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Critical Conversations: How Independent School Alumni Describe the Schooling Experiences That Facilitated Their Understanding of Race and Ethnicity

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Abstract

The United States is becoming more racially diverse. In spite of this increasing diversity, many American schools still remain segregated. Far too many young people are receiving an education without learning the critical skills needed to live, work, and lead in a complex, diverse, and stratified society. Graduating students who know how to positively interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are essential to American democracy. This qualitative phenomenological study investigated how independent school alumni (ISA) described the schooling experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. Intergroup dialogue provided a theoretical lens through which to examine ISA schooling experiences that led to racial and ethnic understanding. This study employed four data gathering techniques: (a) demographic profile sheets, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) field notes, and, (d) document collection. Data were analyzed using multiple rounds of coding to identify emerging themes. The findings reveal that school social environments facilitate racial and ethnic understanding; racial awareness occurs both inside and outside the classroom through formal instruction and extracurricular activities and programs; racialized activities and spaces lead to the development of personal connections with people from different backgrounds; privilege and power highlight a social divide that intersects race and socioeconomic class; and different levels of readiness to interact with diverse people is indicated in post-secondary settings. Implications for school teachers and leaders as well as for future research are addressed.

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Critical Conversations: How Independent School Alumni Describe the Schooling

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my loving wife, Denise, my two wonderful sons, Hassan (Bud) and Niles, and my amazing mother, Nadine. I could not have completed this journey without their love and support. There were many times throughout my dissertation process when I had to read, write, and do research instead of doing things with my family. However, my wife always stood in the gap for me and made sure everyone was taken care of, including me. Her patience, strength, encouragement, and unconditional love made it easier for me to concentrate on my studies and for that I am truly grateful. I'd like to thank my mom for instilling in me a belief that I could do or be anything I wanted to be as long as I worked hard at it and never gave up. Additionally, I would like to thank all of those who spoke the words of "Dr. Jones" into my life years before I even knew I would pursue my doctorate degree. You spoke the words that were not as though they were and it helped to bring what once was a distant dream into a reality.

Special recognition must be given to my dissertation committee, Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason and Dr. Chris Henry Hinesley. Without their support, guidance, and wisdom, I would not have been able to complete this process. They forged a deep appreciation and respect for receiving a doctorate degree by demanding high quality scholarly work. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my Executive Mentors, Dr. Ward Ghory and Dr. Deborah Pearce. Both individuals provided hands-on support, a steady voice of assurance, and the tools I needed to complete the process.

Biographical Sketch

Hassan Jones was born in Utica, NY. He was raised as the only child of a single mother, who gave birth to him at age 15. The challenges of growing up in an impoverished home without a father forged in him a spirt to succeed. He believes that your circumstances do not define you and feels that education is the key to success for young people.

Hassan's commitment to young people and love for learning led him to pursue higher education. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in History in 1995 and a Master's Degree in Elementary Education in 2000 at the State University College at Brockport, and a he received a Master's Degree in Educational Administration at Canisius College in 2005. Throughout his 20 years within the field of education, he has served as an elementary and middle school classroom teacher in the Rochester City School District, an Assistant Principal for Grades K-6 in the Greece Central School District, and as the Head of Middle School, Grades 5-8, in a private independent school in Brighton, NY.

As a life-long learner, Hassan returned to school to pursue his doctorate degree in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College in the spring of 2016. Mr. Jones pursued his research using a qualitative study that explored how independent school alumni described the schooling experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity under the direction of Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason and Dr. Chris Henry Hinesley.

Hassan strongly believes that preparing young people for how to live and work with people in an increasingly diverse nation is an essential part of the educational process.

Abstract

The United States is becoming more racially diverse. In spite of this increasing diversity, many American schools still remain segregated. Far too many young people are receiving an education without learning the critical skills needed to live, work, and lead in a complex, diverse, and stratified society. Graduating students who know how to positively interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are essential to American democracy.

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated how independent school alumni (ISA) described the schooling experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. Intergroup dialogue provided a theoretical lens through which to examine ISA schooling experiences that led to racial and ethnic understanding. This study employed four data gathering techniques: (a) demographic profile sheets, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) field notes, and, (d) document collection. Data were analyzed using multiple rounds of coding to identify emerging themes.

The findings reveal that school social environments facilitate racial and ethnic understanding; racial awareness occurs both inside and outside the classroom through formal instruction and extracurricular activities and programs; racialized activities and spaces lead to the development of personal connections with people from different backgrounds; privilege and power highlight a social divide that intersects race and socioeconomic class; and different levels of readiness to interact with diverse people is

indicated in post-secondary settings. Implications for school teachers and leaders as well as for future research are addressed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Teaching students how to interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is especially important in a pluralistic society that is growing more and more diverse by the day (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). National demographic trends show that by 2025, half of all American school children will be non-Anglo American, and by 2042, people of color will make up the majority of the American population (Hodgkinson, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau Report, 2010). In response to the changing demographics, Civil Rights leaders and educators argue there is a growing need for educational practices that prepare students to live, work, and lead in a complex, diverse, and stratified society (Banks, 2001; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005; Gurin & Bowen, 1999; Tatum, 1997). This view is further supported by the American National Common Core Standards, the stated purpose of which is to prepare students to be college and career ready (U.S Department of Education [USDOE], 2010). One of the articulated standard measures of being ready for college, or a career, is for students to be able to:

> Appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds (USDOE, 2010).

In light of this stated goal, school districts across the nation will need to find more effective ways to help students learn and work together with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Research suggests that American schools play an important role in the "inculcation of fundamental values necessary for the maintenance of our democratic society" (Brown v. BOE, 1954). These values include teaching students how to participate in an increasingly heterogeneous and complex nation (Gurin et al., 2002). However, many American schools remain segregated by race and ethnicity (Orfield, Frankenberg, Ee, & Kuscera, 2014). Fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954) declared state laws requiring Black and White students to attend separate public schools unconstitutional, researchers are seeing trends that show public schools nationwide have become more racially isolated (homogeneousness of color and low-income) than in the past 30 years (Welner, 2006). Black students attending schools with more than 90% minority students increased from 34% in 1989 to 49% in 2012 (Orfield et al., 2014; Rothstein, 2014). This increase shows that public schools are becoming more segregated by race.

Additionally, data from the U.S. Department of Education (Figure 1.1) show a breakdown of the racial composition of schools attended by the average student of each race in the 2011-12 school year. The data reveal a Latino student was most likely to attend a school that was 57% Latino and White students were likely to attend a school that was nearly 75% White (Orfield et al., 2014). The lack of racial diversity in American public schools is clearly evident.
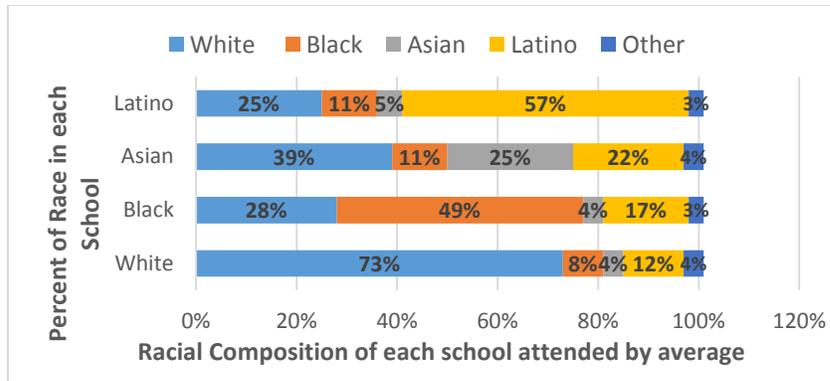
Figure 1.1. The racial composition of schools attended by the average student of each race, 2011-12 (Orfield et al., 2014).

The concentration of certain racial groups in different communities is a result of where students live (Rothstein, 2014). Over the past few decades, suburban development and the expansion of metropolitan areas have made it more likely for students from different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds to reside in separate school districts (Holme, Frankenburg, Diem, & Welton , 2013). Data from the U.S. Department of Education (Figure 1.2) show White students are concentrated in suburban and rural communities. Whereas,
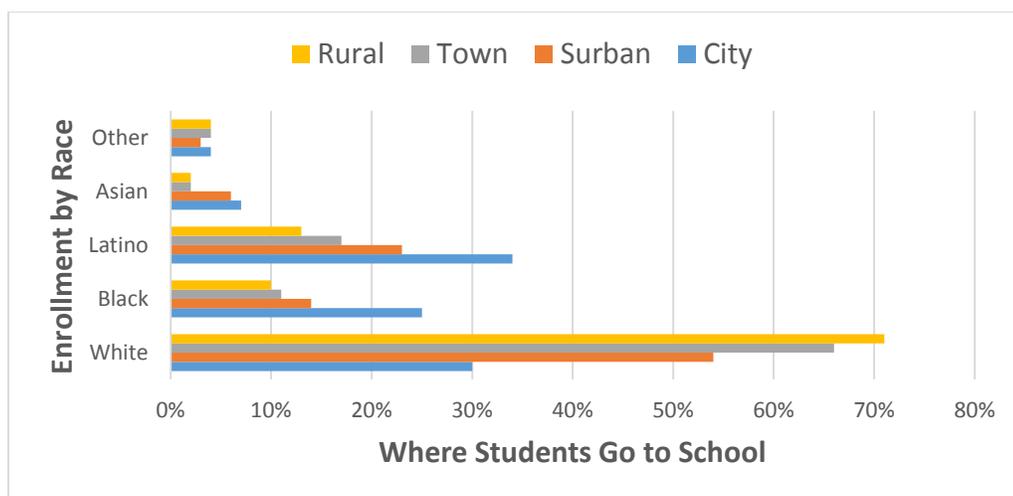
Figure 1.2. The racial composition of where students attend school, 2007-2008 (Education Week, 2014).

Black, Hispanic, and Asian students are found in city and suburban areas. Figure 1.2 provides a breakdown by race of the percentage of students enrolled in school based on where they live.

