introduce each other, obviously it's orientation. And for meeting the other people, it was either something like, you just sat down, you happened to be near by or something happened that was in common." Once at larger campus events where seating was required, participants sought the familiarity of others on their floor even if they did not yet know them. Students simply sat down next to someone they recognized and then talked to the person they happened to be sitting with. Because students traveled in floor groups with their Woolies, this was often easy to do.

At other times, meeting people from the floor took more effort, but followed a similar pattern of recognition and approach. Tired of being alone, Marcie decided to attend a building wide activity. When she saw Nick, she thought:

There's someone from my [floor] and I was like, "Okay, he might blow

me off, and be like 'whatever, like you're not cool' or he might, you

know, actually talk to me." So I went and I sat next to him and we were

talking and we were like, "We've got to see the movie."

Residents of both Campbell A and Bigwind B reported finding themselves at a campus

event with many different people from many different areas of campus. They looked

around and saw someone familiar from the floor. When approaching someone from your

floor you could say, "Hi, you're on my floor" to break the ice. Even if he or she did not

know the person, the person from your floor provided a familiar, approachable face in a

sea of even less familiar faces.

Only one participant, Holly, mentioned the mandatory session on diversity as

helpful in encouraging interactional diversity without specific prompting, but because of

her positive response, I asked other participants about the event at later interviews. Holly,

the participant who reported making a conscious choice to be more open minded after

arriving at UMBC from a predominantly White high school and neighborhood, described

this nationally known diversity facilitator as a "motivational speaker." The title of the

session was "R-E-S-P-E-C-T." Holly described the event and her reaction to it.

And then I also went with my roommate to the motivational speaker

that they had that was really good. I can't remember her name, but she

comes back every year and she speaks really good [sic]. [..] I remember

it mainly being about diversity, but like being open to diversity and

then she talked a lot about stereotyping. She was kind of like a

comedian in her own way and she was talking about her story about how people looked at her because she was a lesbian and it just was a really good talk.

When asked if any of the Welcome Week events she attended helped her with her transition to a diverse environment, Holly again referred to the diversity speaker.

I remember calling my mom after it. That was like a really great speaker. It was really good, and it really opened your eyes even if you weren't open to everyone. I remember she was talking about how diverse our school was and how lucky we were that we were so diverse…

When asked specifically about the session, other residents echoed Holly's assessment that the speaker was good or at least cool. Michelle asked, "Was she the woman with the kind a short hair? Yeah I went to her. I remember that she was a lesbian and I thought that was cool." Like Holly, Heather also thought of the diversity speaker as a motivational speaker. Heather first replied that she had not attended a diversity speaker, then said:

…was she the motivational speaker? I went to one speaker's show and it was really good. She talked about everyone being different I remember that, and it was mostly about the diversity and how everyone's different and we shouldn't judge people and it was a really good speech. I can't really remember too much of it right now, but I really liked it, it was really good. I just remembered that during the

speech she would make us, she'd get like the audience involved. Like we'd stand up many times during the speech at some interval and introduce ourselves…

Students experienced this speaker as motivational and part storyteller, part comedian, part entertainment. Yet, clearly some participants got the message that UMBC was a diverse place where they were encouraged to get to know others in their diverse communities. As in other sessions, participants were given the opportunity to interact with others in the session.

Not everyone indicated that Welcome Week activities were helpful. (Residents did not always associate the first floor meeting as a Welcome Week activity.) Not only did Lucas keep his door closed at first, he was uncomfortable meeting people at Playfair. While he thought the floor meeting was effective, the larger scale of Playfair "pushed him away." When asked what encouraged interaction with diverse peers, he noted the value of structured interaction, but found the Playfair activity unhelpful. Lucas said:

when we had our group interactions that encouraged it basically for everybody. I know that one of the orientation activities, this wasn't just for our floor, this was for everyone who was a freshman I believe at UMBC or a transfer student. They had them get together and do activities with each other in the RAC and that was like a mass group of people and I didn't really like that. That kind of pushed me away from hanging out with people because you really didn't know the people at

all, and you thought, I'm probably never going to see them again, unless they're like in one of my classes.

Lucas attended events, and in general thought the activities helped form connections, but felt uncomfortable interacting in a large group setting. Jargal chose to stay in his room. He "didn't attend too many social events" during Welcome Week because of "shyness." He did attend "a couple of them like the hypnotist and all that. Other than that we didn't really go out too much." Sarah went to the "summer reading discussion and went to something else," but did not go to many of the activities because "we're all very friendly so we all thought that the activities were you know for people who aren't used to meeting others or need a little help in meeting others or doing new things and we all made friends very easily with not only our floor but with everyone from the building or anyone who we just came in contact with on a daily basis."   As a result several of the residents on her floor hid from the Woolie to avoid being rounded up for activities.

> …our Woolie in particular was very outspoken in that he would every morning knock on our doors, bang on our doors, making sure we got up and actually went to the activities and a lot of times we didn't attend the activities, but just the mere fact that we were all experiencing the way he handled things, a lot of us interacted at least in that way. So we would all be like, 'oh, what's going on with our Woolie you know, he won't let us sleep' [..] that's how conversations initially started.

Despite reports from some participants that they did not attend many Welcome Week activities or found it uncomfortable to do so, no participant reported missing Welcome

Week activities completely. In order to test emerging themes, participants were asked if Welcome Week activities encouraged students to meet and interact with diverse peers at the final interview. No one responded negatively; a few qualified their statement by suggesting it was better for others than for them either because they did not need it or because they were too shy to attend. Welcome Week played a significant and positive role in encouraging diverse peer interactions for many residents. Although records indicated that nearly three quarters of first year students attended Welcome Week events, other than the floor meeting, there was no single event that was considered beneficial by all residents. Data related to Welcome Week often contained references to more than one event suggesting that no single event (excepting the floor meeting) was as influential as the cumulative effect of the multiple opportunities Welcome Week provided for new students from many backgrounds to interact and find similarities. Describing Playfair, her floor meeting and multiple meals together, Michelle recalled her involvement with other residents from Bigwind B during Welcome Week as helpful.

> That first day, not the first day, during the first couple of days, we went to things. I remember the thing in the gym, too. We were all jumping around. The one like jumping in a circle that was on our floor [helped]. And also when our Woolies would like come and get us all to go to dinner together that was really helpful cause then we didn't have a choice, but to like sit and talk to each other.

Alison was not thrilled to be marched around in groups, but still conceded that taken as a whole, the forced togetherness of Welcome Week was effective.

I think it's those different things that they made us do together that got

us to get to know each other. Like, we went to see the hypnotist

together, and we got to know some of the people there. When we eat

breakfast in the morning, we did get to know some people during

breakfast and, um, ... and lunch and dinner. Oh, and they made us learn

everybody's name according to their food. Yea, that was fun too. So,

like even now I still call Sammy, Sammy Soup.

While different events and activities during Welcome Week had different value

for different residents, the structured events and unstructured meal times provided

multiple points for interaction between diverse peers to occur. Interactional

diversity was not left to chance; Welcome Week activities encouraged cross racial

interaction by providing structured opportunities for such interactions to occur.

Cultural Events and Diversity Workshops. As described above, participant data

related to the required diversity session during Welcome Week was generally positive,

but not all students mentioned it and only one listed this workshop as a significant

influence on their desire to and comfort with engaging in diverse peer interactions.

Resident Assistants indicated that response to the R-E-S-P-E-C-T session was positive

and because it happens each year it is one of the sessions staff encourage students to

attend. Student evaluations of this session are positive and numbers showed it was well

attended. However, Michelle specifically mentioned not wanting to attend anything

specifically for Black students and Nick thought the titles of cultural events ought to be

changed to make it clear that others were welcome. Alison and Sarah mentioned that their

first RA introduced them to an Indian Dance program, but there was no other mention of specific cultural programs that aided or hindered interaction.

Stereotypes, Prejudices and Political Correctness

As illustrated in the data related to joking presented earlier in this chapter, stereotypes are ever present in Campbell A and Bigwind B. As the basis for jokes, some students in this study might argue that stereotypes provided an initial bridge that helped students to cross differences and sustain relationships with diverse peers through humor. Indeed the findings in earlier sections of this chapter suggest this argument is true. However, despite the participants' use of jokes rooted in stereotypes to bridge differences and ease discomfort, the presence of stereotypes and prejudices interfered with interaction and impacted intimacy in relationships. Particularly in the beginning of the semester, stereotypes hindered interaction in the diverse communities of Campbell A and Bigwind B. As illustrated by Patrick, assumptions kept students from or it made it more difficult for students to form friendships with diverse peers.

> Um, it's more of just an idea that's in my head that I think that if I tried
>
> to become friends with these people, it would be more uncomfortable
>
> than it would be if I went out to meet people but it's really, that's not
>
> true.

Sean arrived at UMBC never once thinking "that I'd get in on a diverse floor." Coming from a predominantly White community and high school he'd never experienced anything different, so he just "expected college to be all White." Until his family told him to begin looking at people for who they are and not what they look like, Sean stayed to

himself. Stereotypes and prejudices kept Sean from initiating relationships with both his Indian roommate and others on the floor as well.

> It might have been like a feeling of superiority maybe, and that being in the majority, being an almost complete majority for, you know, all of my life, I kind of made myself think that I was better than the other people. Well, it's obviously not true. It's just kind of what had been in my head from living in a place where it's 95% White. It was just a block - these people are less than me, so why should I go talk to them? So, realizing that that wasn't the truth was part of what made me go out and meet people.

Unfortunately, by the time he made with friends with others on the floor he felt it was too late to recover with his roommate. He did not know how he would open up after months of superficial relationship. (Though at the end of the study his roommate was spending more time in the room and they were able to talk about sports and classes.) Sean's stereotypes of Blacks also created distance between White and Black members of Bigwind B's core group. Sean was one of the White students Marcie described below:

> Three people who are coming from very, very White communities where they'd say like, "At my school, there are only 14 Black kids and there only 12 Black kids and I didn't like any of them because they all basically acted like the Black people do on TV" and coming from their point of view, like that wasn't okay. So in the beginning we had that separation between us.

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Stereotypes impeded racially different resident's ability to approach each other comfortably. Political correctness or fear of saying the wrong thing accompanied the stereotypes and prejudice. Tired of "walking on broken glass," Marcie challenged the White students to say the word "nigger" just so everyone could be comfortable with each other. When they would not do so, she said the word loudly and repeatedly. Marcie described this as a turning point in relationships between White and Black residents.

> Because you see on TV, you can see like this is how you're supposed to interact with the Black guy, the Black tough girl, you know? And we don't act that way and they've never encountered anyone in that way or like us. They don't really know how to approach it. So I think before that whole experience, everyone was just kind of cautious, nervous about how they could present themselves, how to communicate with us. And when I was just like, you know what, say it - don't be nervous. I don't represent the NAACP just because I'm a confident Black woman. I'm just like everyone else, just because I'm Black doesn't necessarily mean that I'm part of this organization. I wasn't like going around expecting everyone to be politically correct, so I think at that moment everyone could go back to letting their hair down and being comfortable around everyone.

White students present for this interaction also saw it as a turning point. They remained uncomfortable with the language she used, but started interacting more comfortably. As stereotypes and political correctness were addressed, more open friendships emerged.

Previously hidden stereotypes and prejudices became jokes rooted in the same stereotypes that initially blocked intimacy. Describing a later interaction where residents of Bigwind were sharing thoughts and joking about Bigwind's plans to celebrate Black History month, Marcie said, "Even though I might not have liked everything I heard, it was nice that no one felt like they had to apologize."

While stereotypes existed about White students and minority students also targeted and made fun of White students, minority students also expressed the need to make others comfortable through the jokes described in earlier sections or less frequently through direct confrontation, before they could become comfortable on the floor. Students denied that the jokes were harmful in any way. Yet, Black and Asian students more frequently reported making jokes about themselves to break tension or to give others permission to joke with them.

Some minority students also avoided activities and same race peers that they or others considered stereotypical of their racial group. For example, Michelle was adamant about never attending the Black and Gold event sponsored by a Black group on campus. Michelle did not like to label herself because, "I feel like if I'm Black, people will be like, 'Oh she must love rap music,' and like they'll just immediately think of all of the stereotypes people associate with being Black." She also avoided more than superficial interaction with "stereotypical" Black students. Most students described the core group of Bigwind Hall as very friendly, but other than Nick and her roommate no one in the core group interacted more than superficially with Tasha. Michelle explained:

But um like I wouldn't really like, I know Tasha she's - if I would think

of like a stereotypical Black person like I think Tasha more so like that

than I am - and she's nice and we talk in the hall and everything, but I

wouldn't, I don't think I would fit really fit in well if I tried to hang out

with her.

Sarah was not initially comfortable with other Indian and Indian American women. Like

Michelle she held stereotypes about others who shared her ethnic identity.

A lot of my older cousins and friends who had finished college, they

had always advised me, be careful of who you make friends with at

first. Indian girls have a lot of drama, but then again I thought, don't all

girls have drama? They always made it seem like it was so much more

in the Indian crowd, so at first when I did find out that my suitemate

was Indian, I was kind of a little bit skeptical, and kind of left

wondering, what would happen, but once we got to know each other,

everything just seemed fine. [..] I did not want to be very closely

associated with other Indian women.

At the same time, some members of the core group had issues with a Black lacrosse

player because he did not fit racial stereotypes. Marcie imitated these students, "I don't

like him he acts so White all the time, he's so White, so White, so White…" Students of

all races made these judgments, including Michelle who did not interact with Tasha

because she was stereotypically Black. This left Marcie wondering where she fit in,

"Sometimes you feel like the Blacks don't accept you and then it's like well the Whites -

I'm not truly White" and left Nick, a friend of Tasha's, wondering why others "want everyone to be the same." What was clear is that stereotypes hindered both cross race and same race relationships between students particularly at the beginning of the year.

Perhaps the most deeply held stereotypes on Bigwind B were related only indirectly to race. Stereotyped as arrogant, White (used in a pejorative sense), loud and disrespectful, few on Bigwind B made any real effort to interact with the eight lacrosse players living together at the beginning of the floor. Even the RA assumed these men wanted to remain apart. Hoff, the RA, reported being surprised when mid-year, one of the Lacrosse players asked him why he had not included them in floor events. Describing the lack of interaction between the lacrosse boys and the rest of the floor, Sean said, "Then here are the lacrosse players that just really don't interact with us at all besides I think there are some egos there. I know that at least some of the athletes in high school thought they were better so they might have the same feelings." Like Hoff, few students on the floor considered the possibility that the lack of interaction between the athletes and the core group, stemmed from the core group's assumptions about the lacrosse players and not the other way around. Michelle directly said "I wouldn't interact with the lacrosse players. One because I'm kind of upset that they're loud, well that comes later, but I don't really like them - I didn't associate with lacrosse, football whatever in high school - so I'm not going to associate with them here." Despite her intentional shunning of them, she saw them as aloof and unwilling to participate in the floor. The lone Black lacrosse player often took the brunt of their comments for acting White. Marcie explained,

Lacrosse is a typically all White sport. People who play it are White and White males. And even in my high school as diverse as it was, when guys of other races played lacrosse people teased them all the time like you're Black you shouldn't be playing lacrosse, you're Indian you shouldn't be playing lacrosse, it's a White guys sport. So let's say someone is on a sport like that and sports are a huge part of their time, the only people that are there are like them. You know it's not really their fault that they didn't get other experience.

Whether the stereotypes had a hindering or helpful impact on Bigwind's diverse peer interactions depended on perspective. Clearly stereotypes isolated the lacrosse players reducing the amount of contact between the primarily White males and the diverse core group on the floor. At the same time, jointly held lacrosse stereotypes served to unite members of the more diverse core group. Paul observed that the group bias against the lacrosse players had

a solidifying kind of effect on the rest of the community because they were all like, 'oh those are the lacrosse guys, they're not cool, we don't like them because they're in lacrosse.' And they're actually a minority, or viewed as such at a point. There was a tangible feeling of exclusion towards them at one point, which was really weird and scary. But I think most of that's gone away and I think initially it did have an impact.