According to Rothstein (2014), residential segregation stemming from previous racially motivated law, public policy, and government-sponsored discrimination is one of the major reasons why American schools are segregated. For example, in the early twentieth century, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veterans Administration (VA) both had policies in place that denied mortgage insurance to Blacks (Bischoff, 2008; Rothstein, 2014). Furthermore, the FHA and VA prohibited developers from selling to Blacks and required them to implement deed restrictions that prevented the reselling of homes to what the FHA referred to as an "incompatible racial element" (Rothstein, 2014). As a result of this historical housing discrimination and current local and state policies that require students to attend school based on where they live, White students end up attending racially homogenous schools in suburban and rural areas, while Black and Latino students tend to be in heterogeneous environments with few White students in more urban areas (Bischoff, 2008; Holme, Frankenburg, Diem, & Welton , 2013; Rothstein, 2014; USDOE, 2010).

Additionally, schools with a majority of Black and Latino students also have a high concentration of low-income students (Orfield et al., 2014; Rothstein, 2014). Scholars argue that placing economically disadvantaged students of color in schools segregated mainly by race reinforces a self-perpetuating system of inequality (Rothstein

2014; Welner, 2006). For example, empirical data show students of color tend to be enrolled in schools with fewer resources, limited enrichment opportunities, and lower graduation rates (Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Romney, 2003; Rothstein, 2014; Welner, 2006). Consequently, Black and Latino students fall behind their White and Asian peers when it comes to college and career readiness (Romney, 2003; Welner, 2006). Further, residentially segregated schools reinforce stereotypes and low expectations of Black and Latino students in low-income schools (Nunn, 2011; Rothstein, 2014). The situation is dire and a more integrated and diverse school system that promotes regional educational equity, is essential to help break this cycle of inequality (Holme, Frankenburg, Diem, & Welton , 2013; Welner, 2006).

Problem Statement

Race, according to Bonilla-Silva (1999, 2004) is a "social fact" that affects the social lives of individual members of races whether they want it to or not. Bonilla-Silva (1999) further suggested that we are all part of a racialized social system in which schools play a key role (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). For this reason, learning to live and work with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is an important part of the education process (Jacobsen, Frankenberg, Lenhoff, & Winchell, 2012). In fact, Chief Justice Warren in writing the Court's opinion in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) argued that education, "Is the very foundation of good citizenship . . . it is a principle instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and helping him to adjust normally to his environment (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). In other words, education plays a critical role in preparing young people for work and citizenship in an increasingly diverse society (Welner, 2006).

Thus, it is important to understand the various ways in which American schools socialize students racially.

There is a growing body of research that points to the benefits of learning in a diverse school community (Davis & Torres, 2013; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, Dey, Gurin, & Gurin, 2003; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Tatum, 1997). Many American schools, however, remain segregated by race and socioeconomic level. As a result, little is known about the types of school experiences that facilitate racial and ethnic understanding in racially-mixed (typically racially-balanced or predominantly White) K-12 schools (Welton, 2013). This study directly addresses this need by exploring how independent school alumni, in a racially-mixed setting, describe the schooling experiences that facilitated their racial and ethnic understanding. For the purposes of this study, diversity will refer to race and ethnicity and their relationship to cross-racial understanding (Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007).

Diversity in higher education. Scholars generally agree that having a racially and ethnically diverse student body in higher education enhances learning for all students (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Davis & Torres, 2013; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2005; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005). Bowen (1999) argued that diversity is an inextricable part of a student's educational experience at the university level. He further posited,

> Our society—indeed our world—is and will be multiracial. We simply must learn to work more effectively and more sensitively with individuals of other races, and a diverse student body can contribute directly to the achievement of this end. (p. 62)

An Amicus Brief filed in Grutter v. Bollinger (2003) revealed college presidents and provosts from across the nation held a similar view to Bowen (1999). As a group, senior staff university officials articulated the belief that diversity in higher education leads to an exchange of ideas, robust learning, and new understanding that prepares students to function in a multiracial society (Grutter v. Bollinger, 2003 expert witness testimony). To that end, diversity in academia is viewed as part of a core mission to prepare students who are civic minded, culturally competent, critical thinkers who will make positive contributions to society as a whole (Hurado et al., 2003; Jacobsen et al., 2012; Tatum, 1997). Gurin et al. (2004) argued that as students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds get to know one another, they develop commonalities and an ability to see different perspectives. It is also believed these students become more engaged in citizenship through community service and political activities (Gurin et al., 2004).

Studies in higher education demonstrate there are also cognitive benefits associated with being in a racially diverse school community. Two longitudinal studies—one conducted by UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, and another at the University of Michigan revealed that students who interacted with racially and ethnically diverse peers both inside and outside the classroom, demonstrated greater engagement in active thinking, increased intellectual engagement and motivation, and growth in intellectual and academic skills (Fine & Handelsman, 2010). Furthermore, cross-racial interaction in higher education is linked to the development of interracial friendships later in life, racial tolerance (Welton, 2013), and increased likelihood of working in an integrated environment and of having positive experiences in the integrated workplace (Kurlaender & Yun, 2005).

Diversity in K-12 education. Theory and empirical evidence indicate the educational benefits of learning and working with a diversity of people can actually begin earlier in K-12 settings (Davis & Torres, 2013; Hurtado et al., 2003; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Tatum, 1997; Welner, 2006). Research shows benefits for all students associated with mixed raced K-12 school environments include, but are not limited to, improvement of outlooks and viewpoints concerning race (Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Welner, 2006). Students who experience positive interactions with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds report feeling more comfortable and optimistic about addressing issues dealing with race (Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Tatum, 1997).

Exposure to diverse people in earlier grades is also linked to reduced negative racial stereotypes among young children of all racial and ethnic backgrounds (Black, 2002; Killen & Stangor, 2001). Research shows children who are exposed to people from different backgrounds early on are generally more "culturally flexible" and later in life are more likely to choose to live or work in integrated environments (Eaton, & Chirichigno, 2010; Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007) Furthermore, studies show students in integrated learning environments are more likely to develop interracial relationships (Wells, Holme, Revilla, & Atanda, 2004). Whereas, students who are in segregated environments are less likely to do so (Orfield et al., 2014). Greater civic engagement and more positive intergroup attitudes are also associated with learning in racially diverse environments (Black, 2002; Ma & Kurlaender, 2005; Wells et al., 2004).

Moreover, early acquisition of the benefits associated with learning in a racially diverse setting is important because many students who graduate from high school choose not to attend college, and instead enter directly into the workforce. According to

the United States Department of Labor, 16.8 million people ages 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school in October 2013 and the labor force participation rate of these youth was 77. 7% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). There is also evidence that students of color (SOC) in racially diverse schools, in particular, benefit from access to social networks, career information, and advice that helps to improve overall life chances (Dawkins & Braddock, 1994; Welner, 2006). These same benefits do not hold true for the SOC in racially isolated schools with high poverty levels (Holme, Frankenburg, Diem, & Welton , 2013).

 Students of color in predominantly white schools. Black students, in predominantly White institutions (PWI), at the secondary and post-secondary levels face both academic and social hurdles not faced by their White counterparts (Carter, 2007; DeCuir-Gunby, 2012; Tatum, 1997). Research shows Black students often feel marginalized and struggle to integrate into predominantly White institutions due to perceived racial and ethnic barriers (DeCuir-Gunby, 2012; Nunn, 2011; Tatum, 1997). On the other hand, White students in the same school context, experience a sense of normalcy and seldom face issues related to race or ethnicity (Alexander-Snow, 2010; Fryer, 2006; Tatum, 1997). Furthermore, studies show students of color in PWI are often assigned to lower track classes and feel their White counterparts and teachers perceive them as being low performers and trouble makers (Gordon, 2012; Ispa Landa, 2013; Nunn, 2011).

 Moreover, Nunn (2011) investigated the relationship between classroom experiences and high school students' attitudes regarding race/ethnicity and school success. A comparative analysis examined students' everyday classroom experiences in

two suburban and one urban school. Findings from the study suggest suburban schools exacerbate ethno-racial divisions among students through institutional policies and practices like tracking, and a combination of classroom choices, teachers' leadership, and wider attitudes about race and ethnicity that were prevalent in the suburban schools included in the study (Nunn, 2011). Despite these challenges, studies show students of color in predominantly White schools perform better than their peers in public schools (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Jenkins, 2011; Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003; Lucas, 2005).

Given the need to prepare students to live, work, and succeed in a multi-racial society, it is important to understand the schooling experiences that facilitate racial awareness for students in racially-mixed settings. While there is a growing body of research focused on the educational benefits of having a racially and ethnically diverse student body, most concentrated on higher education (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Hurtado, 2003; Nunn, 2011). Additionally, the majority of research about the benefits of desegregated schooling is predicated on the attainment of racial heterogeneity and contact across groups with perceived social differences in public schools (Welton, 2013). There is a critical need to go beyond the numbers and the mere presence of structural diversity, however, to better understand the schooling experiences that contribute to the racial socialization of students in racially-mixed private school settings (Gordon, 2012; Welton, 2013). This is important because less is known about how the school context, curriculum, or extracurricular activities influence racial awareness for students in desegregated private school settings.

Independent schools. Independent schools are nonpublic and non-parochial schools that share six basic characteristics: self-governance, self-support, self-defined

curriculum, self-selected students, self-selected faculty, and small size (Kane, 1991).

Unlike other private schools, independent schools are approved by a recognized

evaluation process as part of their membership of the National Association of

Independent Schools (Kane, 1991). These schools are fiscally independent from

government entities, and are governed by independent boards of trustees, directors or

advisors (Kane, 1991). Still, like other private schools, parents pay tuition for their

children to attend, a fact that makes them less accessible to low-income students (Powell,

1996). Parents send their children to independent schools based on beliefs that their

children will receive a better quality education, learn in a safer environment than in

public school, or because the school has an educational philosophy similar to their own

(Powell, 1996).

Historically, independent schools were designed with the mission to serve the

educational needs of a narrow elite population (Brosnan, 2001). Traditional independent

schools in the Northeast excluded students based on race and religion, while schools in

the south were founded for the exclusive education of White children in reaction to

desegregation following Brown v. Board of Education (1954) (Brosnan, 2001; Kane,

1991). Over the past two decades, while public schools have become increasingly

segregated, independent schools, fueled in part by their history of discrimination, have

sought to become more diverse (Brosnan, 2001; NAIS, 2013; USDOE, 2010).

Diversity in independent schools. The National Association of Independent

Schools (2013) reported the total number of students of color in both day and boarding

schools for 2000-2001 was 16.8%. The 2012-2013 report shows this number increased to

27.6%. Of this number, 6.2 % are African American, 4.1% are Hispanic, 7.9% are Asian,

0.2% are Native American, 1.3% are Pacific Islander, 6.5% are multiracial, and 1.4% are Middle Eastern (NAIS, 2013). These numbers demonstrate that nationally the efforts to increase diversity is progressing upward. However, in the South and West, where White students make up a much smaller share of the population, private schools are much more segregated than their public school counterparts (Reardon & Yun, 2002). Still, the national increase in SOC in independent schools, creates a unique research opportunity.