Question Two: Summary and Conclusion

Participant data suggested that regardless of high school background and the presence of stereotypes, when a good mix of racially diverse, academically focused first year students get stuck together in the close quarters of a college residence hall, they will be forced to encounter one another. Excitement, loneliness, fear of exclusion and a desire to make friends encouraged residents to overcome their initial anxieties and interact with others different from themselves. The first floor meeting played a critical role in breaking the ice and helped residents to find less visible similarities with other residents. By attending orientation events during the first week of school and just propping doors while on the hallway, residents took advantage of multiple opportunities to interact. The presence of stereotypes at first hindered then provided bridges and learning opportunities. Some students bore the cost of these stereotypes more than others.

Research Question Three:

Do the interactions between peers in compositionally diverse residential communities impact their learning? If so, how do students describe these effects?

Living and interacting with diverse peers had a profound impact on learning for many participants and, by extension, members of the community. Students living in diverse communities reported learning a wide variety of interesting facts about the people they lived with as well as about their cultural habits, values and beliefs. They also reported developing a greater openness to differences while developing the ability to view problems and questions from multiple points of view. Prompted by awareness that their world view has been limited by what others have taught them, some students

became curious to discover other things of which they may have been ignorant. Others developed a willingness to explore ideas in the classroom they might not otherwise have been open to hearing prior to interacting with and learning about their diverse peers. Although a small minority of participants reported learning nothing from diverse peers, multiple student participants not only learned, but seemed excited about learning.

Did students report learning from peers in compositionally diverse environments?

Two students reported no learning. Peer interaction lists from those participants indicated less frequent diverse peer interaction than other participants. One participant indicated that she had already experienced many of the revelations other students were facing for the first time. Maddie (having lived in China, Japan and multiple regions of the United States before arriving at UMBC), said:

> I've moved around in a lot of places, and I've made friends with different races of people and it sort of feels like I've already [learned]. For some people college is a new experience where they get to meet people from different backgrounds and different cultures and get to know them, but I feel like I've already done a lot of that.

Still Maddie recognized that by making her choice to spend time with Chinese friends, she lost "basically new insights into life." Still Maddie, having attended predominantly White schools prior to college, having Chinese peers was different for Maddie. She learned about her Chinese heritage and was learning to speak Mandarin Chinese, something she thought would help her in international business.

Holly, the only student in the study to report that all of the students in her close interaction circle were White at the end of the study period, paused in surprise when she recognized that the peer list she had just written was not diverse - a realization that disappointed her as she had hoped to shed her family's attitudes about race. Although Holly reported learning nothing from diverse peers when questioned, she mentioned cultural facts and grooming habits that had sparked their interest in roommates or friends throughout our interviews. Even though she reported no learning outcomes, Holly expressed interest in learning about the cultural habits and grooming practices of those racially different from her. For other participants, similar interest in grooming later created a curiosity about differences that eventually led to a willingness to interact or to be open to learning in other contexts. With less interaction, Holly may have learned more slowly than others or it may be, as she indicated, that she did not learn anything from living on her diverse floor.

Patrick said, "I guess you could say I really haven't learned much of anything because, unfortunately, I haven't been - up to now - willing to go out and talk to everybody." But, by the final interview, he, too, described learning prompted by interactions with his roommate and new efforts to meet others on the floor. As Patrick challenged himself to spend more time with people different from him (in part because of questions raised by participation in this study), he, too, reported learning. By the final interview, he eloquently described meaningful changes in his openness to others, empathy and values. He attributed these changes to greater awareness of cultural and socio-economic differences learned from interactions and observations of his roommate,

floor mates and their families.   In summary, students who reported no learning outcomes were few and either had significant experience with diverse peers prior to college or had fewer diverse peer relationships at UMBC compared to peers who reported learning.

Participant learning: physical differences, cultural and geographical facts.

Some of the earliest learnings reported by participants were simple things like facts or customs. Students report learning about many things from diverse peers including physical differences, grooming habits, clothing, geography, food, music and even lions. While seemingly simple, these basic cultural facts were presented by many participants as eye opening and exciting parts of their experience with diverse peers. These simple learnings created curiosity, stimulated conversation and fostered deeper reflection.

Physical differences and grooming. Some of the most interesting awareness's for the women in the study were related to physical differences and grooming. Holly reported that there were many things she hadn't know about different cultures before coming to UMBC and cites as evidence of her ignorance, "Like I didn't know a lot about like the Indian hair types." Maddie also offered knowledge about hair as evidence of learning. She said, "I learned more about physical differences, too. Like her hair and my hair, how it's different, and I don't know how that will help me later on in life. Maybe it won't, but it's just interesting to know." Holly's White roommate, Brittany, was preparing to go out with an African-American friend when Holly entered the room. Holly described her discovery that some Black women on the floor did not remove body hair.

I came into my room and my roommate was tweezing her eyebrows.[..]

She was like, "Michelle is waiting for me, but I told her I had to come

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do some White girl stuff, White girl grooming." And I was like, "What are you taking about? Doesn't she tweeze her eyebrows?" and she was like, "She doesn't really have to." I was like, "What?" I was so oblivious.

In addition to hair and physical differences, clothing and shopping preferences were also noted by women. Michelle suggested that "You like to go shopping. I like to go shopping. We're probably going to be friends. We'll go shopping together. It's like I'm Black. You're from Israel, So what?" But as Alison and Tyra discovered when they went shopping with their White roommate, even shopping can lead to the discovery that people of diverse backgrounds may shop in different stores reflecting cultural taste in clothing. Describing a trip to the mall, Alison entered a store she does not usually shop in with her roommate. She described the trip, "We went to Towson a little while ago to go shopping and our roommate just had to go to Delia's. Me and Tyra were like, 'It's such a White store. Like look at all these little shirts. They're so White, they just look like you.'" Apart from everyday dress, Holly learned about traditional Indian dress from a friend in the building:

> She got to tell me about the different things with her religion and show me the intricate beaded outfit that she gets to wear to all her family functions and that's something that I'd never heard of before and obviously nothing that I had experienced, so I was like, "Oh really, that's awesome!"

When asked why she thought learning about clothing was important, Alison replied:

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It will probably help me out later when I meet another Indian person or

if I want to fit in with them. And it's a good way to communicate with

people too, because when you know something about them, then they

feel you're interested in them, so you can keep having a conversation.

More importantly, interest in daily habits opened the door for additional interaction,

dialogue and relationships between women. Questions about physical differences,

grooming and dress created more comfortable spaces for relationships to develop and to

explore less superficial differences.

Geography lessons, cultural facts and language. While men in the study did not

mentioned grooming or clothing, both sexes indicated learning about geographical and

cultural facts from others in their community. Often these lessons came from

international students, but many facts came from domestic students as well. Similar to

women's observations about grooming and clothing, these simple discoveries prompted

greater awareness of differences and curiosity about the world while providing a

foundation for additional conversation. More than one student was encouraged to

discover or rediscover world geography. Patrick said he had learned a lot about Nepal

from his roommate because, "I didn't know much about Nepal. I for some reason did not

know Mt. Everest was in Nepal which is really silly of me." Michelle was reminded that

Estonia actually existed saying, "Harry just moved in and he's from Estonia, and that's

cool. I forgot all about Estonia. I didn't even remember that being a country." Alison, too,

discovered a country she did not know existed, "She comes from this place in the West

Indies that I've never heard of in my life." Maddie's African roommate "likes to talk

about Africa and she's shown me pictures of animals." Lucas learned about life in

Ethiopia from a female friend in the Ethiopian Society. These basic facts often prompted

questions and discussions about the world. Michelle illustrated this point well when she

discussed what she learned from her African suitemates.

> Well, I just learn. Many people sometimes have a jaded view of what
> Africa is like because they just see National Geographic or whatever.
> So I asked, "What is it really like. Are people just walking around with
> no clothes on?" They'll be like, "Maybe in the villages or something,
> but in cities and towns people have regular clothes and we live in
> houses" and I'm like, "Oh that's really interesting!" because we won't
> really get to see that part of Africa. We either see the fragile part or the
> part that's in war.

Food and everyday habits were also a source of learning and surprise for several

participants. Patrick discovered curry through his Nepalese roommate. An Ethiopian

friend brings Lucas food from the Ethiopian society parties. Sarah asked her Asian

friends if their food at home is "really like the stuff we eat in restaurants." Davit and

Alison also learned about food and other differences from living with the diverse group

on her floor. Alison described what she learned about food as well as the everyday habits

of the diverse peers living on her floor:

> When I got to know Sarah, I learned about Indian culture. When I got
> to know [two Asian women], I got to learn a lot about their food
> because they feed me all the time. The White people like to play DDR.

I learn all these different things all the time, and if I was at home, I would never have known that. I wouldn't have known that other people don't eat meat.

Davit shared Alison's surprise that some people don't eat meat. As simple as that fact may seem, to Davit it was an eye opening revelation.

I just assumed that everyone was like me and everyone was like my friends, but now that I've known new groups of people I know that's completely opposite. People don't think the same way. People, there's actually people who don't eat meat, you know, that was a big thing.

The realization that some people don't eat meat, prompted Davit to think that there might also be differences in deeper things like the way "people see the world."

Nick and Heather reported enjoying language differences, particularly the opportunity to practice a language they already knew or were trying to learn. Heather asked people if they spoke another language when she met them.

I love talking about things that other people do, like people who speak Spanish. My Spanish isn't great, but you know, I actually do share my language with one person who lives on my floor and I think I'm the only Hispanic person on the floor, so I do practice my Spanish with him, and go around getting to know people and see what other people's interests are. Some people are learning different languages and we're like what does this mean, I ask them about it.

Sean simply enjoyed learning new words from and sharing Haitian-American slang with

Marcie. Describing her as the friend he thought most different from himself, he took delight in learning simple things about her language.

> I learned a lot about the differences with [Marcie] that I probably hadn't realized before. There are a lot of words - our vocabularies are very different. But then we started to learn each other's vocabulary, I learned she's Haitian, so I started to learn about her culture and that helped me with being open minded. My favorite [Haitian] word is "eeesh". It's kind of fun just to learn different things.

As Sean said, these basic facts and discoveries were simply fun to learn. Students living in both Campbell A and Bigwind B reported learning a wide variety of basic, simple facts about other countries and other people. These learnings ranged from a greater awareness of physical differences and grooming habits, to lessons of world geography, cultural habits and use of language. As Sean pointed out, awareness of these basic facts created a greater openness to learning more about other cultures prompted by the fun of new discoveries and connections. The discovery of simple differences they did not know existed, prompted these curious students to wonder what else they might not know.

Awareness and understanding of cultural differences

For students from predominantly White or Black high schools their diverse floors provided the first opportunity to discover differences in less superficial ways. Even for most students with exposure to diverse peers in high school, the residential environment provided more opportunities to observe, to ask questions and to enter discussions that fostered awareness and understanding of simple differences – something that happened

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less often in their more cliquish high school environments. This in turn provided more opportunities for questioning, deeper understanding and further discussion. Rachel said that living on Bigwind B had helped her to better understand different cultures and backgrounds. This understanding gave her more to talk about with others, so she found herself being more social and asking questions because it was much "easier to ask questions here than it was in high school." As Sarah reported, questioning, "just out of curiosity," allowed some students to become aware of the deeper cultural differences exhibited through values, accepted behaviors, and family expectations. For example, Michelle observed that several Christian students with different cultural and religious backgrounds (including Ethiopian Orthodox, Haitian-American Catholic and Greek Orthodox) celebrated Lent, but did so quite differently on different time schedules. She also found Marcie's Haitian culture and food interesting. These experiences piqued Michelle's desire for more in depth learning. Michelle explained "it's just kind of like you get a taste for all these different cultures and you might find something that you like and you might want to look into it more."

Many of these deeper understandings resulted from discussions, observations and comparisons of family dynamics and patterns. Sarah's ideas about the unity of Asian families developed in her Eastern Indian family were challenged when two Asian students both told her their Christian parents had allowed them to choose their own religion. She found that interesting "being from an Asian family, because I've always understood the family unit is close knit and strong and, whatever one person is doing the other person should be doing, too." Both Chris and Holly became aware of how strict and

formal Marcie's Haitian parents were compared to their own. Marcie told others on Bigwind B that as a first generation Haitian- American she did not have some of the freedoms others enjoyed in their purely American cultures. While Holly heard her descriptions, it was not until the third interview that she really understood her suitemate's family and how her own behavior impacted their interactions:

> how strict [they are] and how at home she was only allowed to speak French. She wasn't allowed to speak anything else, and how when they come to visit, we always [say] Mr. and Mrs., but in their family, it's only polite when you greet them if you call them sir and ma'am and use their full names. We didn't know that, so we always, really I, wondered why they don't like us. It's because we never like greeted them in the proper way that they felt was respectful.

Patrick provided an example of how earlier superficial learning gave way to cultural comparison and then deeper cultural understanding. During his third interview Patrick, who earlier said he had learned little because he had made little effort to interact with students different from himself, explained that he had learned a lot from his Nepalese roommate, learning that he said impacted how he acts every day. Initial awareness of superficial cultural facts combined with deeper information about his roommate's family and cultural practices. This information allowed understanding that eventually turned into respect and a desire to incorporate parts of Shyam's cultural values into his own. Patrick clarified:

I'm more conscious of what you see in movies, about how Asian people take off shoes before you go into places, but there's more than just that. [..] There is, I guess, a lot more curry - he does eat a lot of curry. [..] but now that I know about [his culture] I might want to do what he does and this way I can add on to what I already know is good, to add certain things from him that my parents didn't teach me, because of what his parents taught him, like more respect for the family.

He continued:

So in a sense Shyam was saying how he has so many cousins or sisters and brothers and I guess I never really realized that it's kind of cool to have all those people because it creates a lot more emotion. I also learned that my family's quite small.[..] And it kind of makes me want to talk to my family a lot more and to put a lot more emphasis on that, because I don't really do that. I spend more time on myself and trying to impress others rather than helping other people. I guess I really didn't see the good that happens when you talk to other people.

The judgments Patrick made earlier about other cultures were gone from this later reflection. Davit, too, became less judgmental saying:

I've learned that there is probably a lot more to understand in this world than I originally thought. I don't want to say everything seems so Black and White when I lived back in California, but it just seemed like a lot more questions arise just because you see other people's point of view

and you tend to incorporate that into what you believe is acceptable and what's not acceptable.

By the end of the study Heather had learned that "change is good because it opens you up to different things, different types of people, you take an interest in their culture, and that in a way makes you more cultured." Just as encountering basic facts and simple differences fed curiosity and encouraged questioning, the subsequent observation and inquiry spawned by the residents' curiosity made possible deeper understanding of cultural differences. Through interactions with diverse peers, residents in both Campbell A and Bigwind B began developed a greater openness to people and ideas accompanied by reduction of prejudice and stereotypes.

Openness to diversity and reduced prejudice and stereotypes

Stereotypes abound at UMBC as described in prior sections of this chapter. The jokes described earlier depended on the existence of racial or ethnic stereotypes for their impact and served in part to ease tension, so it was not unexpected that Holly expressed surprised "that it would be so easy to have so many different ethnicities together living and there'd be no problems considering all of the stereotypes and what not there are nowadays." The lack of conflict between racial groups was important to her because with all the stress of "being a freshmen" she "couldn't imagine what it would be like for someone that had to like deal with all the college stuff plus like having a constant stereotype or prejudice against them." The greater awareness of cultural differences

experienced by many in the study brought with it reduction of prejudice and a greater openness to look beyond stereotypes when interacting with diverse peers.