The push for independent schools to become more diverse is driven by both moral and practical reasons. Based on their socially exclusive past, independent school leaders initiated efforts to embrace diversity as part of the training in character and citizenship that they have long viewed as key ingredients of a good education (Brosnan, 2001). NAIS, which represents more than 1,100 schools nationally, moved to make diversity a priority in the 1980s by creating an office of diversity and establishing an annual people of color conference (Brosnan, 2001). Furthermore, in 2013 NAIS published a diversity handbook to assist leaders with facilitating diversity inclusion and a better understanding of how diversity influences student learning (Bassett, 2011; Davis & Torres, 2013. These moves led independent schools to reexamine what it means to be in an inclusive community that embraces diversity (Davis & Torres, 2013).

As a result, most, if not all independent schools now view diversity as essential to their educational mission (Davis & Torres, 2013). For example, many NAIS schools now post diversity statements on their website that reflect the general definition of diversity adopted by NAIS. According to Batiste (2013) NAIS defines diversity as:

> The wide range of human characteristics used to mark or identify individual and group identities. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, ethnicity,

race, national origin, age, personality, sexual orientation, gender, class, religion,

ability, and linguistics. Diversity of thought and ways of knowing, being, and

doing are also understood as natural, valued, and desired states, the presence of

which benefit organizations, workplaces, and society.

Spurred by NAIS policy changes and diversity initiatives, independent schools began to

seek to develop students who are civic minded and culturally competent (Bradberry,

2013).

Another reason why independent schools are becoming more diverse is the

decline of public schools. Public schools across the nation are facing financial challenges

due to governmental budget cuts (Baker, Sciarra, & Farrie, 2014). These cuts have

caused some schools to increase class sizes, slash extracurricular programs, and eliminate

tutoring programs and others special services (Baker, et al., 2014). These changes,

coupled with an increasing concern for student safety and an emphasis on high-stakes

testing, are causing some families to seek alternative schooling for their children (Baker,

et al., 2014). Families, including those of color, that send their children to private

independent schools are doing so based on their belief that they will find a safer learning

environment, smaller class sizes, higher quality education, more individualized attention,

and a better learning experience (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013).

National demographic trends provide another reason why the racial and ethnic

composition of independent schools is changing. It is predicted that by 2050 half of all

Americans will be non-Anglo American, which is already resulting in more school-aged

children of color across the nation (Hodgkinson, 2000). NAIS, in an effort to

strategically position itself for the future, encouraged membership schools to work

toward demographic sustainability (Demographic Sustainability, 2009). NAIS suggested this could be accomplished by becoming,

> more inclusive, providing greater accessibility financially and socially, developing a school climate in and out of the classroom that is supportive of a diverse student and faculty body, implementing a coordinated admission marketing strategy, and promoting a more flexible work environment. (Demographic Sustainability, 2009)

To remain financially viable, independent schools have to find ways to expand their market base by digging deeper into existing markets or opening up new ones (Bassett, 2011. The expected increase in the racial and ethnic minority population in the United States over the next few decades, will represent an opportunity for independent schools to broaden their enrollments and to secure their financial futures (Kane, 1991; , Demographic Sustainability, 2009).

While research shows there are educational benefits associated with learning in a diverse community, such as increased critical thinking, less is known about the social interactions and conversations that foster positive relationships between students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in mixed race K-12 settings (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Davis & Torres, 2013; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2001; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005). The ability of high school graduates to understand and appreciate others from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is considered to be essential to their college and career readiness. Moreover, having the skills to live in an increasingly diverse society is a matter of national interest and of critical importance to the development of citizenship (USDOE, 2010). Given the increase in diversity in independent schools and the fact that

these schools are examining ways to bring in more diversity, it is justifiable to conduct this study in an independent school setting (Bassett, 2011; NAIS, 2013). Research in this area will contribute to the body of knowledge on the educational value of having a diverse school community.

Theoretical Rationale

Intergroup dialogue provides a framework for exploring the experiences students have with one another in a diverse community. Intergroup dialogue has been defined as "a form of democratic engagement that fosters communication, critical reflection, and collaborative action across social divides" (Zuniga, Lopez, & Ford, 2010, p. 1). Scholars contend that through intergroup dialogue, individuals become more aware of race distinctions and further develop empathy for those who are different from them (Zuniga, Biren, Chesler, & Walker, 2007). Furthermore, a growing body of literature demonstrates that intergroup dialogue can lead to increase understanding and reduced prejudice among adolescents (Aldana, Rowley, Checkoway, & Richards-Schuster, 2012; Wayne, 2008). Diversity practitioners point to three core educational goals associated with the intergroup dialogue approach as the reason for improved understanding between people from different backgrounds: raising consciousness (Awareness), building relationships across differences and conflicts (Acceptance), and strengthening individual and collective capacities to promote social justice (Action) (Zuniga et al., 2007).

Consciousness raising occurs through an examination of power and privilege in which participants are encouraged to question personal biases and preconceptions and begin to situate the perspectives of others in a larger social context (Zuniga et al., 2007). Through race-based intergroup dialogue, members of both advantaged (White majority)

and less advantaged (people of color, minority) groups examine the effects of privilege and subordination on their relationships (Nagda, Gurin, & Johnson, 2005). In doing so, they develop a greater understanding of their own social identity as well as an awareness of intergroup and intragroup differences (Zuniga et al., 2007).

Relationship building in this model focuses on sustained communication among participants to develop deeper understanding, mutual respect, and empathic connections across and within social identity groups (Zuniga et al., 2007). For the purposes of this study, relationship building will also include the development of friendships with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Research shows American adolescents deal with issues related to diversity regularly in the form of intergroup conflict, lunchroom segregation, and race-based social exclusion in schools (Crystal, Killen, & Ruck, 2008; Tatum, 1997). Intergroup dialogue provides these adolescents with an opportunity to foster relationships and bridge their differences.

The promotion of social justice is a byproduct of consciousness raising and the development of closer relationships. The social justice goal is for individuals to develop a sense of shared responsibility for challenging discrimination and advocating for greater justice (Zuniga et al., 2007). This involves being an active citizen and working to ensure that everyone is treated in an equitable manner. Scholars contend that intergroup dialogue provides a structure that can empower participants to enact change in their schools and society as a whole (Crystal et al., 2008; Tatum, 1997). There is empirical data to support this contention. Studies show that young people who participate in intergroup dialogue are more likely to become involved in efforts to combat discrimination and social injustice (Nagda et al., 2005; Tatum, 1997; Zuniga et al., 2007).

Intergroup dialogue provides a lens through which to examine independent school alumni's schooling experiences involving race and ethnicity. Research shows that intergroup dialogue exposes students to experiences that challenge their existing worldview and way of thinking (Allport, 1954; Gurin et al., 2002; Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Tatum 1997; Zuniga et al., 2007). Nagda (2007) supported this belief and added that, "diverse educational settings marked by novelty, disequilibrium, and dissonance in information and experiences combined with opportunities for substantive reflection and meaningful dialogue with others can have significant positive impact on participants" (p. 59). Given the educational and social benefits associated with intergroup dialogue, it is important to examine the pre-college school experiences students have in racially diverse settings that facilitate their understanding of race and ethnicity. A study of this nature will help to fill the gap in empirical research by identifying how school experiences are racialized in K-12 independent school settings. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the efforts to find ways to engage youth in meaningful dialogue dealing with race and ethnicity in hopes of building relationships and partnerships for social justice.

Statement of Purpose

This phenomenological study proposes to explore what racial and ethnic experiences ISA had in secondary school, and how those experiences influenced their ability to interact with people from different backgrounds in post-secondary settings. In both higher education and K-12 schooling, learning in a racially diverse setting is considered to be a fundamental part of the educational process for all students (Davis & Torres, 2013; Hurtado et al., 2003; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Tatum, 1997; Welner, 2006. However, theories and models that support learning in a diverse environment often

presume the mere presence of diversity will lead to cross-racial experiences. Research in this area will contribute to the literature on cross racial interactions. It will also extend the extant literature on diversity by further explaining the educational and societal benefits of having a racially and ethnically diverse school community.

Research Questions

This study is guided by one primary question: How do independent school alumni describe the ways in which their schooling experiences facilitated racial and ethnic understanding and their ability to interact with people from different backgrounds in post-secondary settings? This study aims to lend understanding to the benefits of having a racially- mixed independent school. Additionally, this study further explores the link between the educational goals associated with intergroup dialogue and the development of the critical skills needed to live and work in a pluralistic society.

Chapter Summary

There is an emerging body of research focused on how racial and ethnic diversity influences student learning and educational outcomes. However, little is known about this phenomenon at the secondary level in independent schools. Chapter 1 spelled out that this study offers a conceptual framework for investigating how alumni of an independent high school describe the schooling experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. Research in this area will contribute to the body of knowledge on the educational value of having a diverse school community.

A review of the literature on race and ethnicity in private schools is presented in Chapter 2. The research design, methodology, and analysis is discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the results and findings, and Chapter 5 discusses the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.

Definitions of Terms

The following is a list of key terms used throughout this study.

American Indian or Alaska Native – a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This category includes people who indicated their race(s) as "American Indian or Alaska Native" or reported their enrolled or principal tribe, such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yup'ik, or Central American Indian groups or South American Indian groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Asian Students – learners having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. It includes people who indicated their race(s) as "Asian" or reported entries such as "Asian Indian," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Korean," "Japanese," "Vietnamese," and "Other Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Black Students – learners having origins in any of the racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicated their race as Black, African American, or Negro (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

Diversity – refers to race and ethnicity and their relationship to cross-racial understanding (NAIS, 2013).

Hispanic/Latino – any person, regardless of race, creed, or color, whose origins are of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or of some other Hispanic origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Intergroup Dialogue – a form of democratic engagement that fosters communication, critical reflection, and collaborative action across cultural and social divides. This includes working together to solve problems, consciousness-raising in regards to social inequalities, and civic engagement for social change (Zuniga et al., 2007).

Liberal – education that teaches students to think independently, appreciate and respect differences, and to become responsible citizens (Dewey Mission and Diversity Statements, 2013).

Racial and Ethnic Dialogue – communication between and among people from different population subgroups (within a larger or dominant national or cultural group) with a common national or cultural tradition that creates and recreates multiple understandings. The communication can be emotional and uncomfortable, but it is safe, respectful and has a greater understanding as its goal (Wink, 1997).

Racially Diverse Schools – learning institutions in which White students are between 10.1 and 89.9% of the population (Jacobsen et al., 2012).

Racially Isolated Schools – learning institutions where less than 10% of the population consists of White students (Jacobsen et al., 2012).

Students of Color – learners identified as "Black" and all other non-White learners (U.S Census Bureau, 2010).

White Student – learners identified as having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. This includes people who indicate their race(s) as "White" or reported entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to present an overview of empirically researched studies that focus on the topic of race and ethnicity in private independent schools. To help focus the paper and provide an organizing framework, the following areas will be explored: academic and social integration; the role of socioeconomics; the boarding school experience; factors related to achievement and sense of belonging, and racial identity and racism in private schools. These areas of focus were selected based on their frequency of appearance in review of the literature and connection to the phenomenon being investigated.

Review of the Literature

Academic and social integration. Black students in private schools experience tension between academic achievement and satisfaction on one hand and social marginalization/isolation on the other (Jenkins, 2011; Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003; Lucas, 2005). This dynamic has been demonstrated consistently in several qualitative case and action research studies in both day and boarding schools. Datnow and Cooper (1997) in a case study involving 42 African American students in Grades 10-12, from eight different independent schools, explored how these students utilized peer networks to achieve success in a predominantly White institution (PWI). Success was defined in terms of a student's ability to maintain satisfactory academic progress in a PWI for at least 3 years. Findings from the study revealed both formal and informal African American peer group

networks were essential to the participant's success. The students reported that academic success was seen as a positive and part of being cool among their friends. The data also showed the students in the study struggled to fit in socially both inside and outside their school communities.

The emotional tug of war characterized by the lack of social acceptance both within and outside their school community is a consistent theme found throughout the literature on African Americans in private independent schools. Two terms used in the research to capture the feeling of social suspension described by African American students in private school are: "outsiders within" and "acting White." "Outsiders within," attributed to Collins (1986), was used to describe African American students' participation in activities of institutions yet their incomplete acceptance in the minds of those within them. "Acting White," a term defined by Fryer (2006), is a set of social interactions in which minority adolescents who get good grades in school enjoy less social popularity than White students who do well academically.

The experience of alienation described in the study by Datnow and Cooper (1997) was further supported by the work of Ottley (2005), who conducted a qualitative action research investigation that explored how African American students experience independent school. The participants included 51 students (Black and White), 23 African American alumni (out of 50 from the classes of 1980-2004), over 30 teachers, and 25 Black parents of the school. Four key themes emerged from the study. The first theme dealt with what Ottley described as a "sense of otherness" among the African American students. The students reported liking their school and feeling good about the academic program, but they also felt marginalized. The second theme involved what Ottley called

"racelessness" or not belonging to one particular racial group. The students in the study described a feeling of trying to exist in two different worlds: The world they lived in at home and the one they experienced in school. The third theme pointed to a "culture of niceness," or a "go along to get along" attitude that prevented the community from having authentic conversations dealing with diversity or racial concerns.

Lastly, the research showed over half of the African American students in the study expressed a sense of "indebtedness" not found among White students. According to Ottley (2005), this further isolated African American from White students. On one hand, you have students who feel entitled and on the other, those who feel indebted. This creates an environment where some students feel they belong and others feel as if they are merely guests. Ottley's research points to the need to find out more about the role of socioeconomic class.

The role of socioeconomic class. The experience of African American students in private predominantly White independent schools is further influenced by Socioeconomic class (Jackson, 2010; Jenkins, 2011; Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003). Jenkins (2011), in a qualitative critical race theory study, investigated the question of how and why Black students across social classes and genders enroll in PWI and their opportunities and experiences within these schools. She used one-on-one interviews, participant observations, and document analysis to collect data from 27 Black students and one Hispanic student attending three elite private schools and one community organization that prepares and places lower income students of color in private schools.

The study findings confirmed previous empirical research (Anyon, 1981; Lareau, 2003; Macleod, 1987; and Oakes, 2005) indicating those with advantages are further

advantaged and those who are disadvantaged are further disadvantaged within schools.

Moreover, participants in the study were both marginalized and simultaneously

advantaged (compared to peers in public schools), creating a conflict and contradiction in

their lives. There was also a clear link between the academic opportunities students had

in middle school with what was available to them in high school, and thus their higher

education opportunities. Lastly, it was revealed that study participants faced color-blind

racism in the form of assumptions and stereotypes about Blacks related to their academic

and intellectual abilities. The term color-blind refers to the belief that race is a non-issue

and should be disregarded when considering the lived experience of students (Bonilla-

Silva, 2003).

In a similar study focused specifically on boys, Kuriloff and Reichert (2003)

sought to understand how boys from diverse backgrounds manage in an elite boy's

school. They interviewed 27 boys (16 from a previous study, 1999-2000, examining the

relationship between achievement and the way boys construct their identities) and 11

alumni who were in college blocked for race, class, and academic performance. The

students were from various races and classes (upper and lower quartile and middle half).

The boys were asked to describe themselves as learners, their understanding of their

parents' attitudes about learning, and their view of the school's approach to teaching and

learning. They found the boys, regardless of class, believed in the vision of the school.

Focusing on this shared vision translated into a commitment to hard work, a view of

intellectual achievement as part of manhood, and a desire to do well academically.

A second finding from the study showed there was a clear social divide between

upper-class lifers and everyone else. The marginalized group included Caucasians from

blue-collar families, African Americans from every social class, and other non-WASP boys, including other boys of color and Jews. The students in this group expressed the belief that the school deliberately or unconsciously privileged its wealthy students and they in turn excluded or failed to recognize students from lower income families. However, the researchers also found the African American students in this study developed intragroup discourses of race and class that helped to shield them from the hegemonic culture of the school. Still, again, the African American students consistently reported feeling invisible, stereotyped, and expected to achieve less academically. Kuriloff and Reichert's (2003) findings align with those of Ottley (2005) and Jenkins (2011). All three studies confirm African American students in PWI wrestle with feelings of not belonging that are further exacerbated by socioeconomic class.

The boarding school experience. Elite, predominantly White boarding schools present similar academic and social integration challenges for students of color (Alexander-Snow, 2010; Jackson, 2010; Kramer, 2008). Kramer (2008) conducted a qualitative study to examine how African American students interacted and integrated into a wealthy predominantly White boarding school. The study included 10 first semester boarding school students who participated in a 14-month program designed to place students in private schools. The participants were trained to pass the exams, impress admissions officers in interviews, manage time, and interact with future classmates. A combination of ethnographic fieldwork, follow-up interviews, and an online survey was used to collect data. An analysis of the data led to several key findings.

One conclusion drawn from the data was that the participants succeeded by confidently asserting their racial identity throughout the entire school. The students had been trained to view themselves as "diversifiers" and as such their job was to teach elite peers how to appropriately interact with people from different, generally less privileged backgrounds. It was suggested that by embracing a "diversity mindset" these students avoided falling into the marginalized or otherness category. A second finding indicated the students mainly associated with students who were racially and socioeconomically similar to themselves. Yet, it was believed these relationships were not used to critique the school and only occasionally were used to critique their fellow students. A third, and final assertion from this study is that prep programs used to place disadvantaged students in private schools perpetuate the status quo by training students how to adapt to the existing culture of a school without ever challenging it. One limitation of this study is that it only included information on the first year for the boarding school participants. A follow-up study might shed light on whether or not the "diversity mindset" has staying power over a longer period of time.

Socioeconomic class has an even more profound impact on the experience of Black students in elite boarding schools. Jackson (2010) investigated the psychosocial experiences of economically disadvantaged (combined household income less than $60,000), Black students who attend predominantly White, elite, private, boarding schools. A qualitative phenomenological study was conducted with nine students ages 15-18, four males and five females, meeting the above criteria. The students attended eight different schools within the United States, five in the Northeast, two in the Southeast, and one on the West Coast. Semi-structured interviews were conducted,

lasting approximately 90 minutes each, and data were collected using a recursive method informed by Creswell (1998), as well as Consensual Qualitative Research methods.

The results revealed several themes associated with the participant's experiences. For example, participants felt they received "an education without representation." In other words, there was a lack of Black culture in the curriculum and a discomfort around discussing issues of race in the classroom. Furthermore, the findings revealed Black peer networks were important and provided support for adjustment within a predominantly White environment. Still, it was found that participants felt caught between two worlds and had difficulty negotiating identity within two contrasting cultures. Racial disparities in the form of discrimination, pressure to excel based on their racial identification, and colorblindness or no acknowledgement of differences also shaped the experience of students in the study.

Additionally, Jackson (2010) found that there was a desire among participants to establish relationships with people from diverse backgrounds; socioeconomic challenges related to financial ability to participate in specific activities; living-away-from-home challenges manifested in the form of increased independence with little to no family support; a "bubble syndrome" characterized by a sheltered, closed experience with little racial and class diversity; an impact of peers on level of success whereby being around other motivated bright students inspired the participants; and that relationships with Black faculty who can serve as role-models and mentors made a significant difference for study participants. The findings from this study provide important insights into the experiences of Black students in an elite predominantly White boarding school, but how does this compare with Black students who attend a historically Black boarding school?

The experience of graduates from a historically Black boarding school. A study by Alexander-Snow (2010) investigated how graduates from a historically Black boarding school integrated academically and socially into two traditionally White universities. The sample included four students (evenly distributed by gender), two of whom were in high school seniors and two college seniors; all attended the same boarding school. All participants had at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA), were members of a national honors society, and were recognized leaders within the boarding school community. A qualitative study utilizing naturalistic inquiry, criterion sampling, constant case analysis, and case design methods was used to collect and analyze data over a 14-month period.

One of the primary findings from the study was that the Black boarding school experience played a significant role in shaping graduate's academic and self-concepts. Self-concept in this case was defined by the researcher as, a "student's perceptions about competence or skills thorough experiences with his or her environment, and social and academic interactions with peers and faculty relative to other students" (p. 183). The author interpreted this finding to mean that the Black boarding school experiences provided participants with feelings of psychological comfort and belonging, a sense of empowerment, and a cultural confidence that helped them to navigate the academic and social terrain of the traditionally White universities. Additionally, the study revealed the participants had to integrate three social realities. The transition from an all-Black community to a predominantly White community required: psychological and social relearning, recognition of being in the minority associated with disempowerment and a

sense of otherness, and the development of a Black culture distinct from their previous experience.