Referring to the stereotype that Asian students "have to be smart," Shyam said "Since I've come here, I've learned that it's just a joke and everybody is where they are because they're smart. If they weren't smart they wouldn't be here. You come to realize that. So I mean, the [stereotypes] might be there, but like no one really gives it any attention and it dies." Lucas also learned to look beyond stereotypes before making judgments about people. Lucas met a male from a racial background different from his own and later learned that he was interested in a wide variety of things he might not have expected based on his appearance. "He's into film, he's into skate boarding, and snow boarding and a lot of different things that are I guess fun. He likes just a lot of different things. He likes to play pool [..] and if there's any kind of entertainment, he knows about it, and I know that might sound kind of vague, but he reads a lot, too." The recognition that one of his closest friends on the floor was the person he saw as most different from himself (sex, race, and ethnicity) pushed Sean to reexamine his stereotypes and to question "why certain people become your friends and what conversation or interaction leads to becoming good friends." While he had not yet reached a final conclusion, he had learned that "you really need to look past, you know, visual differences or things and look more into people than you really have ever before. It's a look for what people are all about, not just what they look like or how they act." These realizations came both from observations and by talking openly about issues of race with others on his floor.

You start to look beyond the color of their skin or where they're from and see more about the people. I mean, I've learned a lot here about that. [..] That race is an issue and people make judgments, but once you get past the judgment, then once you make race not taboo, once you actually talk about race and then eventually joke about it - we do - I guess you start to see people in a different way. [..] It's really just seeing them more for who they are and not immediately seeing somebody and going, 'oh, you're Asian.'

Sean, more open than most participants about his prejudices and fears, said living on Bigwind B helped him to get over his prejudices and taught him "to be less stereotypical."

Most participants indicated in different ways that racism and stereotypes are wrong (even if some thought of stereotypes as unavoidable or even natural), but fewer addressed their own racist or stereotypical ideas as directly as did Sean. More commonly students talked about learning to be more open to diverse peers. In a world where "race is in the news and the world is growing smaller", Nick recognized during his first interview that to succeed "you have to broaden your horizons, you have to open you're your mind." In his third interview he was more specific, saying:

the way to succeed at UMBC is you have to think differently. You can't think of yourself, because there's nobody here that's just like you at all. [..] these are kids that are on their own now, basically, so they're making their own assumptions and own beliefs and own views. You

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have to think openly and you have to be diverse.

Heather agreed. Living with diverse peers on Campbell A and socializing with diverse friends on Bigwind B:

> opens you up to the different accents, the different people you will meet
> out in the world. Growing up you hang out with a certain group of
> friends, with a certain group of people and you don't really know much
> except for what's in that group. But coming here, where there are so
> many different people, you learn about other things that you might not
> have known about. You learn about different kinds of people than the
> ones you're used to.

Michelle is equally convinced that living in a diverse environment like Bigwind B has an impact on openness and reduction of prejudice. With unwavering conviction she said, "Really, if somebody was racist, I'd make them come and live here for like a week." During the same final interview Michelle provided further explanation:

> It's just that like racism and all that stuff is really dumb. Because once
> you actually live with whatever race you're against, or whatever
> ethnicity you're against, you realize that these people are just people
> and that's maybe a little thing about them, but overall they're just like
> you and it sounds really cliché, but it's true.

As Sean began looking below the surface, he, too, accepted Michelle's cliché that people are more alike than different, a discovery one makes if open to it. For Sean living on Bigwind B taught him to become more open. He also found that when meeting different

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people "if you're open about yourself you'll find out that you're really not that different." In our first interview, Patrick indicated that most of his friends were White simply because that's how his parents had raised him. Surprised when I pointed out that he had already begun spending time with several Asian and Black students on the floor (based on previous interview and interaction lists), Patrick was first surprised by this awareness, then pleased, and then curious to observe and learn more. At his final interview, Patrick, though more slowly than others, demonstrated a growing openness to others and he, too, began to recognize the similarities. In a recent visit to Alison's room he found two Asian students playing computer games and hanging out with her in her room. What was remarkable to him as he described the encounter was that it was so comfortable and felt so normal. Explaining how he had previously felt awkward around Black people, Patrick said:

> When I live close to them, I see that their rooms are the same, that they ask me questions, they do the same things as I do, studying in the same way. It's kind of silly, but it kind of puts a concrete picture in my head. They're really not that different. They do the same things that I do. There is no world secret, nothing that they all do that makes them different.

Talking about her earlier life experiences with diversity and her experience at UMBC, Marcie concisely summarizes the sentiments of other study participants.

> I've gotten to know more people and different religions and races and I not only just feel smarter in a sense I feel more open to this world and I

feel less sheltered and I feel like I'm better able to function in this society than I was before not only because I'm obviously older, but just because I know more than I did before and I think that's true for mostly everyone.

Embedded in this new openness to different people and new ideas gained from interaction with diverse peers is the need to develop the skills and attitudes necessary to live in a diverse community. As residents of both Campbell A and Bigwind B expressed a greater willingness to be open to different others, they also experimented with and cultivated the skills and attitudes necessary to peacefully coexist in their compositionally diverse environments.

Compromise and politeness

Residents of both Campbell A and Bigwind B reported that an important part of what they learned from difference was how to get along with others. As students became more aware of differences, they also became more aware of the need to adapt their behavior to the likes and dislikes of the others they live with. After her first two months on Campbell A Sarah became "more aware now of who I'm surrounded by since I've gotten to know everyone on the floor. I know now some people, their likes and dislikes and better ways of interacting with different people." Likewise, living at the other end of the hall, Heather found that a combination of respect, open communication and compromise were key to community living. "I've learned that you always have to respect if you really want to be respected."

Over in Bigwind Hall, Michelle and Jargal reached similar conclusions. Although Jargal got along well with his Trinidadian roommate (as confirmed by the RA and their Facebook pages), Jargal found it necessary to adapt to his roommate's more social, sometimes loud and laissez-faire style of living he attributed to cultural difference. Jargal described compromises over music volume and security issues amongst other issues:

> Well, because he is Black, and he's the first Black roommate I've had, just like, you've got to learn to let little things go. [..] people over. You just kind of get used to it, you don't really mind it. So it's just like you just get over it unless it's like a really big thing.

Referring again to compromises with his roommate, Jargal said he had learned, "Definitely be more polite…it just helps to be more courteous and say it without being offensive." Learning to let go of little things was key to living in tight quarters with culturally different others. With her African roommate in mind, Michelle echoed Jargal's thoughts:

> I've learned that you need to make a lot of compromises living around other people. Sometimes some stuff you just have to let go like if your roommate is [has] annoying little things and like chews loud or something. You just kind of have to let that stuff go and just be like "That's just how they are." If it gets to be really bad and you're trying to study and they're chomping on some cocoa crispies or something then you just need to be like "Can you eat that a little quieter please? I'm trying to study." But a lot of little things you have to let go and you

also have to be considerate of others. You can't be loud all the time.

You have to like realize that there are other people in the world besides yourself and you have to think about them with your actions.

Like other's, Michelle's awareness of the need for compromise and communication is rooted in a growing awareness that her behavior impacts others and an increasing ability to take the perspective of the other people on the floor. Nick also said, "You can't just think of yourself." Michelle cited the need for consideration while several of her peers said they had learned to be polite in order to maintain their interactions on the floor. By mid-year maintaining relationships with their diverse peers often required conscious effort to be respectful and polite. Learning to behave respectfully kept conflict from disrupting the floor. Sarah offered this explanation:

Polite meaning that everyone should have respect for each other regardless of our differences or regardless of who we are as a person and it's very important to have politeness be a factor on our floor because without being polite or without having respect for others it's extremely hard to get along or to just go on with everyday life.

Referring again to compromises with his roommate, Jargal learned to "definitely be more polite because some people take things the wrong way. It just helps to be more courteous and say it without being offensive."

Two of the participants in the study found that they had to curb their outspoken natures in order to live successfully in a diverse community. Alison said she learned to tone down a direct communication style she attributed to being Black. Alison learned:

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how to interact better with people socially and how to say certain
things. Because I'm Black, I'm very outspoken about certain things and
I've learned to kind of control that a little bit and find different ways to
talk to people. Because now that I'm in college I'm encountering
different situations that I'd never thought I'd encounter before and
being able to talk to people is something that I've learned a lot. [..] So, I
kind of learned to tone that down a little bit and talk to people. 'Cause I
care about people.

While some of the concern for politeness comes from a need to maintain harmony on the

floor, most participants share Alison's motivation of care and a desire to be a good

community member. Equally outspoken, by the third interview, Nick had angered several

people on his floor with his jokes and outspoken nature. Through these conflicts, Nick

had learned to watch what he says not only out of care, but also because his floor mates

do not have to put up with him. As a result, Nick - previously critical of people's correct

use of grammar - does not "even think things like I used to think before." Living on a

diverse floor also taught him to listen and think before speaking. Referring to a recent

conflict with Marcie where, according to other residents on Bigwind Hall, he was

insensitive to the cultural demands of her Haitian born family, he cautioned:

You've got to watch what you say. I'm known for saying how I feel [..]
It's taught me that you have to listen to everybody more and then
before I say something, I have to assess what I'm going to say…

It was tempting at first to present these efforts to be polite as efforts to be politically correct, but when coupled with the desire to compromise and a desire not to harm others, a desire expressed even by Nick (who was often concerned with his desire to say whatever he chose), the focus on politeness seemed to be a genuine effort to learn from and to negotiate differences. It was also notable that the skills they described often mirrored the Community Living Principles posted on hallway walls and described in chapter 4. These principles were developed several years earlier from focus group data collected from residence hall students. Through their interactions with diverse peers, residents in these two racially diverse communities developed important interpersonal skills – skills they believed would help them later in life as well as in the classroom now.

Academic and career benefits

Data from participant interviews for both Campbell A and Bigwind B indicated interactions with diverse peers affected residents' learning and development in a variety of ways including awareness and appreciation of cultural differences, openness to diversity, reduction of prejudice, and development of the interpersonal skills and attitudes necessary to navigate relationships with others different from themselves. Multiple students also talked about and gave examples of how the experience with diverse peers in the residence halls transferred directly to the academic realm. Whether applying new perspectives from peers who thought differently to solve difficult academic problems or simply being more receptive to ideas, residents of both Campbell A and Bigwind B were able to transfer lessons from the floor to study and classroom settings. Several students

also believed that their experiences in diverse residence halls prepared them well for future career situations.

Academic benefit. Davit credited the reduction of long held prejudices with a greater willingness to consider multiple perspectives in the classroom.

> When you're forced to live with a diverse group of people, ignorances or prejudices that you had go away. So when you come to the classroom you may think, 'okay, I was wrong about that, you know, maybe I'm wrong about this. Maybe, maybe, I can learn a few things.' You're maybe more willing to just look at things."

Likewise, Sean:

> learned that the world is not all White and that was kind of my view in high school. And then being open minded in my social interactions helped me in school in that if somebody were to present a different idea, while before I might have just said, 'You're different I don't want to hear it,' now I'm a little bit more open to it, willing to listen and not just judge them because I don't like what they think.

Nick, too, became more tolerant of ideas in the classroom. Learning from his diverse peers outside of class helped him with academics because "It's helped me judge things less." He cites as evidence his ability to think more broadly and to listen more openly to others in his Political Science class (including his professor who Nick sees as less conservative than he is.) Nick still gets:

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in little debates with the teacher, but it's taught me to listen more and that's the main thing. Being a leader is about listening and being number one is about being a leader so, everyone's trying to be number one so you have to be able to listen to things - not just hear it - and then collect all the ideas and then come up with the best answer. And so I think I've learned how to listen more.

Lucas depended on diverse members of his floor to help him see alternate approaches to academic problems and to consider multiple viewpoints. Lucas said:

whenever there are problems that come up, [I] turn to people on my floor. They provide different solutions and it just shows you different ways that you can approach a problem. And it teaches you just to look at different classes - it teaches you to look at it from different views and I learn.

Still, Lucas sees limitations to the help learning from other cultures provided in the classroom because "most of the people aren't extremely different from other people and they don't think extremely different. They're all within a range of each other." Never-the-less, he does think learning from diverse peers "definitely helped me to broaden my views." Other students reported that diversity made a difference in humanities and social science classes, but made little difference in hard sciences. For example, Paul found diversity did not matter at all in large lecture classes like calculus and physics, though he allowed that "because I have run into more people from more diverse situations I have

learned more in discussions" related to his philosophy class and honors forum. Alison found the perspectives of peers helpful in her African Studies class, but like Paul found diversity useless in her science classes.

> I took African Studies and there's certain times when we talk about the different people and I have an opinion - I have something to say because I learned something new from somebody that I met in my hall or in my class - I learned something from somebody else about what the people in Germany do and I give my input in that class. But when it comes down to like my core science classes, I don't think I learned anything.

For Davit, just knowing that some people do not eat meat helped him academically.

> Since everyone back in California thought the same way I did, I just assumed that they thought the same way about an assignment or a homework or something like that. But now that I know that people think differently about other things I'm less hesitant to ask them, because I kind of feel like they would have more insights because they think about other things differently. They just think of things differently. And because of that I ask more people more questions.

Davit thought that soliciting ideas from diverse peers was particularly helpful in sociology. If he did not understand the readings he asked others for their input. By sharing ideas about the readings with each other, they all understood the ideas better and as a result got A's that others in the class did not get.

Career benefits. Some participants in the study also anticipated that learning to negotiate racial and cultural differences in their residence halls would have positive impacts on their careers. Attending a diverse university allowed residents to learn about differences between people before they experienced diversity in the workplace. Marcie was glad to have experience with people from different ethnic backgrounds at an early age because "had I had the experience when I was 30 and in my first job and my boss was, let's say, Pakistani and I was not only confused about who he was and his race and his religion and I still had to work with him that might be too much because at that age it's harder to assimilate - not assimilate - but to accept things that are different." Sean expressed similar thoughts.

> I think that it is [important] to get an idea that not everybody is the same.[..]Because if you get out in the working world, you're going to realize that a lot of different races are in this world, a lot of people coming from a lot of different places and need to somehow work together as a team. If you're shocked by the presence of a Black person, then that's going to hurt you when you're trying to work with Black people.

Describing a diversity workshop conducted for the Meyerhoff Scholars in Campbell Hall, Lucas said the facilitator made them discuss sex, race, ethnicity and religion, "issues that people don't like to talk about." Like Marcie and Sean, Lucas thought this discussion was important because "if later on we're going to be a pioneer or a leader, you can't be uncomfortable with anything." In a slightly different vein, Nick saw career value in

diverse peer interactions because multiple points of view would prepare him better to manage a variety of situations.

> You want to be the best psychologist, right? That's totally cool, but to be that you can't just look at one way, because if some other doctor comes in and brings a whole new point you don't want to be like, I don't know what to say about that. So you'd want to [..] know different aspects of how to deal with situation. So I'd say that that's a key, that you want to meet different people, is because you want to know how to handle situations.

Though not all participants identified academic and career advantages to living and learning in the compositionally diverse environments of Campbell and Bigwind Halls, many did and none suggested that the diversity of their floor negatively impacted learning. Openness to diverse peers paved the way for and sometimes prompted new openness to ideas in the classroom.

Summary: Diverse peer interaction and Learning

While the comparisons to existing theoretical constructs will be made in Chapter six, it is possible to identify important triggers and components of learning from the cross case analyses of the two floors selected for study. By living in close or intimate quarters with others different from themselves, residents in Campbell A and Bigwind B were able to learn about world geography and to observe or to experience simple cultural differences such as food and dress. For women, observations of physical differences in hair and skin resulted in interest in the varied grooming habits of different racial and

ethnic groups. These simple facts and behaviors increased awareness of cultural differences and stimulated curiosity about the world and others. Over time curiosity, proximity and increased comfort allowed students to ask questions about and to discern the less superficial aspects of culture including family patterns, values and behaviors. Comparison of these more meaningful cultural differences to their own families, values and beliefs created both confusion and excitement as students reflected and assessed the value of the new perspectives they discovered. This deeper understanding of differences facilitated a variety of desirable learning outcomes.[5] Increasing openness to diversity and willingness to consider new ideas developed as prejudices and stereotypes diminished. Perspective taking allowed residents to consider the conflicts of daily living from the perspective of the others on the floor leading them to develop better listening and communication skills and an increased willingness to compromise and act with polite consideration of others. Some residents transferred their new ability to consider multiple perspectives and ideas to academic arenas especially in social sciences. Others valued their diversity experiences as training for future careers.

Interacting with diverse peers in a compositionally diverse residence community provided the challenges necessary to prompt new ways of seeing the world. Without the resident hall experience, Alison said she would not have learned so many things. As Shyam recounted, the simple act of visiting a friend's room and sharing a conversation with someone who saw the world differently was indeed a forceful catalyst for learning.

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[5] The literature distinguishes learning outcomes from societal outcomes, career/economic outcomes, but since students called it all learning, I do not distinguish here.

When you come to a place where you're living with totally different people, you come to realize that there's no exact right or wrong because everybody has their own reasons and, if you listen to their reasons, what you at first might have thought was wrong you come to realize that it's not. You look at it from the other perspective instead of just judging it up front. [..] I don't think that would have ever happened to me if I had not lived in dorms or I had commuted, because I wouldn't have spent time here. I would just come here to study. I'd go to class, I'd go back home. That would never have happened. So being here, I go around to my friend's rooms and I talk to them, it really broadens your horizons.

Few students said it as clearly as Shyam in our first meeting - encounters with diverse others in the close proximity of residence halls have the potential to challenge every assumption a student brings with them to college. He concluded:

I've had all my morals, all my ethnic beliefs, everything challenged. And in the end I have to go around and figure out what's right and what's wrong and I think that's what you do when you talk to other people about their differences.

Occurring in the diverse and supportive contexts described by residents of Campbell A and Bigwind B, the end results of the cultural and cognitive challenges experienced by residents in these diverse contexts were powerful for many participants.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

When the contextual data presented in chapter four and the descriptive interview data in chapter six are considered as a whole, the findings of this case study are, with a few notable exceptions, consistent with extant research and the conceptual framework presented in chapter three. Central to the purpose of the case study, student interviews (augmented by staff interviews and document review) provided the "detailed descriptions" and "detailed accounts of how students decide which peers [..] influence them, how those influences occur and with what effect" missing from earlier quantitative studies (Whitt et al., 1999, p.74). Findings also suggested mechanisms that facilitated or hindered peer interaction and the processes by which diverse peer interactions facilitated important college outcomes. Simple, but specific practices for fostering interracial interactions in this residential context are suggested by these findings.

Implications for theory and comparison to concepts in the literature

The descriptive data confirms quantitative findings that socializing and studying with diverse peers matters (Astin, 1993; Gurin, 1999; Gurin, et al., 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, the detailed descriptions of student interaction in chapter five also reveal new information including the importance of observation and conversation starters while challenging ideas found in quantitative studies about the importance and meaning of serious conversations about race for first year students. Student background influenced comfort with early interactions, but students from both diverse and homogenous high school backgrounds participated in diverse interaction and had racially

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and ethnically different friends. Regardless of background, diverse peer interactions required purposeful effort. Observation and conversation starters appeared to be strategies that students used to initiate contact with others they had little in common with. Jokes provided comfort and shorthand for managing serious matters while keeping the environment light. Nothing in this study challenged the importance of institutional and societal context found in the literature, but resident interview data also did little to confirm the importance of culture or climate. The figure below summarizes findings related to the original conceptual frame.

Conceptual Framework Revisited
Diverse Peer Interaction and Learning in Two Racially and Ethnically Diverse Communities
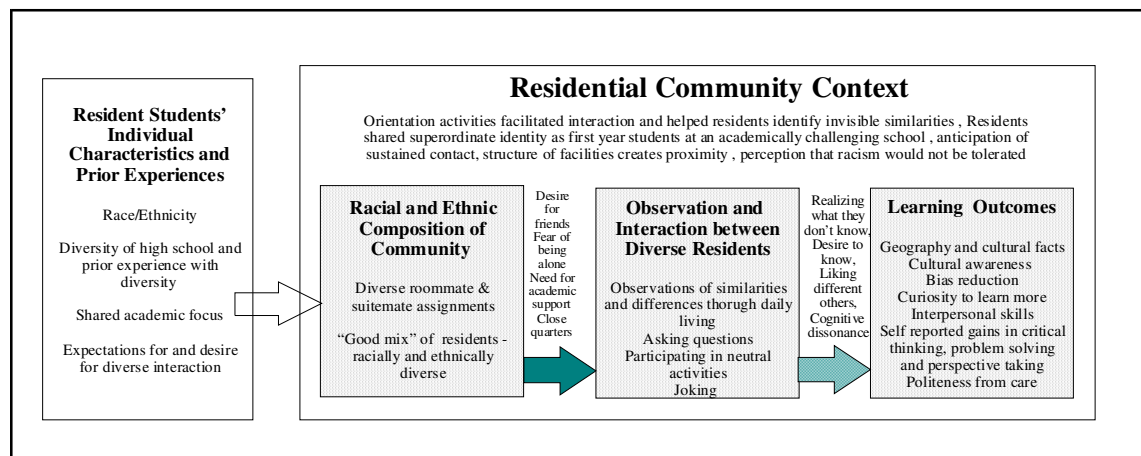

Figure 5 Conceptual Framework Revisited

Individual characteristics and prior diversity experiences

Pre-college characteristics affected early anxiety and willingness to interact, but did not predictably influence behavioral interaction in later interviews. Similar to Hu and

Kuh's findings (2003), background characteristics did not explain the frequency or quality of diverse peer interactions in this case study after the first days of school. Background variables, particularly prior experience with diversity, contributed greatly to the initial levels of anxiety or excitement residents experienced as residents' encountered their diverse environments, but had no consistent relationship to behavioral diversity after the first weeks of the semester. While students with less prior high school diversity initially experienced greater shock and anxiety when observing the diversity of their floor, eventually fear of exclusion and desire for friends balanced or outweighed anxiety for most participants in this study. Following the first three days of school, interactions were idiosyncratic and influenced as much by personality (outgoing or shy), pressure from peers to interact and class schedules as by pre-college diversity experiences. Students reported that the compositional diversity of their suites and floors required them to interact with people different from themselves regardless of desire or pre-existing background characteristics if they wanted tot have friends and succeed at school. Forced to interact, pre-college experience with diversity became less determining over time in relationship to diverse peer interaction.

For example, considering results of multiple studies indicating that race, gender, prior diversity experience and student major influenced behavioral diversity, I might surmise that a White male from a predominantly White rural high school with no prior diversity experience might have little diverse peer interaction (antonio et al., 2004; Milem, 1994; Milem & Umbach, 2003; Milem, et al., 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Pascarella, Whitt et al., 1996). Yet, Sean, a student with all of these

characteristics, was a consistent and central member of the diverse dominant friend group on Bigwind B. One of his three closest friends was a Haitian-American woman. In contrast, Jargal, an Asian male who had attended an international middle school with students from many nations had to get used to his Black roommate and did not connect with the larger floor until much later than others despite his prior experience with diversity largely because he was shy and anxious. A White woman on Campbell A from a predominantly White high school (a student described by participants, but not a participant) had little interaction with diverse others on the floor while a woman with the same characteristics had an extremely diverse friendship group and selected her Black suitemate as her new roommate for the current year. While diversity background sometimes influenced in expected ways, there were just as many surprises.

Previous studies also found that students with high talent levels were most likely to have diverse peer interactions (Hu and Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, Carter and Sharp, 1995). While there are alternate explanations, this research may suggest that the academically focused culture and the high talent level of students at UMBC facilitated interaction regardless of other background variables. While individual talent levels as measured by SAT scores or high school GPA were not available, the talent level of all students at UMBC was higher than the talent levels of students at peer institutions on these measures (Tinney, 2006). One of the striking characteristics of the diverse peer interactions that can not be detected from the written transcripts alone was the enthusiastic curiosity many of the participants displayed in relation to differences. Students also reported asking questions when observing or discovering differences and being hungry to learn more.

Questioning others about differences was common on these floors (even though students indicated this behavior was not present in high school). These curious students enjoyed learning about others and their excitement was obvious in interviews.

Finally, Milem and Umbach (2003) found that students of all races planned to get to know students from diverse backgrounds regardless of prior experience with diverse peers. At a university as diverse as UMBC, I expected students to be aware of the diversity of the campus prior to their arrival and to have considered the likelihood of interacting with students from other racial backgrounds. However, until students received roommate assignment letters from the university in early August few students had given much thought to the diversity of the institution or their suitemates. The students who said they had considered the diversity prior to arrival were African-American, Black, Haitian-American and Hispanic. Even these students underestimated the diversity they found on arrival. Asian, Black and White students found the diversity to be surprising or shocking. In this study, prior diversity experiences reduced anxiety about diversity once encountered, but no student in this study was fully prepared for the high degree of compositional diversity they experienced on arrival nor had any of them planned for it. Talent levels and compositional diversity had greater influence on diverse peer interaction than did pre-college demographic variables, prior experience with diversity or pre-existing expectations or desire for behavioral diversity. Individual characteristics such as prior experience with diversity in high school and individual expectations for diversity at UMBC influenced initial comfort with diverse peers, but had no patterned or predictable impact on interactions after the first weeks of school. However, the self

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selected nature of the participants interviewed and the small number of participants in the study certainly limit my ability to draw any firm conclusions in this area. When considering this finding, it is important to remember that nothing is known about why the students no one ever saw stayed in their rooms. I can only draw conclusions about those who chose to participate.

Racial and ethnic composition of the community

Compositional diversity was not just a necessary precursor, it facilitated diverse peer interaction. Consistent with the literature, compositional diversity played a critical role in facilitating diverse peer interactions or behavioral diversity (Chang, 1996, 1999, 2001a; Chang et al., 2006; Gurin, 1999; Gurin, et al., 2002; Hurtado, 1999; Milem, 2003). Participants in this case study saw the racial composition of their suites, of their floor communities and of the university as the single, most influential reason for diverse peer interaction. Participants indicated that avoiding interaction with diverse peers was impossible in communities where few suites were racially homogenous and the larger community was racially and ethnically diverse. Having a racially or ethnically different roommate or suitemate facilitated diverse peer interactions first by forcing interaction within the suite and then, as students branched out, by facilitating diverse peer interactions through shared friendship networks. Black roommates met their White roommate's friends; White roommates met Hispanic friends of suitemates, etc.

Participant data also indicated that compositional diversity influenced a respectful and welcoming climate related to race. Participants indicated that a "good mix" with "enough" of each group to feel comfortable allowed many residents to engage in both

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same and diverse peer interactions. With so many different races and ethnicities present, participants suggested that it would not be smart to make racist comments even if someone felt that way (they did not think they did) as there were too many people who could be angered. In other words, students perceived that even if someone was racist, the sheer number of people who would disagree kept potentially racist comments at bay. Participants also suggested that the compositional diversity of the communities created both opportunity and motivation to meet and interact respectfully with diverse peers while finding support in same race interaction. But what is "enough" when describing racial composition?

Tipping point theories and critical mass theories have both attempted to quantify the percentages of minority members that influence behavior in different contexts (Linn & Welner, 2007; Schelling, 1969; Wolf, 1963). Introduced in the sixties and widely used to explain racial segregation in neighborhoods and schools, tipping point theory suggested that Whites "flee a neighborhood in large numbers once a threshold of nonwhites is reached" (Easterly, 2004, ¶1). Underlying this theory is the assumption that individuals have differing tolerance for compositional diversity. Therefore, as those with lower thresholds move, those with higher thresholds remain comfortable until the tipping point is reached, the point where few Whites remain comfortable and flee (Schelling). Grounded in economics and real estate theory and developed to explain White flight in the face of desegregation, tipping point theory has been criticized for failing to explain current patterns of segregation and integration (Ottensmann, 1995). Grounded in majority perspective, tipping point theory is less useful to explain minority behavior.

More directly relevant, critical mass theory attempts to quantify the percentage of minority students necessary in a classroom or school to increase educational benefits and to reduce tokenism and other problems for minority students. Critical mass theory was used to support race conscious practices in the Grutter v. Bollinger case introduced in chapter one and more recently in two supreme court cases "collectively known as the Meredith cases, examining the use of race by K–12 public school districts as a factor in assigning students to schools" (Linn & Welner, p. 5). Estimates in these briefings suggest that percentages of minority participation between 15% and 30% are required to facilitate learning and reduce negative outcomes for minority students such as stereotype threat (Linn & Welner). The research summarized for the Meredith cases provide little evidence that composition alone increases educational benefit. Nor does the research presented verify the existence of optimal percentages or demonstrate that higher percentages of minority students and lower percentages of majority students create greater benefits. Still, students in this study were very clear that the diverse mix of residents on the floor facilitated both interaction and learning. Similarly, first year African American students at a diverse, public research institution similar to UMBC indicated that the compositionally diverse residence halls provided access to informal networks of support and earlier research suggests that when a critical mass of minority students is reached minority students benefit (Baber, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). While neither tipping point theory or critical mass theory fully explain the "good mix" suggested by participants as instrumental to cross race interaction at UMBC, both offer insight to approaches taken in other arenas of education research to address similar questions.

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Finally, the racial and ethnic composition of Campbell and Bigwind Halls may also explain why more recent research found that most diverse friendships between upper class men began in the first semester of residence hall living (antonio, 2004). There are few other environments on a university campus that require diverse peers to observe and discover the similarities that underpin relationships. Not only did residence halls place student in proximity to each other, the closeness allowed for the discovery of hidden similarities. This insight (coupled with a policy of random assignments for first year students) may shed light on Hu and Kuh's (2003) finding that first year students were more likely than upper class students to meet peers with backgrounds different from their own. In the absence of random assignments, students are unlikely to again encounter environments as diverse as their first year floors in later years.

Before accepting this conclusion, it should be noted that no participant in this study stayed in their room without socializing with others on their floor. On Bigwind B, the students who never came out of their rooms were reported by other residents to be male and White. On Campbell A, the race of only one unknown student was mentioned (Asian), but all unknown students were also male (something easily discerned from floor plans without accessing non-participant records). Despite student assertions, it *is* possible to avoid diverse peer interaction if one rarely leaves their room and uses the back stairwell. Without participation from these missing students, it is impossible to know if they were just shy or anti social as residents assumed or if they were actively avoiding the diversity on the floor or both. While compositional diversity facilitated diverse peer interactions for the participants in the study, it is possible that pre-existing attitudes and

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prior diversity experiences may have influenced the reclusive behavior of less interactive students. It is possible that those who found the diversity overwhelming or unpalatable simply avoided any interaction at all.

Observation played a significant role in facilitating peer interaction and learning.