The experiences of students of color in elite private boarding schools parallel that of those in day schools. The three studies reviewed in this section (Alexander-Snow, 2010; Jackson, 2010; Kramer, 2008) investigated the issues from different angles. However, the same issues of social integration, socioeconomic class, and sense of school membership appeared frequently. The findings from these studies combined with the earlier studies suggest there are specific factors related to SOC achievement and sense of belonging in private independent predominantly White school settings.

Factors Related to Achievement and Sense of Belonging for Students of Color

Instructional and co-curricular programs influence the achievement and sense of belonging of students of color in private predominantly White independent schools. A study conducted by Lucas (2005) investigated the effectiveness of the instructional and co-curricular programs of a predominantly White, all-female, religious affiliated independent private school in educating African American girls of color. The study took place at a school in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. At the time of the study, the school had an enrollment of 450 students (2.22% Asian, 4.88% Hispanic, 8 88% Black, and 84% White). A qualitative case study was conducted. Research tools used in the study to collect data included observations, focus groups, interviews, review of archival data, and document analysis. Admittedly, the researcher indicated she was granted limited access to various groups and documents which restricted the study. Nine African American females selected by the school in various grades participated in the focus group; one parent, one administrator, and a small number of teachers were

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interviewed. The researcher was also granted permission to observe several predetermined classrooms in Grades 9-12.

Lucas (2005) drew three main conclusions from the data. First, class size makes a difference—it allowed students to ask numerous questions, receive individual attention, and develop close relationships with their teachers thus enhancing their ability to achieve. Secondly, instructional freedom led to varied curricular resources, teaching strategies, and strong student participation. Lastly, a de-emphasis on standardized tests while maintaining clear scholastic expectations led to higher educational opportunities. In fact, one of the most significant findings from the study revealed African American graduates of the school (28 in total), over a period of 4 years, 2000-2003, overwhelmingly applied and attained admissions to schools among the 50 top-ranked and second-tier colleges and universities in the United States (Ehrenberg, 2002). The findings from this study support the reasons Smith (2008) found for why African American parents send their children to PWI.

The school program, expectations, and leadership. A second study conducted by Newman (2005) showed there are still other factors related to achievement and sense of belonging for the SOC. His qualitative case study included 24 students and six members of the faculty and administration. The students were selected based on gender, grade level, and ethnicity and distributed ratio evenly with a balance for male and female across grade levels. He also interviewed four Black faculty members and two White faculty members, and they were split evenly among gender.

The results from the study showed a solid orientation to the school community and its social and academic norms is essential to the success of the SOC. Furthermore,

the framework and expectations of a school's academic program form the foundation of a student's experiences. This pointed to the importance of having a diverse curriculum and the need to provide academic support for students unprepared for the academic rigor of the school. The researcher also concluded that students who participate in school activities outside of the school's academic arena are more likely to feel a sense of belonging. Moreover, the leadership of a school must take the lead in fostering a culture that supports a sense of belonging in a school. The school context including things like class size, teacher autonomy, orientation programs, and academic expectations all play a vital role in the experience of SOC in PWI.

Social and academic influences on the achievement of SOC. Social and academic influences have impact on the SOC achievement and sense of social belonging in PWI. Crenshaw (2007), explored the relationship between academic and social influences and their effect on the academic and social integration of high achieving African American students. Tinto's (1993) theory of integration and retention and the Black Racial Identity Model (Smith, 1989) were used to frame the study. The study included six African American males (two freshmen, one sophomore, two juniors, and one senior) who attended an elite private predominantly White school in the mid-Atlantic region. The study found demographic characteristics, sense of school membership, perceptions of social support, feelings of discrimination, and racial-identity development have significant influence on academic and social integration. The sample size in this study was small which makes it difficult to draw generalized conclusions. However, similar findings were found in the work of Arrington, Hall, and Stevenson (2003).

Arrington et al. (2003) used grant money from the National Institute of Mental Health and funding from NAIS to conduct a longitudinal study over a period of 5 years. The mixed method study explored the experience of African American students in private independent schools. The qualitative data was collected from individual interviews with 65 male and female students in Grades 6-12 and focus groups with upper-school students (6-8 per group). Quantitative data was collected in two waves. The first wave included 109 students, Grades 5-12, (59 females, 50 males) who completed survey questionnaires. The second wave involved 122 students (68 females, 54 males), Grades 5-12, who took the same survey.

Findings from the school climate survey revealed 75% of the students indicated they had to make special efforts to fit into their communities; 82% reported they had a negative experience in their schools; and 40% did not believe that the school treated all students fairly. The quantitative data combined with the qualitative data led to three overall themes. First, there is a link between the academic success of African American students and their connection to the school community and emotional health. Second, students are socialized in schools both academically and racially. Lastly, the experience of racism is a reality for Black youth and can compromise the quality of their school experience and tax their emotional resources. Like Crenshaw (2007), Arrington et al. (2003) found both social and academic factors influence the experience of the SOC in PWI.

Parental experiences with race and ethnicity. One additional factor that must be considered when examining the experiences of SOC in private independent schools is what the parents/families experience and what role they play in the education of their

children. Smith (2008) investigated the experience of African American parents at a predominantly White elite private school. She embarked on a qualitative phenomenological study involving twelve African American couples with middle school boys, ages 32 to 53 (M = 45), college educated, five with terminal degrees (i.e., M.D, J.D., and Ph.D.), four with graduate degrees, and three with undergraduate degrees. Eight couples had an annual income between $100-299,000, two couples with $300-499,000, and two with $500,000 and up. Seven of the couples enrolled in the school in the middle school years, three in the upper elementary years, and two intermittently during kindergarten through middle school. Six of the couples had two or more children at the private school, four couples had children enrolled in private and other schools (i.e., one public and three private schools). Six of the participants attended private school and reported their sons as the second generation to attend a private school.

A team of researchers including a counselor, clinical psychologist, and a school psychologist, all female, two of African American descent and one of European descent collaborated to complete the study. Having various researchers who cross checked one another added to the study's validity and trustworthiness. Multiple research tools were used to collect and code the data including, 45-90 minute interviews, focus groups, demographic surveys, a reflexive journal, an audit trail, and a recursive data analysis. Five themes emerged from the study: Opportunity engagement, selective engagement, parental connection, parental struggle, and parental marginalization.

The first theme, opportunity brand, highlighted the fact that 100% of the couples reported sending their child to private school because they believed it would lead to better educational opportunities. Parental connection through sporting events and relationships

with faculty was identified by 75% of the couples as the thing that made them feel closest to the school. Selective engagement was used to describe the 67% of couples who identified their parental school involvement as a personal preference and the 43% who reported not wanting to engage as they viewed parents at some activities to be self-absorbed and pretentious. The findings related to parental struggle showed 50% of the couples struggled with cost-benefit analysis of sending their kids to private school. The biggest issues for these parents included the lack of a culturally relevant pedagogy, traces of racism, and the absence of more Black faculty. Lastly, 50% of the couples reported an unwelcoming environment with other parents at events like parent coffees, parent club, and volunteer activities that made them feel marginalized.

Racial Identity and Racism in Private Schools

Black racial identity has been examined across multiple disciplines, including psychology (Seaton, Sellers, & Scottham, 2006), sociology (Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Harris & Marsh, 2010), and education (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Tatum, 1997). Various approaches have been used in these disciplines to examine racial identity. In the area of psychology, the focus has mainly been on attitudes about racial identity. Sociological studies have concentrated on collective racial identity. The reviews in education mostly revolved around the examination of power and policy as it pertains to racial identity (DeCuir, 2009). For the purpose of this paper the information in this section will highlight research in the area of Black racial identity as it relates to the experience of African American students in private independent predominantly White schools

The experience of SOC in private independent predominantly White institutions (PWI) includes negotiating race and racism (Arrington et al., 2003; DeCuir-Gunby, 2007;

Rhett, 2004; Washington-Smart, 2011). Arrington (2001) examined the relationship

between race and race-related stressors for Black students in PWI. She also explored

how race and racism are experienced by African American students in these settings. A

mixed method design was used to conduct two separate but related studies.

The first study included 45 students, 35 (78%) female and 10 (22%) male, Grades

9-12, average age 16.3 years. Four students (9%) self-identified as being biracial; 38%

were in Grade 12, 24% in Grade 11, 27% in Grade 10, and 11% in Grade 9; 55%

attended parochial school and 45% independent elite schools. The median family income

was $65-75,000, and median education level of the students' caregivers was a college

diploma. A stratified nonrandom sampling (i.e., involves the nonrandom selection of

participants from subgroups of interest in a specified population) was used to form the

group. An initial computerized survey was administered to assess the youths' previous

experiences with racism, racial identity, and sense of school membership. Afterwards,

the students completed a computerized diary every other day for 3 weeks documenting

specific incidents related to race that occurred over a prolonged period of time and they

responded to structured questions at set intervals designed to provide information about

race stress management and mental health.

The second study was part of a larger research project entitled Success of African

American Students (SAAS) in independent schools. This study involved 121 students, 76

upper school students, Grades 9-12, and 45 participants from the first study. Of the

students studied they were: 75 (62%) female, and 46 (38%) male; average age 15.9; 21

(17%) were self-identified as bi-racial with 21% in Grade 12, 21% in Grade 11, 30% in

Grade 10, and 29% in Grade 9. Of the participants, 21% attended parochial school and

79% attended independent elite schools. The students in this study completed a survey that assessed experiences with racism in the school setting, racial identity, and sense of school membership.

The measures used in the two studies included: a demographic questionnaire; a racial stress engagement survey (study one); a Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5) (study one); a Perceived Racism Scale-Adolescent Version (PRS-A) (study two); the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (teen version MIBI-t) and the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) Scale (study two) (Goodenow, 1993).

Findings from the two studies revealed the participants view the Black community in a positive manner, race is central, but there were mixed feelings about the way in which non-Black people are believed to view the Black community. Secondly, participants encountered an average of 10 experiences with racism in a school setting measured by the PRS-A during the year of the study and over their lifetime. Thirdly, a wide array of racism was experienced by the participants and believed to be directly related to the academic setting.