The descriptive data from participant interviews shed light not only on the content of the everyday student interactions frequently cited in quantitative studies, but provided insight on how the simple activities of residential living facilitated diverse peer interaction. While previous quantitative studies focused on the importance of active forms of diverse peer interaction such as socializing, studying, discussing race, or participating in programs, this case study suggests that observation of daily living activity is critical to peer interaction and learning. The ability to "look in" to other residents rooms was mentioned repeatedly and was one of the underlying contributions of open doors to diverse peer interaction. As students observed floor mates in their rooms, peers from different racial or ethnic backgrounds became less mysterious or different. The simple ability to see other students doing exactly the same things that they did or to observe similarities in belongings challenged stereotypes and assumptions. These observations also provided conversation starters (described in the next section). In addition, sharing a room or eating a meal with other residents allowed participants to observe differences including the more superficial elements of culture such as grooming or dietary rules. When family members phoned or visited participants noted how family interactions were similar or different from their own. Observation stimulated curiosity and facilitated questioning. It would not have occurred to a student who assumed that

everyone ate meat to ask about eating differences without first observing the difference. Thus observation, important in its own right, served both as a passive form of interaction between diverse peers and as an important precursor to active forms of diverse peer interaction such as discussion and socializing. The power of observation may also shed light on Chang, Denson, Saenz and Misa's (2006) finding that at compositionally diverse institutions even students with little active diverse peer interaction seem to benefit.

   The importance of conversation starters and questions. While saying race does not matter, participants also indicated initial anxiety related to diverse peer interaction. Making friends with so many different people was hard during the first week of classes even though residents were open and friendly. In a compositionally diverse floor, similar interests and backgrounds could not be assumed; they had to be discovered or purposefully unearthed. A few outgoing students felt comfortable initiating conversation without prior information about their conversation partner, but most students looked for icebreaking content prior to initiating interaction. Looking in and neutral activities both helped students to identify information that could be used to initiate conversation. As participants looked into other rooms on the floor, not only did they become familiar with the occupants, they identified common music or interests to discuss or found interesting items to ask questions about. Participation in neutral activities allowed residents to discuss the speaker or movie even if the individuals had little in common. The importance of the first floor meeting and Playfair events become clear in this context. The ice breakers unearthed hidden interests and experiences participants could store away and talk about when they next saw that person. (Note: Data related to participants' use of

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Facebook, MySpace and other online social spaces were not included in findings both because no clear pattern of use emerged and because participants reported that such tools played only a peripheral role in their on floor interactions since they were likely to see each other face-to-face. However, when mentioned, Facebook was described as a tool to get information about others so they would have something to talk about when they saw that student in person. The unreported data related to Facebook use also influenced my thinking about the importance of conversation starters.)

Joking vs. serious conversation. Many of the quantitative studies reviewed prior to conducting this case study contained questions and data related to socializing, study or serious conversations about race (Astin, 1993; Chang, 1996, 1999, 2001a; Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 1992). Yet, students of Campbell A and Campbell B reported more joking about race than serious conversation about race. In fact, students in this case study resisted serious conversations about race until pushed to do so by hurt feelings from a joke gone too far or simply by being tired of careful or politically correct discussion. Once the serious conversation took place, the conversation itself could become the subject of future jokes. Even though I work with students at this institution and have heard similar jokes prior to this study, the blatantly racist and stereotypical content of the jokes students found acceptable and the degree to which students' reported that these jokes created comfort and reassurance was, for me, the most surprising finding of the study. I was at first skeptical, then pulled in to their belief that the jokes did no harm until a closer review of the data and distance from their arguments led me to conclude the truth, as it often does, lies somewhere in the middle.

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Jokes played a critical role in challenging barriers erected by pre-existing stereotypes and beliefs about people of other races and ethnicities. Jokes were an effective short hand for recognizing difference without making a big deal out of differences. When honoring the rules for cross racial joking, in a few words a joke could convey serious content, "I know that stereotype exists, I know it's not true and because we are close friends I am telling this joke to let you know I do not think the stereotype is true without having to talk about it seriously. Even if I've done something stupid to indicate otherwise, I am your friend and do not want this stuff to interfere with our friendship. Are we still going to dinner?" A quick banter back with an alternate stereotype could say, "What you just said is as ridiculous to me as what I just said about your race. Be careful, there are stereotypes about you, too, but no offense taken as long as you do not repeat the mistake. Sure we're still going to dinner. We're friends and I trust you wouldn't purposefully say something to bring me down." Alternately, a "play hurt" response would give warning that damage had or was about to be done and an apology was warranted even if it was a "play apology." As Maddie indicated, play offense gave a serious warning to stop. As Davit suggested, jokes were a way of having serious conversations while keeping things light. In a diverse environment, participants found comfort in the shorthand language of jokes.

On the-other-hand, self directed jokes were reported more frequently by minority participants. Asian, Black and Hispanic students more frequently felt the responsibility for or need to break through racial barriers than did their majority peers. Minority participants were explicit that they made these jokes to break the ice and to set others at

ease. Though no participant reported using jokes as protective mechanisms, it is also possible that the jokes told by minority students were pre-emptive efforts to make fun of self before others did. In this ways the jokes may have served to protect students, minority students in particular, from the sting of racial stereotypes. There was also an asymmetry to the jokes that seemed rooted in societal power dynamics unseen by participants. There were jokes about Whites and Christians and Italians, but jokes by and about Asians, Blacks, Hindus, Jews and Muslims were more common. There were limits to the jokes White students could make about other races, while minority students could more freely make jokes about any race as long as a member of that race was present. In fact, the only report of hurt feelings from a racial joke stemmed from Black students targeting White students. Regardless of the asymmetries I discerned, participants of all races were insistent that no one meant any harm and that jokes provided comfort. Still, even after considering and reconsidering students' perspectives, it seems unlikely that the negative burdens of stereotyping revealed in other studies do not exist in these stereotype-laden climates (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001).

Although students reported few serious conversations about race, participants reported serious learning outcomes from their observations and interactions with diverse peers. Therefore, learning somehow occurred for many participants without the benefit of much serious conversation. Since few students reported involvement in classes with diversity content, cultural events, or racial awareness workshops other than the diversity speaker, it is plausible that outcomes such as openness to diversity and reduction of prejudice were in part the result of the observations described above in combination with

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joking about serious matters. Perhaps as participants would argue, it is possible to have serious conversations without having them. Or perhaps, it is possible to reduce stereotypes simply by observing and interacting with diverse peers without any conversation about race at all. Regardless, joking was an evident form of diverse peer interaction in both communities investigated as part of this case study.

The avoidance of serious conversation about race and the use of jokes as a strategy to manage diverse interactions is strikingly similar to Korgen's (2002) recent research about close cross race relationships between forty Black and White friendship pairs of all ages. The majority of friends in Korgen's study dealt with racial differences by avoiding or ignoring the issue of race in their relationships (p. 34). Several of these pairs chose instead to deal with race through humor. Interestingly, six of the nine pairs relying on jokes to deal with differences were college students. Like the participants in this case study, these young friends described the use of racial "barbs" to create closeness. Also like the participants in this study, Korgen's participants indicated that the ability to make fun of each other's race was a sign that their friendship was close and on comfortable ground. Jokes served as reassurance that the friends remain on good footing when issues of race unexpectedly surfaced. Korgen suggests that joking behavior may be more prevalent in young participants because they are not yet bound by the rules and etiquette of polite adult society.

In this study, participant reports of avoiding serious racial conversations is potentially incongruent with NSSE data indicating that UMBC students more frequently interacted and had serious conversation with racially diverse peers (Tinney, 2006). As

this study concluded in February, the frequency of joking seemed to subside as friendships became more intimately established. I also had a sense, but little evidence other than their reflections in the last interview that students were beginning to think about their diverse peer interactions in more serious ways. Had the study continued through the Spring semester, I would not have been surprised to see serious conversations about race emerge triggered both by interactions and by materials encountered in classes.

Shared space and similarity of interests still matter. Studying the more racially homogenous peer groups of the 1960's, Newcomb (1962, 1966) identified three factors - pre-college acquaintanceship, propinquity and similarity of attitudes and interests – which influenced the formation of college peer groups. In this case study, only one participant mentioned a pre-college acquaintanceship within their floor community. As mentioned previously, findings from this case study confirm propinquity and similarity of interests are still central to the formation of peer groups in today's more racially diverse environments. Propinquity was important in the earliest diverse peer interactions while similarity of interest dominated diverse peer interactions later in the study. Students on both Campbell A and Bigwind B initially interacted more frequently with other residents who lived on the same residence hall floor than with students who lived on different floors or in different buildings.

The influence of propinquity was also evident in the sequenced process of interactions that typically started with roommates and suitemates in shared spaces then branched out to others on the floor. As the semester developed, shared classes and shared interests outside of the floor gained greater influence, but participants still frequently ate,

joined in late night floor conversation or study, and shared weekend activity with others on their floors. As described in detail in chapter five, students were adamant that shared interests were central to friendships and interactions, diverse or otherwise. Although people form friendships with others who are similar to themselves, similarity plays distinct roles in different stages of friendship (Fehr, 1996). For residents in both cases and particularly for participants from Bigwind B shared experiences created a floor identity that kept diverse peer relationships in tact as outside interests grew. Propinquity remained influential because shared space made floor mates (most frequently room and suitemates) the only consistent relationships across semesters. As new classes and new activity schedules changed patterns of interactions in the spring semester, floor mates and roommates remained a comforting, constant over time.

Sustained contact and common academic goals facilitated positive interactions and challenged stereotypes in these compositionally diverse environments. Evidence from this case study is consistent with the premise that residence halls foster diverse peer interactions and learning not only because of propinquity, but because residence halls give rise to the conditions of contact most likely to facilitate positive cross racial relationships (Allport, 1954/1979; Milem et al., 2006). In Campbell A and Bigwind B diverse residents not only lived close enough to each other to observe and interact, they lived together for an extended period of time while pursuing the shared goal of education. Sustained contact exposed residents to first-hand, concrete knowledge about racially different peers; this first-hand knowledge conflicted with pre-existing stereotypes creating cognitive dissonance and ultimately reduction of prejudice. As residents realized

they had believed inaccurate information, they became curious and more open to learning about others. Openness eventually transformed into a broader willingness to consider multiple perspectives both in and out of the classroom.

The concentration of first year students on Campbell A and Bigwind B placed a diverse group of students anxious for friends and academic success in close proximity to one another. Participants believed that success at UMBC hinged on developing mutually supportive relationships on the floor even if they had little in common. The literature reviewed in chapter two specified that diverse peer interaction is most productive when accompanied by shared goals or interest, cooperative effort or shared identity based on similarities (Levin, 2003; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Schofield, 2001). As mentioned above, multiple participants mentioned the need for academic support as a motivating factor binding diverse residents together. Students indicated that challenging classes required group study and mutual support in order to succeed. While most participants shared identities as smart students at an Honors university, students in Campbell Hall also explicitly stated a shared an identity as academically focused and driven students. From waking late risers for class to studying the night before a big exam, students on both floors indicated that they needed each other to succeed or simply to survive their first year. Early research not included in the original literature review suggests that competing or dissimilar groups can be encouraged to cooperate by introducing a shared superordinate goal (Sherif, 1958). Shared goals encourage cooperation in order to attain the desired outcome. The first year students of Campbell and Bigwind naturally shared two explicitly common goals as first year students: 1) the need to make friends and desire

to create community, and 2) academic success. Multiple participants stated their willingness to create relationships with diverse peers in order to create a mutually supportive community in order to reach academic goals less easily attained without peer support.

The literature indicated that sustained contact prompted greater openness to diversity and this case study produced evidence consistent with this premise (Allport). In addition, residents in this case study indicated that simply *anticipating* sustained contact prompted greater openness to interactions with diverse peers. During the early days of the semester, multiple participants reported interacting with others because they knew they were stuck with each other. Not seeing any other alternatives and knowing these residents would be their neighbors for the year they made greater effort to mix.

Learning outcomes discovered through qualitative case study mirror those found in previous quantitative studies. Consistent with the literature this case study found that diverse peer interactions resulted in a variety of learning outcomes including: awareness and understanding of cultural differences, increased openness to diversity and decreased stereotyping, development of interpersonal skills including compromise, anticipated ability to work more effectively with diverse colleagues in future work settings, and increased perspective taking and openness to ideas in academic settings. These findings are consistent with extant research on diversity and learning outcomes (Astin, 1993; Gurin, at al., 2002; Milem, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt et al., 2001). Different from the literature, participants also described very simple and basic learning related to physical differences and grooming, geography and basic differences in culture

and language. These simple lessons were precursors to the broader and less superficial changes in cognitive capabilities such as perspective taking and problem solving. These facts provided insights into the mechanisms by which diverse peer interactions stimulated greater openness to differences while developing the ability to view problems and questions from multiple points of view. Prompted by awareness that their world view had been limited by what others taught them, students became curious to discover other things of which they may have been ignorant. This awareness also cultivated a willingness to explore ideas in the classroom they might not otherwise have been open to prior to interacting with and learning about their diverse peers. To learn, participants first had to unlearn old stereotypes and myopic views of the world. As old views were challenged, students were forced to reconsider even deeply held values and ideas. The racial and ethnic composition of the floor placed diverse peers in sustained contact while pursuing shared goals which encouraged interaction and cooperation. This prolonged interaction provided the exposure to the diverse peers and different ideas hypothesized in the literature to cause the cognitive disequilibrium necessary to promote learning and development (Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003; Milem et al., 2006). The data provided in chapter five provided examples which illustrate the process through which diverse peer interaction challenged stereotypes and transformed basic knowledge into more substantial cognitive development. This case study provided descriptive evidence to confirm both previous findings and to demonstrate how diverse peer interactions act as a catalyst for learning.

Culture and climate may be invisible to residents. The original conceptual framework suggested that a supportive culture and climate are important even when invisible. The results of this study confirm nor disconfirm this assumption. In fact, culture and climate seemed invisible to students in this study. For this reason, I have not included institutional context in Figure 5. While it was not the explicit purpose of this study to assess the climate or culture of the institution, the findings in chapter four do suggest a unique and positive institutional backdrop for this case study on diverse peer interaction when compared to data from similar campuses and to the literature on campus culture and climate as suggested in the literature (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Hurtado et al., 1999; Kuh et al., 1991; Milem et al., 2006; Tinney, 2006). While students are unlikely to be aware of the unique historical context of the university, most participated in convocation, so were likely to be aware that the President was Black (while articles identified him as African-American, students would visually see skin color), had been a part of the civil rights movement and had encouraged them to interact with people different from themselves. Residents of Campbell hall were also likely to be aware of the Meyerhoff Scholarship program. While no student mentioned the importance of leadership, the data gathered in chapter four suggest that presidential leadership and support for minority students matters at UMBC. While nationally known for championing access and excellence for underrepresented minorities and visibly supporting the Meyerhoff Scholars program at home, Hrabowski also stresses the importance of supporting the potential of all students without pitting people against one another (Fain, 2007). The Meyerhoff Scholars program has become such an integral part of the university's identity that the

mission statement included specific references to the program and to its goals of supporting minority achievement.

Multiple generations of university faculty, staff, and students or alums consistently articulated the same set of shared values including a sense of family, diversity and superior academic achievement (Akchin, 2006). What is striking about this list is not only the consistency over time, but the fact that these themes rose from people's lived experiences at UMBC rather than from formal institutional documents. A consistent set of values experienced by members of the community over the institution's life span indicted that these values are deeply embedded in the campus culture. Regardless, participant interview data from chapter five revealed less about campus culture. A few participants cited visible symbols such as the international flags in the Commons and the racially diverse student body as evidence that the school supports diversity, but most attempts to gather data about the wider campus culture or climate drew blank stares and shrugs of shoulders not included in the findings. This could be because as first year students they were not yet fully acclimated to the campus culture or it could be that culture was simply not visible to those immersed in it. Still residents like Michelle "just knew" it would not "be cool" to be racist on her floor or at UMBC in general. Like Michelle, new resident students were better able to describe their experience of the more malleable climates they experienced on their residence floors. Like antonio's (1998) findings, students' perceptions of the larger campus climate had little relationship to the development of diverse friendship groups in first year residence halls. For the first year students in this case study, people on the floor and the networks of

friends developed through others on the floor dominated peer interaction for much of the first semester. Therefore, the climate of the floor mattered more to students than the larger campus climate or culture. Still, given the contextual findings in chapter four, it is unlikely that the welcoming climates of their floors were not influenced by the larger campus culture.