Additionally, students who had been attending their schools for a long time felt more connected to the community ($r = .32$; $p < .05$). The more positively individuals believed others evaluated Black people, the more connected they felt to the school community ($r = .40$; $p < .01$). The more students experience racism in the past year and over their lifetime, the less connected they felt to the school ($r = .50$, $p < .001$ and $r = .53$, $p < .001$, respectively). Implications from the study suggest that Black youth's

negotiation of race and encounters with racism play a critical role in their experience in predominantly White schools.

In a similar quantitative study, Rhett (2004) investigated the relationship between racial identity, self-concept, and coping style using correlation analysis. It was hypothesized that adolescents who had a more internalized, positive Black racial identity would use transformational coping methods (i.e., developing self-reliance, investing in close friends, etc.) and would present with more positive self-concepts as a group. A second hypothesis was that those with negative racial identity would tend to use avoidant coping patterns (denial, withdrawal, etc.) more often and present a relatively lower self-concept. Still, a third hypothesis was that there would be a positive correlation between scores on the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS), the Multiculturalist Inclusive subscales, and the Piers-Harris Self Concept subscales.

The study included 10 participants (90% female), ages 13 to 19 with various numbers of years in independent schools. Students were selected through a program that identified gifted students (top 5% of their elementary schools) of color and helps them earn admission to New York independent schools.

Various instruments were used in the study including: the Cross Racial Identity Scale) (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001) measures six of the seven Black racial identities defined in the revised Nigrescence model: Assimilation (PA), Mis-education (PM), Self-Hatred (PSH), Anti-white (IEAW), Afrocentricity (IA), and Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI); Piers-Harris Children's self-concept scale (Piers, 1984), which is an 80-item measure with items that reflect the domains of: Behavior, Intellectual/School, Physical Appearance /Attributes, Anxiety, Popularity, and Happiness/Satisfaction.

Internal consistency for this measure ranges between .88 to 93 with stability ranging from .42 to .96. Subscale internal consistency ranges from .73 to .81; A-COPE: Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (Piers, 1984). A 54 item self-report instrument was used to assess patterns of coping by adolescents. Responses were grouped into 12 distinct factors or categories. Four of the categories (ventilating feelings, seeking diversions, avoiding problems, and relaxing) fall under the category avoidant coping. The remaining eight categories (developing self-reliance and optimism, developing social supports, solving family problems, seeking spiritual support; investing in close friends; seeking professional support; engaging in demanding activity; and being humorous) are considered more active or transformational means of coping. Reliability for the 12 factors ranged from $a = .50$ to .75.

An analysis of the data collected led to several key findings. There was a significant correlation ($r = .791$, $p = .006$) between the CRIS IMCI score and the A-Cope Humor score, which supported the first hypothesis. However, the correlation coefficient between the mean transformational coping patterns score and the CRIS IEAW, IA, and IMCI subscales was not significant ($r = -.550$, $p = 100$; $r = -.524$, $p = .120$, and $r = .285$, $p = .424$, respectively). The second and third hypothesis were not supported. Their findings led the researchers to conclude that there is a positive correlation between advanced Black racial identity and coping style.

Furthermore, the data indicated teens with an established multicultural identity used humor and advanced coping mechanisms more often. On the other hand, teens presenting with a more Afrocentric perspective presented with a nearly significant higher sense of happiness and satisfaction. There were also strong positive feelings among

participants about being Black grounded in their racial identity, but at the same time they demonstrated a desire to become assimilated into the mainstream culture of their communities. Finally, the study showed students who maintained the highest anti-White attitudes, used the least effective coping patterns. These findings shed additional light on the relationship between racial identity, coping style, and self-concept.

In two related studies, one that explored how race and class shape African American adolescent identity, and one that investigated racial stress and coping experiences, we learn more about the role of race and racism in the racial identity development and experiences of African American adolescents in predominantly White independent schools. DeCuir (2007) used a qualitative critical race approach to examine how issues of race and social class influence African American adolescents' sense of identity. Her study involved six African American high school students (three girls and three boys) at an elite predominantly White independent school with religious roots in a southern urban city. Participants in the study were ages 14-17, ranging from a sophomore to a recent graduate. The students were selected by a diversity coordinator who deemed them to be academically and socially successful in the school's environment (i.e., involved both inside and outside of school, high achieving A/B, honors classes, and aspiring to attend college). Data from two separate personal interviews of 1 to 2 hours in length was collected. An inductive analysis was used to analyze the data and identify patterns or themes.

Results from the study led to several key themes. One theme dealt with the rationale for why the students believed they were attending a specific private school. The parents and by proxy the students understood how the reputation of the school could

benefit them in terms of future opportunities and networking possibilities. A second theme centered on the challenge of fully fitting into the life of the school. Participants expressed difficulty navigating the social landscape of the school due to politics involving power and money combined with race, which created an uncomfortable atmosphere. Similarly, a third theme revolved around the notion of being in a "bubble," or protected environment with little racial and class diversity (DeCuir, 2007). These findings demonstrate negotiating identity in an independent school provides additional challenges in the area of race and class.

The challenges of race and class experienced by SOC in independent schools often leads to racial stress and the need for coping mechanisms (Washington-Smart, 2011). Research conducted by Washington-Smart (2011) in this area highlights the critical role race and racism play in the experience of SOC in private schools. She used a mixed method study design to explore the experiences of 201 SOC who were enrolled (or planned to enroll) in over ten elite independent schools. The participants ranged in age from 11 to 16, and resided in the southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey areas. Of the 201 students, 45.5% were male, and 54.5% were female. The racial breakdown of the group was reported as: African American (28.9%), Black/African (3.0%), Black/Caribbean (4.0%), Black/Latino (3.0%), Biracial (25.4%), Multiracial (10.4%), White (.5%), Latino/Hispanic (13.4%), Asian (10.9%) and unsure (.5%).

The aim of the Washington-Smart (2011) study was to find out the variability of racial stress and coping experiences reported. Three separate theories (critical race theory, recast theory, and racial literacy theory) framed the research. A combination of surveys and focus groups were used to collect the data. Of the 201 students, 30

participated in small focus group sessions (three groups of 10) and answered open-ended questions dealing with racial socialization and school membership. Five research instruments were used to collect data: (a) a demographic survey, (b) the Psychological Sense of School Membership survey, (c) the Racial Socialization-Student Frequency Scale, (d) the Racial Literacy (Importance) Survey, and (e) the Racial Stress Survey. Data from the surveys combined with information from the focus groups led to the emergence of several key findings.

The Washington-Smart (2011) concluded that as experiences of school racism increased, school sense membership and self-esteem decreased for the participants in the study. Furthermore, it was found that race matters. There was clear link between the racial composition of students' schools and classrooms with how much the students identified racial stress and coping. In schools where there were fewer students of color, racial stress and coping was higher. It was further reported the students in schools with little racial diversity adopted a variety of racial socialization techniques including accepting and ignoring racist acts, insults, or mistreatment as a way of coping (Washington-Smart, 2011). Moreover, students reported feeling left out and excluded and most frequently mentioned they were alienated from school or important social networks because of race, income, lifestyle, and others' sense of entitlement. The findings from this study are consistent with other research on the topic of race, racism, and the experience of students of color in private predominantly White independent schools.

Future directions and limitations. The literature dealing with race and ethnicity in private independent predominantly White schools has grown slowly over the past 15

years. Most of the studies in this area concentrated on academic and social integration of SOC— Black students, in particular. However, more recent research studies also examine the role of socioeconomic class and racial identity. The majority of the empirical studies reviewed for this research study employed qualitative research methods. The methods included the use of multiple research tools designed to provide researchers with rich data that was generated through interviews, ethnographic field work, focus groups, and case studies.

One of the methodological limitations found in several of the studies reviewed was sample size. In four studies the sample size was six or smaller. The small sample sizes call into question the reliability and validity of some of the findings reported. There is a need for additional studies that include larger sample sizes over a longer period time. Furthermore, additional quantitative studies should be conducted in the future. Access to data was another limiting factor found in multiple studies. Due to a reluctance on the part of private independent schools to share data publicly. Researchers who were successful in gaining access to private school data had an inside connection as employees, former employees, or a close relationship with an organization affiliated with a private school. Conducting research in this area will require building relationships and trust.

Additionally, there were few studies that investigated the experience of African American parents whose children attended private independent schools. Based on the literature, there is a need for a stronger connection or stronger partnership between African American students, family, and independent schools. The findings from the literature suggest parents play a critical role in the racial socialization and identity development of their children. Thus, it is essential for African American students to see

their parents involved in the life of the school. Researchers should find out more about how African American parents are integrated into private school communities. Another area that warrants further investigation is how racial diversity is used to meet learning objectives. In other words, how does the presence of racial diversity in a private predominantly White school influence learning in that community? Related to this question is what expectations or values do independent schools have around diversity beyond the percentages.

Chapter Summary

The studies discussed in this review suggest the need for more research that investigates the experiences students have with race and ethnicity. Overall, the studies in this review call attention to the need to consider the multiple factors that impede and those who support the success of SOC in predominantly White independent schools. Moreover, this review is a reminder of how race and socioeconomic class, circumscribe the experiences and educational opportunities of all students. Finally, this review suggest it is critical for private independent schools to find new ways to ensure both the academic success and healthy identity development of the minority students they serve.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the methodology that guided this qualitative research study. The context and setting of this study will be explored and the data collection and analysis methods will be explained. The remainder of the chapter explains the methods in which data was stored, managed, and maintained. This study addressed how independent school alumni describe the schooling experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity and their ability to interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in post-secondary settings.

Creswell (2013) suggested phenomenological studies are useful for describing commonalities among several individuals based on their lived experience with a phenomenon. The aim of this study was to better understand how the schooling experiences of alumni who attended a private independent school facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. A qualitative phenomenological approach was practical for this study because it allowed the researcher to examine the nuances between individuals from varied backgrounds (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, a review of the literature revealed little research linked to student understanding of race and ethnicity at the K-12 level. Under these circumstances, the exploratory nature of qualitative inquiries is particularly useful (Creswell, 2013). By utilizing a phenomenological approach, the researcher was able to draw on themes and generalizations identified through

observations and interactions with participants to better understand the essence of the schooling experiences they had with race and ethnicity (Creswell, 2013).