What was clear through analysis of case study data was that no participant in this case study indicated significant problems with culture or climate as related to diversity. In fact, participants more frequently expressed frustration with interview questions they perceived as trying to find problems where there were none. It is also possible that participants were simply ignoring or not reporting problems with racial climate. However, these same participants described concerns they faced in high school or imagined how race could become a problem, but all indicated that they had experienced no concerns at UMBC other than the stereotypical jokes that few saw as problematic. In addition, the NSSE data revealed a supportive campus environment for African-American students in both academic and social arenas including relationships with other students, faculty and staff. The residential benchmarking study found no differences in satisfaction between racial groups (Educational Benchmarking, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006). Together, these findings paint a picture of a supportive campus culture and confirmed participants' assessments that their floor climates were welcoming for students of multiple races and ethnicities. Though invisible to residents at a conscious level, it is still possible – and, perhaps, likely - that a positive racial climate and culture combined with compositional diversity to encourage even students with little prior diversity experience

to interact with diverse peers. As a staff member at the institution of interest, my own experiences and observations tempt me to conclude that leadership and climate played an influential role in the diverse peer interactions in the communities studied. Indeed with no disconfirming evidence and the unique institutional context presented in chapter four, I may be able to make that case. However, participant data presented little triangulating data for this conclusion. Additional research is necessary to confirm or disconfirm the role of institutional context.

Implications for Practice

Student affairs and housing staff cannot control institutional history, culture or institutional leadership, but they can influence the more pliable elements of residence climate by impacting the programs, policies, practices and staffing patterns in the hall. Student affairs, orientation and residence hall leadership can and should provide visible support for diverse peer interactions. This support should begin early and should be obvious. While few students could put their finger on the elements of culture or climate, all experienced a vague sense that diverse peer interaction was normative and that racist behavior would not be tolerated. Although students mentioned few of the overt symbols of support for diversity, chapter four revealed multiple visible signs of institutional and residential support for diversity including the composition of the student body, a diverse resident staff, explicit references to diversity in mission and institutional identity statements, diversity statement in the residential handbook, references to collaboration and cooperation with diverse peers on posters related to residential living principles in hallways and a mandatory diversity session in orientation. In addition, multiple

orientation and welcome week activities provided highly structured mechanisms designed
to compel diverse peers to interact.

Housing assignment processes that place others in close contact with diverse peers were
seen as effective tools to foster diverse peer interaction.

Few other college experiences provide the sustained and intense contact between
diverse peers found in the residential living experience. Therefore, first year students
should be encouraged or required to live on campus if possible. The most common advice
from students related to maximizing diverse peer interactions was to force diverse peers
to live together through random assignments. This recommendation is particularly
noteworthy at a time when many schools have implemented online technology solutions
that allow new students to pick their own roommates. As more institutions consider using
such online services, staff should be aware that students were clear that left to their own
devices they might have opted for the comfort of a roommates and suitemates from
similar backgrounds. Students were equally clear that resident staff should force them to
live together. Assignment practices that place first year students in close proximity to one
another were also key to the formation of diverse peer interaction. Additional materials
designed to develop expectations and offer strategies for entering diverse communities
could be developed to accompany housing assignment information.

Activities and programs should focus on first two weeks of school and include neutral
activities that focus attention on similarities and differences simultaneously.

Baxter-Magolda (1992) suggested colleges should support students as they learn
to live with different others through structured interventions. The first weeks of school

were stressful and high levels of anxiety were common. Structured activity that encourages students to identify similarities is critical in the first days on campus. It is common lore amongst residence staff that the first six weeks are the most critical times to encourage peer interaction. Evidence from this case study suggested the window may be even narrower. The first three days were essential and by the second week of classes groups had emerged in both communities. Most participants agreed that peer groups were fairly set by the third or fourth week of the semester, although membership in these groups continued to fluctuate as group members established relationships off of the floor throughout the semester. However, since many new relationships occurred through networks developed from within floor groups (for example, a floor member introduces a high school friend to a roommate and the two become friends) failure to connect early to members' of one's floor limited later access to the networks students used to branch out. Students appreciated the opportunities large campus events provided for entertainment, but since these activities were used primarily as means to interact with others on the floor, another common suggestion was to have more in community and in building events during Welcome Week.

As mentioned in chapter five, programs and activities were most likely to facilitate interaction between racially diverse peers when they were content neutral. Games, movies and food were activities most commonly mentioned as neutral. Finding ways to assist students in finding similarities and developing a shared or superordinate identity such as the smart and academically focused identity reported by participants in the study was also important. As example, given the importance of the first floor meeting,

RAs should be required and trained to facilitate structured ice breakers as described by case study participants. The icebreakers on Bigwind simultaneously uncovered similarities and differences. The activities could have been strengthened by using these discoveries to create a common or shared floor identity as a result. Other activities should be designed to help students manage the challenges inherent in encountering diverse perspectives. When discussing programs such as floor meetings and orientation events, participant data often blurred the importance of the RA with the importance of the event. In the end, there was greater evidence for the importance of the event. Never-the-less, the RA role in facilitating and promoting these events should not be overlooked. Further, the RA should be helped to understand his or her role in helping students to find similarities and to create climates of inclusion for all students. Lacrosse players were clearly affected by the stereotypical assumptions held about them by others on the floor. Training related to bias and stereotypes should include information about athletes, scholars and other groups housed together in residential communities.

Finally, residence educators at UMBC (including me) may need to reconsider what constitutes educational programming related to race. Hearing the women in this study discuss differences in hair and grooming brought to mind an interaction with an RA who had proposed bringing a hair stylist to her floor to do a program on hair. To me the program seemed entertaining, but not educational as the RA insisted. I can't recall enough details about the program to know who was right, but the information gleaned from this case study forced me to reconsider the possibility a properly designed program about how to style different types of hair

could fit all of the criteria for an educational diversity program. The program is neutral (most people have hair), the program focuses on similarities and differences simultaneously, and the program could be used as a conversation starter to discover and then discuss deeper differences. While this is an overly simplistic example, it served as a reminder that the RA may have been responding to a shared interest and need that, while seemingly trivial to me, was important to residents. With guidance such programs could take advantage of existing curiosity to encourage diverse interaction.

Intervening in acts of intolerance and racism requires an understanding of how residents perceive and use race in diverse contexts.

During the course of this study a Black woman posted a picture of a Black male with stereotypical Black features with a caption something like "I'm gonna get me some [..]" on it and posted it on or near her door. The note was taken down before it came to the attention of staff. Had the sign been detected, staff would have documented the racist language and images and the young women would have found herself in an educational meeting with the community director. In this conference, the Black woman might have explained that she was dating a White man and that the sign was a show of support for the Malaysian woman across the hall who had expressed interest in a Black male much to the chagrin of a White male on the floor who was interested in the same Malaysian woman. In the short hand language of joking, the sign was not intended to be racist (though its content was clearly racist), but rather to send a message that the assumption that dating

should or could be determined by race was ridiculous and racist. The sign was

posted because it was assumed to be so absurd that no one could believe it to be

anything other than it was – a joke that gave warning about serious content

without serious discussion. It was intended as a humorous message to the men on

the floor not to assume that the women based their dating interest on race rather

than personality. I am not suggesting that residence educators ignore such events.

It would be naïve to assume all racist incidents are rooted in the joking cultures

found on Campbell A and Bigwind B. And, even when such incidents are not

intended to harm or target others, they provide opportunities to help students

understand the more insidious underbelly of the images and stereotypes they use

in jokes. The young woman needed to be made aware of how her message might

have unintended consequences. However, when intervening in such incidents it is

important to understand the intention of the student may differ from the message

we interpret if we are to intervene effectively. It is also important to recognize

that joking seemed most prevalent amongst the residents who were trying the

hardest to establish cross racial relationships. Heavy handed approaches steeped

in political correctness without understanding of the social context the incident

occurred in are likely to be dismissed by students like those in the this study and

may actually discourage the very interactions we are trying to encourage. This

finding may be particularly important when considering the impact of speech

codes. Such codes and other efforts to impose political correctness may have a

dampening effect on diverse peer interactions.

Efforts to create safe environments must be balanced with facilitating the open physical environments that foster interaction.

In both communities studied RAs ignored directions to encourage residents to keep their doors unpropped in order to comply with fire safety and to augment personal security. In our zeal to respond to today's safety conscious and liability driven context, we have encouraged students to seal themselves behind secure doors. Yet as these communities demonstrate, the safest communities may be those where people know and look out for each other. Periodically, the RAs of Bigwind Hall, the only traditional hall built after fire codes required self closing mechanisms on room doors, request permission to buy doorstops for their residents. Each request has been denied due to liability concerns. I can suggest no strategy that addresses building code, safety, and interaction simultaneously, but the frequency with which doors were mentioned and the important behavior (such as looking in) open doors facilitated warrant further attention. Administrators can not ignore the threat to personal safety created by open doors. Nor can they support interactive communities by ignoring the critical role open doors create by allowing residents the opportunities to observe and interact with diverse peers.

These recommendations are simplistic. However, they are also the types of very pragmatic changes that may actually be implemented in the residence system providing the site for this case study. The demographics of Maryland and current admissions goals suggest that the campus will continue to become more diverse. In the future, more residence communities will be as compositionally diverse as

the two floors selected as cases for this study. The understandings gleaned from these cases will help to guide future practice and shape new questions as we educate an increasingly diverse student body.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this qualitative study confirm many of the previous findings. The idiosyncratic influence of prior diversity experience warrants additional study given the mixed findings in the literature as well. Although, logic and the preponderance of evidence indicates that prior diversity experiences are influential, greater understanding of these influences in compositionally diverse environments may shed light on how these influences work and why some students behave in ways less expected given their background. Further, while this study did not contradict the importance of climate, student data did little to shed light on or to confirm the importance of institutional climate. Additional studies focused on these larger contextual issues may provide clarifying insight.

The role of jokes in reducing and managing the tension and conflict present in diverse communities was not, but left incompletely explained. Given the asymmetry to jokes and the students' assertions that the jokes did no harm, this form of interaction raises interesting questions related both to the impact of these jokes over longer periods of time and the power dynamics that seemed embedded in them. Longitudinal research that followed students through their entire first year may have shed additional insight on the role of these jokes. Research with upper class students may also shed light on the role joking plays as relationships and friendships solidify. While impossible for me to do so as

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an employee of the institution understudy, an ethnographic study also could provide the intensive, inside view necessary to fully understand the nature, use and purpose of these jokes. Regardless of method, deeper understanding of the rules and roles of joking in cross race interaction is

Compositional diversity has been noted as a critical precursor to diverse peer interaction. This case study demonstrated that institutional context played a role in facilitating these interactions as well. However, students were adamant that given the diversity on the floor, they were forced to interact regardless of the environment around them. In fact, few knew little about the rest of the campus or interacted outside of their floor other than to attend class in the early weeks of the semester. Once living together, they indicated that interaction alone facilitated much of the learning. As campuses and residences become more diverse and as residence communities house a variety of races where no racial group is present as a clear majority, how will interactions change or remain the same? Of all the findings, students were clearest about the impact of a "good mix" on forcing interaction and providing comfort for minority students. Research that seeks to identify the optimal quantitative and qualitative characteristics of compositional mix can help future practitioners create environments that facilitate diverse peer interaction and learning.

This research examined participant responses through a particular conceptual frame rooted in climate and outcome models. There are many other frames from which to view the data and findings. As the students spoke, elements of cognitive development and racial identity theory were evident in their statements. In particular, racial identity theory

could be used to explain some of the motivation and behavior identified in the participant data (Cross, 1978; Helms, 1990). While not expert in racial identity staging, several statements made by Michelle, Davit and Holly seemed characteristic of stages described by such theories. At the same time, statements by Sean and Marcie fit less neatly into my superficial understanding. Sean, who just weeks earlier was uncomfortable with race, seemed to skip "people are people, there are no differences" to demonstrate an ability to discuss deeply embedded cultural differences and to embrace and even enjoy those differences while talking about how hard they were to navigate. Part of the humor he found in racial jokes was the realization that they were all trying to cross race when really you couldn't be anything, but yourself. Marcie clearly saw herself as Black skinned, but having been raised in Haitian culture didn't understand what it meant to be purely American Black. Marcie and other first generation and immigrant African and Caribbean Americans may challenge Cross' concepts of "nigrescence" having formed their early racial identity outside of the American culture under girding this theory. While many aspects of racial identity theory emerged, research that seeks to understand racial identity development in more recent historical context with first generation, immigrant and student populations raised in more diverse contexts may be needed.

Multiple themes emerging from the data were not reported in this document. First, gender differences emerged though there was not enough evidence to draw conclusions in this study. Future study that makes the intersection of gender and race in residence communities the explicit focus of study may shed greater light on this theme. Second, pre-existing groups like the pre-dominantly White lacrosse players and the racially

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diverse Meyerhoff scholars impacted diverse peer interactions in ways left largely unexplored. Emerging themes related to the impact of groups were eliminated from findings because of limited evidence and differing views of the impact (ranging from positive to neutral to negative) of the group on diverse peer interaction. The impact of the group may be dependent on the type of group occupying a floor. Therefore, the role of intact groups may be idiosyncratic. Never-the-less, the stereotyping of the lacrosse players and their exclusion from the floor raises interesting questions worthy of study. Finally, the role of family, friends and technology also remain unanalyzed here. Several students reported relying on friends and family from home for advice about interaction. This theme was omitted when multiple participants stated adamantly that family and friends played no role as I was checking emerging themes with participants during interview three. Given the concern with helicopter parents (a phrase used in popular media to describe very involved parents), this emerging, but unconfirmed them may also warrant further consideration.

Finally, there may be merit in additional case study similar to the study described here with several improvements. If I were to repeat this study, data collection would ideally take place at five intervals beginning during the first weeks of school and ending just prior to finals. By adding an earlier and later time to interview periods, participants could be followed throughout an entire school year. Efforts to collect more background information (such as SES and parent education) and more focused questions related to institutional context would allow greater comparison of findings to existing conceptual frames. Greater effort would be taken to recruit participants representative of multiple

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groups in each community. Following original participants into later years or conducting a similar case study with upper class students would also allow for participant insight related to their first year experiences in diverse communities. Such study would indicate if the "forced" first year experiences with diversity had lingering (or no) impact on later diverse interactions.

Limitations

The method selected for this study presumes that the findings of this study are contextually bound to the specific cases being studied. This research may raise questions or provide findings useful to residence practitioners both at UMBC and in similarly diverse environments at other public, research universities. However, the site for this study was selected because of its compositional diversity and its unique institutional described in the next chapter. Therefore, any findings from this study can only raise questions or suggest practices useful in other environments, and should be transferred to other settings with caution. Further, by its very nature, qualitative research that attempts to capture students' experiences can at best be approximations of the messages students intended to convey.

The act of participating in this research influenced - and in some instances altered - students' perceptions and actions. Prior to this study few students had given any thought to the nature of their diverse peer interactions. Participation in this study required them to do so. On several occasions students reported changing a behavior or thinking differently about an issue on their floor because of reflection on a previous interview question. For example, a student with little prior diversity experience reported purposefully observing

students of other races and was happily surprised to find fewer differences than expected. Reflecting on issues of race and diversity not only altered behavior in some cases, but influenced learning outcomes. Therefore, caution must be used even in transferring findings to other communities within the institutional context where the data was collected as participation in this study may have influenced the interaction I sought to study.

Case selection was based on measurable criteria such as floor demographics and physical structure of buildings. However, all participants within these cases were self selected volunteers. While only one student, a White female, chose not to participate after learning that the research focused on interaction between diverse peers, it is still possible that students who are less interested in or comfortable with issues of diversity may have chosen not to participate. The experiences of each student were unique and the cases were different. In addition, all student interview participants were involved in varying degrees of peer interaction on the floor. Students who chose not to interact with others on their floors (the students "no one knew") were not represented in this study. Given the nature of these communities and the experiences of students like Sean, it is as likely that some of those who stayed in their rooms did so out of discomfort as any other reason. In addition, no lacrosse player was present to represent the perspective of the Bigwind outsiders. The voice of these students is absent from this work. Drawing transferable conclusions even within the institutional context should be done with caution.

The study was short in duration. While three interview periods existed, no interview took place until six weeks into the semester. All data related to the first weeks

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of school were based on students' memories after time had passed. The study also ended prior to the end of the semester. Therefore, nothing is known about the interactions that took place after the first two weeks of the spring semester. As this study ended, relationships continued to evolve. Therefore, it is possible (and likely) that the diverse interactions described in this study strengthened, diminished or even disappeared prior to the natural dissolution of these communities at year end.

As discussed previously, the study is also limited by the degree to which my presence as the researcher impacts what participants felt was appropriate and safe to reveal to me. While this is true in any qualitative study, my role as an administrator with authority in the residence system hosting the study may have limited the degree to which participants shared information related to conflict or behavior which falls outside the bounds of allowable behavior under the student code of conduct (alcohol use, harassment). In a study related to race and ethnicity in college residence halls, my identity as a White, middle aged female may also have limited the degree to which some participants felt free to fully share despite their protests to the contrary. My findings are also limited by my own life experience and ability to accurately hear and capture the meanings of students from races, ethnicities, generations and experiences different than my own. I was acutely aware of generational differences throughout this process and took care to probe more carefully and reflectively to capture students' views. Finally, the focus on racial and ethnic diversity is in itself limiting at a time when research is beginning to expand its focus to multiple views of diversity on learning (Pascarella et al., 2001). Issues of religious and political difference repeatedly surfaced in student interviews.

In Closing

Throughout the literature and the findings, there is a dynamic tension between similarity and difference, homogeneity and heterogeneity. The literature from the 1960's strongly suggests that similarity and homogeneity fosters connections. Students seek the comfort of similar peers to create a sense of comfort and belonging. The more recent educational outcomes literature indicates that difference or heterogeneity creates the cognitive dissonance necessary for learning. Students must interact with those different from themselves if they are to learn. If one seeks belonging and comfort, learning is not maximized. If one seeks learning, belonging and comfort may be sacrificed. The findings of this study provide hope that in compositionally diverse environments, educators can help students harness the power of both homogeneity and heterogeneity simultaneously. By purposefully creating environments, programs and practices that assist students in finding the similarities they share with those they initially experience as different, students can find the common ground to both support and challenge one another to create communities where residents both live and learn. By finding similarities in difference, I hope that future generations of students will live and learn together concluding as Shyam did, "Because we are all different, we are all the same."

Dear CDs and RAs,

I am currently a doctoral student in Higher Education, Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) preparing to conduct research for my dissertation. As you no doubt remember from training, peer interaction is critical to students' success in college. I am interested in learning more about how peer interactions develop in racially and ethnically diverse residential communities like those at UMBC. I have requested and received support from Dr. Charles Fey, Vice President of Student Affairs and Freeman Hrabowski, President, to use UMBC's residence hall as the site for my dissertation case study research. Both UMBC's and UMCP's Institutional Review Boards have approved this project.

Two floors will be chosen for the study. I will solicit and select 6-8 residents willing to participate in individual interviews for each floor. Because I will also need to interview the CD and RA for each of these floors, I am writing to see if you are willing to participate in this project prior to selection of the floors. As a staff member your observations are invaluable to understanding how students interact on your floors or in your buildings. I encourage you to participate, but there is no requirement to participate.

If you choose to participate, I would ask you to participate in three 45-60 minute interviews. The first would be conducted in early November, the second in the first week of December, and the third in late January or early February. Each participating staff will receive a $10 after the first interview, $15 after the second interview and $20 after the third interview for a total of forty-five dollars.
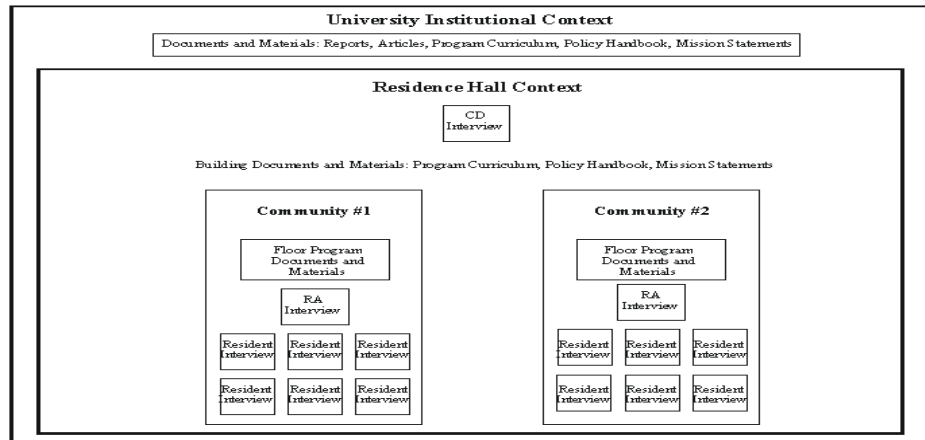
Please let me know of your willingness to participate by replying to this e-mail by hitting the reply-to button directing your response to Dale Bittinger, Director of Admissions (bittinge@umbc.edu) as soon as possible. Dale Bittinger will forward your name to me if you reply yes AND if you live on a floor that meets the requirements of my survey. Therefore, I will not know who volunteered and who did not unless your name appears in the final group. If more staff members volunteer than are necessary for the study, staff will be chosen for participation based on the characteristics of the floor the staff member lives on.

I hope this research will help us to better understand what variables support or hinder the development of positive resident interactions in order to improve our communities in the future. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me directly at 410-455-3768 or nyoung@umbc.edu. Thanks for considering this request.

Nancy D. Young
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education, Policy and Leadership, University of Maryland College Park
Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Housing and Auxiliary Services, UMBC

Multiple Case Study Design
Peer Interaction in Structurally Diverse Residence Communities

University Institutional Context

Documents and Materials: Reports, Articles, Program Curriculum, Policy Handbook, Mission Statements

Residence Hall Context

CD
Interview

Building Documents and Materials: Program Curriculum, Policy Handbook, Mission Statements

Community #1

Floor Program
Documents and
Materials

RA
Interview

Resident Interview | Resident Interview | Resident Interview

Resident Interview | Resident Interview | Resident Interview

Community #2

Floor Program
Documents and
Materials

RA
Interview

Resident Interview | Resident Interview | Resident Interview

Resident Interview | Resident Interview | Resident Interview

Peer Interaction and Learning in Compositionally Diverse Residence Hall Communities

The purpose of this study is to explore how college students interact in compositionally diverse residential environments in order to identify contextual variables and conditions which support or impede diverse peer interactions and, ultimately, impact learning. Qualitative case study methods are used to explore peer interactions in two racially and ethnically diverse residence environments from the perspective of the residents who live in these communities. The study is guided by the following questions:

1. How do students who live in compositionally diverse residence communities describe their experiences and interactions with others in the community?

2. What characteristics, conditions, policies or programs support or impede positive peer interactions in compositionally diverse communities?

3. How do students describe the effect or impact of interactions with peers in compositionally diverse residential communities on learning and development?

Six residents, 1 resident assistant and 1 community director will be interviewed from each community for a total of 16 participants.

Demographic Data for Residence Community and for Floors Selected as Cases

Percentage Sex as reported on Admissions Application

Admissions Sex	All Residents*	Campbell Hall	Bigwind Hall	Case A: Campbell	Case B: Bigwind
Male	55.7	54.3	60.8	51.8	68.6
Female	44.2	45.7	39.2	48.2	31.4

Race/Ethnicity as reported on Admissions Application

Admissions Race/Ethnicity	Total Residents*	Campbell Hall	Bigwind Hall	Case A: Campbell	Case B: Bigwind
American Indian	.4	1.3	1.2	1.8	0
Asian	20.2	25.6	18.6	24.1	19.6
Black	18.2	17.0	14.8	18.5	23.5
Hispanic	3.3	4.1	1.2	5.5	2.0
White	56.2	51.1	62.8	46.3	54.9
Unknown	1.4	.9	1.4	3.8	0

Class Status as reported in Registrar Database

Registrar Class	Total Residents*	Campbell Hall	Bigwind Hall	Case A: Campbell	Case B: Bigwind
First Year	41.4	70.0	77.3	72.2	88.2
Sophomore	25.7	17.3	14.0	22.2	3.9
Junior	19.5	7.3	6.4	1.8	5.9
Senior	12.9	5.4	2.3	3.8	2.0

Residency as reported on Admissions Application

Residency	Total Residents*	Campbell Hall	Bigwind Hall	Case A: Campbell	Case B: Bigwind
Maryland	-	87.7	75.3	85.2	78.4
Out-of-State	-	12.3	24.7	14.8	21.6

Total Residents*   **N ' 3201**
Campbell Hall   **N ' 317**
Bigwind Hall   **N ' 344**
Case A: Campbell   **N ' 54**
Case B: Bigwind   **N ' 51**

* Does not include 600 upper class beds in privatized housing

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 17, 2006

MEMORANDUM

Application Approval Notification

To:	Dr. Jeffrey Milem College Of Education University of Arizona Dr. Diane Lee Nancy D Young Department of Education Policy and Leadership University of Maryland, College Park.
From:	Roslyn Edson, M.S., CIP *fat* IRB Manager University of Maryland, College Park
Re:	**IRB Application Number:** 06-0503 **Project Title:** "Peer Interaction in compositionally Diverse Resident Halls"
Approval Date:	October 11, 2006
Expiration Date:	October 11, 2007
Type of Application:	New Project
Type of Research:	Nonexempt
Type of Review For Application:	Expedited

The University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved your IRB application. The research was approved in accordance with 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, and the University's IRB policies and procedures. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

Recruitment/Consent: For research requiring written informed consent, the IRB-approved and stamped informed consent document is enclosed. The IRB approval expiration date has been stamped on the informed consent document. Please keep copies of the consent forms used for this research for three years after the completion of the research.

Continuing Review: If you intend to continue to collect data from human subjects or to analyze private, identifiable data collected from human subjects, after the expiration date for this approval (indicated above), you must submit a renewal application to the IRB Office at least 30 days before the approval expiration date. *(Continued)*

Modifications: Any changes to the approved protocol must be approved by the IRB before the change is implemented, except when a change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. If you would like to modify the approved protocol, please submit an addendum request to the IRB Office. The instructions for submitting a request are posted on the IRB web site at: **http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/irb_Addendum%20Protocol.htm.**
Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks: You must promptly report any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others to the IRB Manager at 301-405-0678 or **redson@umresearch.umd.edu.**

Student Researchers: Unless otherwise requested, this IRB approval document was sent to the Principal Investigator (PI). The PI should pass on the approval document or a copy to the student researchers. This IRB approval document may be a requirement for student researchers applying for graduation. The IRB may not be able to provide copies of the approval documents if several years have passed since the date of the original approval.

Additional Information: Please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 if you have any IRB-related questions or concerns.

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM - RA
Information about the Study and Consent for Participation for Resident Assistants

Project Title: Peer Interaction and Learning in Compositionally Diverse Residence Halls
This research is conducted by Nancy D. Young ("the researcher") under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey Milem at the Graduate School, University of Maryland - College Park (UMCP), Department of Education, Policy, Planning and Leadership. The researcher is also employed at University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) as the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs with supervisory responsibilities for Housing and Health Services.

The purpose of this study is to understand how peer interactions occur between residents living in racially and ethnically diverse residence communities like the ones at UMBC. Your responses will help the researcher to understand how the students on your floor interact with each other in order to identify conditions which facilitate positive peer interactions and learning. The research seeks to understand how you describe the nature of your residents' interactions and what seems to help or hinder their ability to have positive interactions with each other. Participation in this study involves being interviewed by the researcher on three occasions. Each interview will last approximately one hour. During the third interview you will have an opportunity to respond to the researcher's interpretations of your first and second interviews and share any additional insights or corrections. As recognition of your contributions you will receive $10 after the first interview, $15 after the second interview and $20 after the third interview for a total of forty-five dollars.

Notes will be written during the interviews. The interviews will be audio taped and may also be transcribed (by a transcription service) following the interview. Interview tapes will be destroyed no later than 5 years after the interview. Transcripts will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the interviews. Tapes and transcripts may be reviewed by any member of the researcher's dissertation committee (the faculty members that guide a doctoral student's research), but will not be shared with anyone outside of the committee or transcription service.

Participant names will not be used in association with any interview data or and will not be used in the final research report. Data will be coded immediately following interviews to protect your identity and the identity of others on your floor or in your community. Tapes and transcripts from your interviews will be shared only with members of the researcher's dissertation committee as stated above. This means that the researcher will not share the information you provide with anyone else including other members of the residential life staff. Tapes and transcripts will be stored off campus to insure that other members of the residential life staff cannot inadvertently access them.

Although the information you provide to the researcher will remain confidential, you should be aware that if the information you reveal indicates that you or other members of your community may be at serious risk of harm, the researcher will be obligated to intervene for your safety or for the safety of the community. In addition, if you reveal incidents involving past sexual assault or sexual harassment which occurred on UMBC's campus or at campus related activities, the researcher is obligated to report to University Health Services that such an incident occurred. You will not be asked any questions during the interview that intentionally solicit or require you to provide such information.

Because detailed descriptions of the university and research site will be given, it may be possible for people familiar with the university under study to recognize the residence hall in which you live and work. Therefore, details irrelevant to the study may be altered or omitted to protect your

Appendix D
Consent Form RA p.2

anonymity. You will also have the right to review the transcript containing the interview data from your first and second interviews during your third meeting with me. You may request to omit any statement or quote that you believe may identify you to others or that you do not wish to be made public. Any other data may be directly quoted in final research reports.

During this study you will have the opportunity to reflect on the relationships in your communities and make suggestions that may improve the residential experience for you and for other students in the future.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated to participate in this study.

If you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer any question at anytime during the interview process. You may withdrawal from this study at any time. If you withdrawal, any tape recordings or transcripts already made will be destroyed. To withdrawal from this study, please contact the researcher: Nancy Young, 410-744-9155, or nyoung518@hotmail.com.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards at the UMCP and the UMBC. These boards exist to insure that your rights as a research participant are protected. If you have any concerns about this research or problems related to your participation, the review board is available to hear your concerns or problems. The contact for UMCP is: Roslyn Edson at redson@umresearch.umd.edu or 301-405-0678. The contact for UMBC is: Tim Sparklin at sparklin@umbc.edu or (410) 455-2737. The researcher's advisors Jeffrey Milem or Diane Lee can be contacted at jmilem@email.arizona.edu (520) 621-4931 and dlee@umbc.edu (410) 455-2859 respectively.
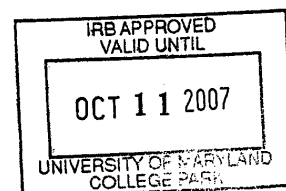
Your signature indicates that:
- you are at least 18 years of age;,
- the research has been explained to you;
- your questions have been fully answered; and
- you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Participant's Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

IRB APPROVED
VALID UNTIL

OCT 1 1 2007

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM - RESIDENTS

Page 1 of 2	
Initial:	*Date:*

Information about the Study and Consent for Participation for Residents

Project Title: Peer Interaction and Learning in Compositionally Diverse Residence Halls

This research is conducted by Nancy D. Young ("the researcher") under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey Milem at the Graduate School, University of Maryland - College Park (UMCP), Department of Education, Policy, Planning and Leadership. The researcher is also employed at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) as the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs with supervisory responsibilities for Housing and Health Services.