Researchers are considered to be the research instrument in qualitative inquiries (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand the researcher's positionality during a phenomenological research study. In this study, the researcher's cultural identity as an African American male and role as a Grade 5-8 independent school principal are beneficial to understanding the phenomena being investigated. Furthermore, the researcher has worked in the field of education in racially and ethnically diverse communities for over two decades and brings considerable knowledge and experience with him to this study. He also has experience as both a teacher and administrator in public and independent schools.

Research Context

This research took place at the Dewey School, which is a private independent school in upstate, New York that offers college preparatory programs for students in nursery through Grade 12. Dewey has been in existence for nearly 100 years. At the time of this study, the school had an enrollment of over 500 students and roughly 80 full-time faculty members. Additionally, enrollment reports revealed that 30% of Dewey's student body was comprised of students of color. Of this number, the largest representation was multi-racial (11%), followed by Asian (6%), African American (5%), Hispanic (3%), international or students from other countries (3%), Middle Eastern (1%), and Native American (1%).

Records show that the average size of the graduation class at Dewey from 2009 to 2014, was approximately 40 students per class. Furthermore, documents show the

average class size at Dewey during the period covered by this study was 12-13 students, and there were no more than 50 students in a grade. The length of time study participants attended Dewey ranged from 6 to 16 years, and on average, each participant spent 8.5 years at Dewey.

During 2013 - 2015, Dewey underwent a comprehensive strategic planning process, which highlighted racial and ethnic diversity as one area of focus. One of the outcomes during this process was the adoption of a Diversity Mission Statement (DMS) that closely aligned with the overall mission of the school. The document details the school's commitment to developing a pluralistic and empathetic outlook in all students. Furthermore, the document articulates the following belief and practices:

> We seek to be a diverse community in which diversity in all its forms is cherished and freely explored. We do so in academic contexts, choosing as readings and projects work that supports this goal; social contexts, developing skills of empathy, appreciation, and collaborative problem-solving; admissions, financial aid, and hiring, as we invite underrepresented populations to join our community; and our everyday decision making (Dewey Mission Statement).

The DMS ends with a commitment to regular self-assessment of progress toward the above principles.

Dewey has also implemented various activities and projects connected to diversity over the past 6 years. For example, a diversity roundtable for high school students was started; a student survey regarding diversity is administered annually in Grades 9-12; a review of the curriculum was conducted to identify the ways Dewey teachers touch on issues of gender, race, and sexual orientation in their courses; a diversity committee made

up of parents, faculty, and administrators was put into place; and the faculty, as a whole, participated in several days of professional development centered on diversity.

Furthermore, Dewey is progressive in its philosophical orientation and places emphasis on the individual child, informality of classroom procedure, and encouragement of self-expression. Moreover, the characteristics of a Dewey graduate, as stated in the student handbook, include: the development of civic-minded individuals who are pluralist (globally aware, tolerant, appreciative of differences); able to dissent respectfully; active participants in the democratic process; both collaborative and independent; a respectful steward of the community and environment; and aware of what it means to take care of another human being (compassion/empathy). In other words, Dewey claims to seek to graduate students who are aware of differences, able to work well with people from varied backgrounds, and who are inclined to actively promote social justice.

Research Participants

The participants chosen for this study all graduated from Dewey from 2009 to 2013. This 5-year period represents a time when Dewey, in conjunction with the election of the first African American President of the U.S. in 2008, engaged in more discussions, activities, and strategic initiatives that centered on racial and ethnic diversity. In addition to the graduation year, the other criteria used to identify students' participation in the study included: enrollment at Dewey for at least 2 years, and age 18 years or older. Students who attended Dewey for at least 2 years had an opportunity to participate in activities or programs with people from diverse backgrounds and were thus more inclined to have experience with the phenomenon being investigated.

Professional networking contacts with administrators and alumni staff were used to purposefully identify the participants for this study. The researcher is an administrator at Dewey, and as such, was able to obtain a computer-generated list of Dewey graduates from 2009-2013 along with their email addresses from the alumni office. An initial list of participants was created in consultation with the alumni director and high school principal to ensure candidates of different cultural backgrounds were included in the initial invitation to participate in the study. Furthermore, an effort was made to ensure that there was at least one candidate represented from each graduation year.

After formulating the initial list, the researcher sent a recruitment email (Appendix A) describing the purpose of the study to 42 alumni who graduated within the targeted years. In several cases where the email was unsuccessful because the email address was no longer valid or no response was received, the researcher contacted the alumni parents utilizing the information in the school's registrar system. The researcher explained the project over the phone and asked the parents to provide a current email address for the participant and to inform him or her that they would be contacted about the study. Enlisting the help of parents proved useful, and it allowed the researcher to make contact with students who were out of state.

Upon the selection of the first 12 candidates who agreed to participate, a letter (Appendix B) was sent electronically to the participants, which provided them with a brief overview of the study and detailed that participation would be voluntary and confidential. Additionally, the participants were sent a demographic form (Appendix C) to fill out in advance of the interview, or they were provided with a hard copy of the form

on the day of the interview. A follow-up email was sent to each participant after the initial contact to confirm the interview date and time.

The interviews were arranged based on the participant's availability and location and lasted 35-70 minutes each. Nine of the interviews were in person at Dewey and three were conducted utilizing Skype video conferencing software. The participants in the study included nine females and three males. Moreover, 25% of the participants identified as students of color. The data reported in Table 3.1 provide summary information for each participant which includes: pseudonym, age, gender, race/ethnicity, graduation year, and college major or career. The information about college major/career was not originally asked on the demographic form, but it was added after each interview as part of the researcher's field notes. The college major/career information and other field notes allowed the researcher to develop a better profile for each participant. The field

Table 3.1

Demographic Profile Sheet Data

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Graduation	Major/Career
1-Jackie	24	Female	White	2009	Teacher
2-Susan	23	Female	White	2010	Engineer
3-Tyrone	23	Male	White	2010	Teacher
4-Tasha	21	Female	Black	2012	Business
5-Gloria	20	Female	White	2013	Nursing
6-Erin	21	Female	White	2013	Education
7-Lucy	21	Female	White	2012	Physics
8-Beverly	21	Female	White	2012	Business
9-Bobby	21	Male	White	2012	Business
10-Kristina	22	Female	White	2011	Education
11-Elvis	21	Male	Asian	2012	Philosophy
12-Natalie	22	Female	Hispanic	2011	Nursing

notes were also used in conjunction with the interview transcripts and demographic

questionnaire to help identify connections to the research question.

Instruments Used In Data Collection

Four data gathering techniques were used in this study to elicit an account of the

data that was rich and comprehensive: (a) demographic profile sheets, (b) semi-structured

interviews, (c) field notes, and (d) document collection. The purpose of utilizing multiple

forms of data collection was to increase the credibility of the results and to assist the

researcher in exploring the schooling experiences that influenced the participants'

understanding of race and ethnicity.

Demographic form. An alumni demographic form was used to capture

biographical information and to gather preliminary information about the participant's

past and present interactions with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Upon completion of the demographic form, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to each

participant in order to maintain confidentiality. The pseudonym was used to identify the

participant throughout the remainder of the study.

Semi-structured interviews. The phenomenon of schooling experiences that

facilitate racial and ethnic understanding among independent school alumni was further

explored through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews with guided

questions (Appendix D) conducted individually made it easier for participants to freely

discuss their experiences in an open and candid way. Furthermore, the use of guided

questions provided a way for the researcher to delve deeper into the subject to understand

thoroughly the answers provided (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Moreover, utilizing this

interview method helped to ensure the information revealed unfolded from the participant's perspective and not as the researcher saw it (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The individual interviews took place over a 3-week period between September and October 2015. Eight of the nine interviews were held in a private Alumni Conference Room, and one was held in a private room adjacent to the school library. The three Skype video interviews were conducted from the researcher's office. The participants who met with the researcher face-to-face were greeted in the lobby of the school and led to the interview location. The Skype participants were contacted at the appointed time and greeted with a smile.

At the start of each interview, the researcher built a rapport with the participants by reiterating the purpose of the study and ensuring that their participation in the study would be confidential. The researcher also explained to the participants that he understood the topic of race/ethnicity was sensitive, but he wanted the participants to feel free to share openly in an effort to help the researcher better understand the schooling experiences they had. The interviews were recorded using the iPhone5 voice memo application and then saved into a secure Dropbox electronic storage file. Additionally, an external digital recorder was used as a backup device to ensure successful data collection. All interviews were transcribed within a 2-week period by a professional transcription service.

Field notes. Field notes included handwritten notes that the researcher collected throughout the data collection process. The notes provided immediate feedback for improving the process. Field notes were reviewed after each interview and modifications to interview questions occurred when necessary. The researcher noted if particular

questions were confusing or caused participants to hesitate for a long period of time before responding and made adjustments to the questions accordingly. Additionally, field notes were taken on verbal and non-verbal gestures along with any other displayed emotions or biases.

Document review. Dewey uses a monthly online newsletter to report on alumni happenings. Information reviewed in the newsletters revealed an active alumni body committed to various projects, programs, and activities linked to working with people from varied backgrounds. One clear theme from the newsletter reports was that Dewey alumni view Dewey as a school that prepared them well academically for college life and beyond. However, the newsletters revealed little about the experiences the alumni had with race and ethnicity while attending Dewey. In addition to the newsletter, course curricula, syllabi, yearbooks and alumni data sheets were referenced.

Procedures Used for Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted utilizing a cyclical process that allowed the researcher to make connections by systematically moving through the data collection noticing, collecting, and thinking about interesting things as the study proceeded (Seidel, 1998). Analytic procedures for this study included: organizing and being immersed in the data; developing categories; and generating themes through three cycles of coding the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). These components helped the researcher to sort, focus, display, and organize the information collected into recognizable patterns, themes, and propositions that were used to make meaning of what was presented (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To assist with the organization of the data, the researcher created an electronic file for each participant using their pseudonym name on his personal computer. Additionally, binders, manila folders, and notebooks were purchased to file and organize all hard copies of collected data. Copies of emails, participants' demographic forms, documents collected, and the professionally typed transcripts for each interview session were kept in either a folder or binder.

The researcher read and reread the data, listened to the audio recordings, and took notes in the margins of the transcripts during the first cycle of coding as a way to gain familiarity with the data. During the second and third cycles of coding the data, various sub-codes were expanded into major codes (Creswell, 2013). As the data continued to be processed, codes that were identified early in the process underwent changes as new understandings of the data emerged. Codes that were common across participants were identified as themes. The themes were a result of patterns and relationships that resulted from the four forms of data. Additionally, actual words spoken by the participants (in vivio) were used in the formation of the theme titles to capture the essence of the participant's spoken words and actions.