The purpose of this study is to understand how peer interactions occur between residents living in racially and ethnically diverse residence communities like the ones at UMBC. Your responses will help the researcher to understand how college students experience diverse residential environments in order to identify conditions which facilitate diverse peer interactions and learning. The research seeks to understand how you describe the nature of your interactions with other residents, what helps or hinders your ability to have positive interactions with other residents on your floor, and how these interactions have affected your educational experience.

Participation in this study involves being interviewed by the researcher on three occasions. Each interview will last approximately one hour. The final interview may be conducted in person or by phone. During this interview you will have an opportunity to respond to the researcher's interpretations of your earlier interviews and share any additional insights or corrections. As recognition of your contributions you will receive $10 after the first interview, $15 after the second interview and $20 after the third interview for a total of forty-five dollars. Notes will be written during the interviews. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed by a transcription service following the interview. Interview tapes will be destroyed no later than 5 years after the interview. Transcripts will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the interviews. Tapes and transcripts may be reviewed by any member of the researcher's dissertation committee (the faculty members that guide a doctoral student's research), but will not be shared with anyone outside of the committee or transcription service.

Participant names will not be used in association with any interview data or and will not be used in the final research report. Data will be coded immediately following interviews to protect your identity and the identity of others on your floor or in your community. Tapes and transcripts from your interviews will be shared only with members of the researcher's dissertation committee as stated above. Because detailed descriptions of the research site will be given, it may be possible for people familiar with the university under study to recognize the residence community in which live. Therefore, details irrelevant to the study may be altered or omitted to protect your anonymity. You have the right to review the transcript containing the interview data from your first interview. You may request to omit any statement or quote that you believe may identify you to others. Any other data may be directly quoted in final research reports.

Although the information you provide to the researcher will remain confidential, you should be aware that if the information you reveal indicates that you or other members of your community may be at serious risk of harm or injury, the researcher will be obligated to intervene for your safety or for the safety of the community. In addition, if you reveal incidents involving past sexual assault or sexual harassment which occurred on UMBC's campus or at campus related activities, the researcher is obligated to report to University Health Services that such an incident

UMCP IRB Resubmission of Recruitment Letter and Consent Form with Required Changes 10/05/06
Page 7 of 9

occurred. You will not be asked any questions during the interview that intentionally solicit or require you to provide such information.

During this study you will have the opportunity to reflect on the relationships in your communities and make suggestions that may improve the residential experience for you and for other students in the future. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated to participate in this study.

If you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer any question at anytime during the interview process. You may withdrawal from this study at any time. If you withdrawal, any tape recordings or transcripts already made will be destroyed. To withdrawal from this study, please contact the researcher: Nancy Young, 410-744-9155, or nyoung518@hotmail.com.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards at the UMCP and the UMBC. These boards exist to insure that your rights as a research participant are protected. If you have any concerns about this research or problems related to your participation, the review board is available to hear your concerns or problems. The contact for UMCP is: Roslyn Edson at redson@umresearch.umd.edu or 301-405-0678. The contact for UMBC is: Tim Sparklin at sparklin@umbc.edu or (410) 455-2737. The researcher's advisors Jeffrey Milem or Diane Lee can be contacted at jmilem@email.arizona.edu (520) 621-4931 and dlee@umbc.edu (410) 455-2859 respectively.
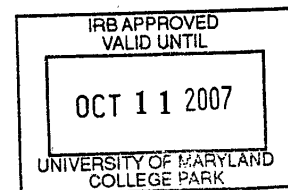
Your signature indicates that:
- you are at least 18 years of age;,
- the research has been explained to you;
- your questions have been fully answered; and
- you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Participant's Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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APPENDIX F
Consent Form CD

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM - CD
Information about the Study and Consent for Participation for Community Director

Project Title: Peer Interaction and Learning in Compositionally Diverse Residence Halls

This research is conducted by Nancy D. Young ("the researcher") under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey Milem at the Graduate School, University of Maryland - College Park (UMCP), Department of Education, Policy, Planning and Leadership. The researcher is also employed at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) as the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs with supervisory responsibilities for Housing and Health Services.

The purpose of this study is to understand how peer interactions occur between residents living in racially and ethnically diverse residence communities like the ones at UMBC. Your responses will help the researcher to understand how the students in your building interact with each other in order to identify conditions which facilitate positive peer interactions and learning. The research seeks to understand how you describe your observations of your residents' interactions, the role your Resident Assistants play in these interactions, and what seems to help or hinder residents' ability to have positive interactions with each other.

Participation in this study involves being interviewed by the researcher on two occasions. The first interview will last approximately one hour. The second interview will also last approximately one hour. During this interview you will have an opportunity to respond to the researcher's interpretations of your first interview and share any additional insights or corrections. As recognition of your contributions you will receive $30 after the second interview.

Notes will be written during the interviews. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed (by a transcription service) following the interview. Interview tapes will be destroyed no later than 5 years after the interview. Transcripts will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the interviews. Tapes and transcripts may be reviewed by any member of the researcher's dissertation committee (the faculty members that guide a doctoral student's research), but will not be shared with anyone outside of the committee or transcription service.

Participant names will not be used in association with any interview data or and will not be used in the final research report. Data will be coded immediately following interviews to protect your identity and the identity of others on your floor or in your community. Tapes and transcripts from your interviews will be shared only with members of the researcher's dissertation committee as stated above. This means that the researcher will not share the information you provide with anyone else including other members of the residential life staff. Tapes and transcripts will be stored off campus to insure that other members of the residential life staff cannot inadvertently access them.

Although the information you provide to the researcher will remain confidential, you should be aware that if the information you reveal indicates that you or members of your community may be at serious risk of harm, the researcher will be obligated to intervene for your safety or for the safety of the community. In addition, if you reveal incidents involving past sexual assault or sexual harassment which occurred on UMBC's campus or at campus related activities, the researcher is obligated to report to University Health Services that such an incident occurred. You will not be asked any questions during the interview that intentionally solicit or require you to provide such information.

Because detailed descriptions of the university and research site will be given, it may be possible for people familiar with the university under study to recognize the residence hall in which you live and work. Therefore, details irrelevant to the study may be altered or omitted to protect your identity. You will also have the right to review the transcript containing the interview data from your first interview. You may request to omit any statement or quote that you believe may identify you to others or that you do not wish to be made public. Any other data may be directly quoted in final research reports.

During this study you will have the opportunity to reflect on the relationships in your communities and make suggestions that may improve the residential experience for students in the future. You will also have the opportunity to reflect on the role practitioners play in facilitating such relationships.
There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated to participate in this study.

If you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer any question at anytime during the interview process. You may withdrawal from this study at any time. If you withdrawal, any tape recordings or transcripts already made will be destroyed. To withdrawal from this study, please contact the researcher: Nancy Young, 410-744-9155, or nyoung518@hotmail.com.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards at the UMCP and the UMBC. These boards exist to insure that your rights as a research participant are protected. If you have any concerns about this research or problems related to your participation, the review board is available to hear your concerns or problems. The contact for UMCP is: Roslyn Edson at redson@umresearch.umd.edu or 301-405-0678. The contact for UMBC is: Tim Sparklin at sparklin@umbc.edu or (410) 455-2737. The researcher's advisors Jeffrey Milem or Diane Lee can be contacted at jmilem@email.ariziona.edu (520) 621-4931 and dlee@umbc.edu (410) 455- 2859 respectively.

If you are selected to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign a copy of this information form prior to your interview. You will have an opportunity to ask questions prior to the interview and to have all questions answered to your satisfaction.
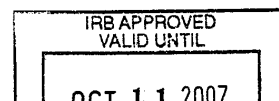
Your signature indicates that:
- you are at least 18 years of age;,
- the research has been explained to you;
- your questions have been fully answered; and
- you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Participant's Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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VALID UNTIL

OCT 1 1 2007

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Introduction: Thank participant. Review consent form and cautions about confidentiality. Confirm consent for audio taping. Start tape and confirm consent on tape.

Warm Up Question: Tell me about yourself. Why did you choose to attend UMBC? Were you aware of the diversity of the student population when you selected the school?

What three words would you use to describe your floor's community? Describe the interactions you have with other residents. (Probes…How many of the people on the floor do you socialize with regularly? Close friends? How many of your close friends at UMBC live on this floor? In this building? How many of these students are of your same race and ethnicity? Different?)

Your floor was selected for this study because it was identified as a diverse floor. Does that description fit for you? Why or why not?

Describe your interactions with residents from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. What is the most significant or memorable experience you've had while living on this floor?

Think back to the beginning of the school year to move-in? How did you get to know the other residents on your floor? Was there anything that helped you to get to know the other people on your floor? Encouraged or discouraged you to interact with residents of differing races and ethnicities?

With so many different people on your floor, how did you form the community you have here? What things kept you from or brought you together?

What is the atmosphere like related to race and ethnicity on your floor? (Probes: Is the environment fair? welcoming? Safe? for all students? Is there racial tension on the floor?)

Does conflict occur around race, ethnicity or cultural difference? If so, can you describe an example and how it was resolved or was left unresolved?

UMBC describes itself as a diverse school that values racial and ethnic diversity. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

What have you learned by living on this floor? Which experiences were most critical to this learning? (Probe: Studies suggest students learn more in diverse environments. Do you think that's true?)

What could the university do to encourage or support cross racial interaction? And learning?

Questions were semi-structured and were tailored to understand the participant's response from the prior interview. The first two questions were short, but with individualized follow-up probes could comprise more of the interview than the original question indicates and were designed to generate new information with non-directive questions. Later questions were designed to member check and to create deeper understanding of content gathered in interview one. Later questions also provided the opportunity to go deeper into areas covered more superficially in early interviews as trust and rapport developed. All questions here are general guide questions. I tailored the general content to fit the individual student, sometimes summarizing content from their previous interview if related to the specific questions before using probes that helped me to better understand earlier responses.

How have you been? What has been happening on your floor since we last talked? (Individualized follow-up probes.)

With the people on your floor? Tell me about the interactions. Same or different than when last we talked? (Individualized follow-up probes.)

I'd like to ask you a few follow-up questions to help me understand things I was hearing during the first interviews - emerging themes you or other students shared during our first interview. I want to clarify, understand or see if the idea does or does not fit for you.

During the first few weeks (you or others) talked about the role of roommates in early interactions. Roommates seemed to either help or hinder the development of other relationships on the floor. Did your roommate play a role? What happened for you?

Joking came up a few times when I asked if race mattered on the floor. Does joking about race exist on your floor? If so, help me to understand the role joking plays on your floor. Have you observed jokes about race? Are there limits? Rules? Describe.

Do you use Facebook or other online communication to communicate with people from the floor prior to move-in. If so, describe. Do you use Facebook or other online communication with others on the floor now? If so, describe.

What role if any did family or friends at home play in encouraging or discouraging diverse peer interactions?

The most commonly described interactions between diverse peers seemed to take place at or following activities one participant described as neutral. Does this label make sense to you for the diverse peer interactions you described to me last time? Why or why not?

I was surprised by how frequently participants mentioned doors. Can you help me to understand why you thought doors are so important or why did doors come up so frequently? (Only a few participants did not mention doors in first interviews. For them I asked if it fit or if not why the doors did not matter to them.)

Did you have any friends at UMBC prior to your arrival?

Did the presence of Meyerhoff scholars or lacrosse players impact the interactions in your diverse community? If yes, how?

Anything else you want me to know?

Questions were paraphrased for this semi-structured interview using the following questions to guide the interview. Like second interviews, questions were broad and individualized. The first two questions were non-directive while later questions tested emerging themes. Questions were personalized for individual participants. For example, the first question was adapted using prior interview material. A typical question would take a form similar to "Last time we talked you said the floor was busy studying and people were getting on your nerves, what's been going on since then?" As in the second interview questions were designed to test themes developed through earlier interviews.

1.   What has been happening on your floor? How have things changed or remained the same since we last talked?

2.   While you were away for the semester break did you gain any new perspectives on your floor's interactions? Did you keep in touch with folks from the floor?

3.   A pattern seems to emerge from the interviews that roommates and suite mates were "joined at the hip" or "clingy" in the early weeks of school, then branched out to others on the floor or in the building and by the end of the semester had begun to spend more time with people elsewhere. Was this true for you? (If yes, how and when did you begin branching out? If no, what happened for you?)

4.   If yes to #3, has this change impact your relationships/interactions on the floor? With roommates and suitemates? With people on the floor?

5.   You or other participants indicated that they were excited or looked forward to meeting people from different races, ethnicities and backgrounds? Was that true for you? Why do you think residents think it is important or exciting to have friends of different races, ethnicities and backgrounds? For non-excited, question about fear or anxiety.

6. Has living and interacting with people different from you impacted you? Have you learned anything? If so, what have you learned? Has interacting with diverse others helped or hindered you academically?

7. I'm going to share a series of cards with themes that more specific themes that seemed to emerge from my interviews with students. I'd like you to listen to each one and tell me if you think it is an accurate statement for you. If you disagree tell me why or correct the statement.

    a.   Many of the relationships and interactions formed during the first three - five days of school. These relationships often started with roommates and suitemates then branched out to others on the floor. (Midway through interviews I began testing first two weeks in place of 3-5 days since most students made this correction in early interviews.)

b. The first floor meeting and the games we played were helpful in getting to know other members of the floor.

c. Welcome week social activities provided a comfortable mechanism to get to know people other than my roommate and suitemates.

d. More in building events would be helpful in encouraging interactions between diverse residents during orientation.

e. Orientation and welcome week activities such as convocation, Playfair (RAC activity) and the motivational diversity speaker gave a clear message that students at UMBC are encouraged to interact with and learn from people of all races and ethnicities.

f. Simple things such as opening your door and smiling at people as you pass are the most important factors in meeting people on your floor.

g. Intact groups (Lacrosse players or Meyerhoffs) did not negatively impact interactions.

h. Family and friends from home are supportive of or actively encouraged interactions with others who were racially and ethnically different from you.

i. While students on your floor don't pay a lot of attention to race and ethnicity, you sometimes become aware of race when going to places off campus or when friends from home or other schools point out these differences.

j. The racial and ethnic mix of your floor makes it impossible to avoid cross racial interactions and friendships.

k. People on your floor feel comfortable asking question about racial or ethnic differences such as food, religion or cultural beliefs.

l. Racial jokes are acceptable on our floor because they:

    i. lighten up or make living with differences more comfortable
    ii. Give others permission to joke about your own race or ethnicity
    iii. make it clear you think racial or ethnic stereotypes are stupid
    iv. show that you are close enough friends to move beyond race
    v. get others riled up or egg others on which is part of the way your floor has fun

m. If a racial or ethnic joke went too far or a slur was made, people on our floor would confront it openly.

n. Our RA has encouraged us to interact and has encouraged us to develop respect for differences.

o. People on my floor focus on similarity in personality or interests more than race. Similarities such as religion or shared academic interest help us to bridge differences.

p. The structure of it floor makes it harder for people at the end of the hall to interact.

q. Alcohol has played a positive role in encouraging interactions on our floor.

8. Has participating in this study had any impact on your interactions?

Background Information Form

Your code:

Race:

Ethnicity:

Religion:

Hometown or home country if not from the U.S.:

Your high school: Public   Private/No affiliation   Private/ Religious:_____

Racial composition of your high school:

      Racially/ethnically diverse with multiple races or ethnicities

      Racially and ethnically diverse primarily two races: (specify)

      Predominantly one race or ethnicity: (specify)

Are you the first generation in your family to be born in the US?   Yes   No

Are you an international student? No   Yes,

If yes, how long have you been in the US?

My major at UMBC is:

Other info you think I should know:

Current friend group on the floor:	Current friend group elsewhere at
UMBC:	UMBC:
Name: Des:	Name: Des:

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