Summary

In summary, this chapter described the methodological approach used for investigating how students in a private independent high school described the way in which their schooling experiences helped to facilitate racial and ethnic understanding. The information was transcribed, coded, and sorted by theme. This process assisted the researcher with organizing the data for reporting the results in Chapter 4 and writing the implications in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study which are presented and formulated by five major themes. Each theme is related to the study's research question and is presented from a retrospective recollection of the participants. The research question is: How do independent school alumni describe the ways in which their schooling experiences facilitated racial and ethnic understanding and their ability to interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in post-secondary settings? The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Data Analysis and Findings

The first theme, *One Big Family of Progressives*, describes how the Dewey school's social environment, as reported by the participants in this study, facilitated racial and ethnic understanding. Specifically, the theme highlights the participants' feelings of being in a school that is small, open-minded, accepting of everyone, and liberal in terms of freedom of thought and self-expression. Participants felt the aforementioned qualities along with a supportive and caring faculty and staff provided them with a safe place to learn about race and ethnicity. However, participants also acknowledged Dewey's smallness, lack of students of color, and intimate environment made them feel as though they were in a bubble, limiting their exposure to people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The second theme, *Racial and Ethnic Awareness Inside and Outside the Classroom,* explores the various experiences students had both inside and outside the classroom dealing with race and ethnicity. Participants reported being exposed to information and social situations involving race and ethnicity in their school curriculum and extracurricular activities. Additionally, the participants expressed having difficulty being able to make sense of or connect to the learning content that was taught or presented.

Racialized activities and spaces linked to the development of personal connections with different-and same-race people is the third theme. The theme describes interactions participants had riding on the bus with teammates, observations made while eating in the lunch room, and both the success and challenge of making personal connections across social divides.

Privilege and power in the form of socioeconomic status perceived along the lines of race and ethnicity is the focus of the fourth theme. Participants often used the phrases "rich White kids" and "White privilege." Moreover, participants expressed a feeling that White students in the community who had financial resources had the ability to do whatever they wanted to do without any real accountability. There was also a feeling among participants that Asian students, while not White, did possess a certain amount of financial power in the school community.

It's A Different World Than Where I Come From serves as the fifth theme for the study. The theme captures the post-secondary experiences expressed by participants based on their experiences after graduating from Dewey. Participants expressed shock and disbelief in how different the racial and ethnic picture was in both their college and

work experience. Intellectually, participants felt good about their ability to engage with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, but there was also an uneasiness expressed by some respondents who had little exposure to people from different backgrounds during their time at Dewey.

One big family of progressives. "Dewey is one big family" was a reoccurring statement throughout the study. Participants pointed to the size of the school, the length time students knew one another, the ability to form friendships with faculty and staff, and the progressive nature of the school as key factors in their development of racial and ethnic understanding. The fact that most students attended Dewey for 8.5 years allowed participants to form close relationships with their teachers and peers, and, participants reported feeling socially comfortable because there was a sense that everybody knew one another.

Kristina, a White 2011 alumna, reported, "I feel Dewey is an environment where people who feel comfortable talking about race and ethnicity can do so because it is so small and you know everybody really well." The smallness of Dewey was considered an advantage by participants in getting to know people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds because they were able to interact with all of their classmates. Tyrone, a 2010 White alumnus, recalled, "There were only like 40 students in a grade. We knew everybody." The feeling of knowing everybody was reinforced by the experience students had of attending school with one another for many years, in some cases from nursery to 12th grade.

Additionally, participants expressed having a similar familiarity with faculty and staff at Dewey. Tasha, a 2012 African American alumna, reported, "Dewey had the kind

of environment where you can kind of get close to your teachers and they become friends." Susan, a 2010 White alumna, reported a similar feeling, stating, "We had the ability to develop close relationships with faculty. There were no barriers and everyone was expected to get along." According to participants, the familiarity with everyone and expectation to get along helped students to accept racial and ethnic differences. Study participants reported noticing and accepting racial and ethnic differences, but not discussing or acknowledging them in a way that made people feel different. Gloria, a 2013 White alumna, reported, "They may have different cultural backgrounds than you, but you need to look at everyone as a person that you could be friends with, and you can interact with, and I think that is what teachers at Dewey taught me." Gloria's comment demonstrates an openness and willingness to make friends across racial and ethnic boundaries. Further, her comment suggests that teachers played an active role in fostering an inclusive environment.

The atmosphere of acceptance described at Dewey was further supported by what participants referred to as a "liberal education." A review of Dewey's mission and vision statements reveal that one of the objectives of the school is to prepare students to become responsible citizens who are "globally aware, tolerant, and appreciative of differences." Based on the information found in these documents, a liberal education is referred to in this study as the type of education that teaches students to think independently, appreciate and respect differences, and to become responsible citizens.

Dewey's progressive orientation made participants in the study feel obligated to be inclusive and respectful of racial and ethnic differences. Moreover, many of the participants pointed to Dewey's "liberal education" and the instructional approach used

by the teachers as the main reason why they were open-minded and demonstrated propensity for appreciating racial and ethnic differences. Erin, a 2013 White alumna, concluded, "At Dewey, I learned to just treat everyone the way I wanted to be treated and just to embrace new experiences." Beverly, a 2012 White alumna, expressed a similar belief that inclusivity was a part of the Dewey culture, stating, "Being liberal here is just like, if you don't accept everybody, you're kind of looked at as a prejudice jerk basically. In other words, being in a liberal environment made it so you felt uncomfortable not to be inclusive."

Beverly's statement highlights the feeling among participants that being in a liberal environment also meant inclusiveness. Participants reported they were taught by their teachers to include others. For example, one of Dewey's policies is that birthday invitations can only be distributed at school if everyone in the class is invited. Similarly, participants reported that acts of intolerance were strongly rebuked by the community and addressed immediately. For example, several participants recalled an incident when one of their classmates made a disparaging remark about Jewish people. The student who made the comment was removed from a key position in the school and admonished by his peers, teachers, and coaches.

For the participants in this study, a liberal environment translated into being in a place where there was little conflict and everybody got along. Natalie, a 2011 Latina alumna who transferred to Dewey in Grade 7 from an urban school district, explained the liberal atmosphere this way, "Everything at Dewey was just so laid back, there were no fights, no arguments, everybody was nice and the teachers were so understanding academically. It was just laid back so I felt comfortable." Natalie's comments further

support the notion held by study participants that Dewey was one big family where everyone was expected to get along, regardless of race or ethnicity.

While the small, familiar, and liberal setting at Dewey helped students to embrace racial and ethnic differences, it also had a downside. One of the drawbacks the participants described of attending Dewey is they felt like they were in a bubble with limited exposure to people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Tyrone, a 2010 White alumnus, in recalling his time at Dewey explained, "Dewey was really, really White. I mean the people of color who I knew at Dewey, I was friends with, but there were only a few of them." The lack of students of color and the experience of being with majority White students from similar backgrounds led Tyrone to characterize Dewey during his time at the school as being unintentionally, "insular and White." Tyrone's comments reveal a belief expressed by the study participants that the Dewey social environment lacked diversity.

This view was further supported by Tasha, who felt that the homogeneous culture at Dewey was further perpetuated by the fact that many of the students attended school together for a long time and seemed isolated from everything else. Tasha reported, "A lot of the students have been together at Dewey since nursery school, like their whole lives, and that's all they know. I feel like they are sheltered from the rest of the world." Similarly, Gloria reported, "I didn't really have experiences with people from different cultural backgrounds at Dewey, I, like, knew everyone since sixth grade, so it is hard to say we had differences." Although Dewey worked to establish an inclusive environment, the participants felt the lack of students of color and majority White, largely

homogeneous, student body restricted their experience with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

In addition to perceptions of being in a bubble with little exposure to people from different backgrounds, the respondents discussed the various ways they learned about race and ethnicity within the school context. The second theme discusses how ISA recalled race and ethnicity being taught, discussed, or experienced at Dewey.

Racial and ethnic awareness inside and outside the classroom. The second theme, *racial and ethnic awareness inside and outside the classroom*, describes the perceptions ISA reported regarding instructional and non-instructional experiences that shaped their understanding of race and ethnicity. Students reported receiving classroom instruction that was situated in a historical context without modern-day references. The sole focus on history rather than the present, challenged the ability of the students to identify with what they were learning. The participants reported having no idea how past events involving race and ethnicity were connected to the present day.

On the other hand, participants expressed that involvement in sports, clubs, certain electives, and school-related programs provided them with exposure and understanding of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The participants further reported that opportunities to interact with SOC in informal ways led to the development of personal friendships and a better understanding of differences. Two sub-themes are included under this theme: (a) formal instruction and conversations and (b) extracurricular programs and activities. The sub-themes capture the experiences ISA had inside and outside the classroom that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity.

Formal instruction and conversations. One of the first recollections participants in this study had regarding the topic of race and ethnicity was the information presented to them in the classroom about slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. Books, such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1988)*, Tom Sawyer* (Twain, 2000)*,* and *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1975), were used in history and English classes to teach students about the racial and ethnic challenges of the past. Participants reported that while they felt it was important to learn about slavery, The Civil Rights Movement, and other parts of American history dealing with race, they wished more would have been done to help them make a connection to the present day. For example, participants did not recall discussing the issues of racial justice presented in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1988) in connection with the present day. Instead, the classroom conversations focused only on how justice used to be administered a long time ago without any discussion of whether or not justice is administered differently in this the 21st century.

Similarly, participants reported having difficulty relating to the information they learned about slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. Gloria recalled, "A lot of teachers took time out to discuss like the Civil Rights Movement and more about slavery. It was hard for me to grasp at first because I never experienced anything like that." A similar disconnection to the material being taught was expressed by Erin who shared, "When I did learn about race, that was in history class and it was about the Civil Rights Movement and things that happened a long time ago. We didn't really talk about current events." Elvis, a 2012 Asian alumnus, had a similar recollection about the material he learned in class, stating, "My class was majority White and we did read like a memoir by Frederick Douglass, but nothing contemporary from different authors like Toni Morrison." Susan,

a White alumna, who felt the dots between what was taught about race in the classroom were never connected to anything relevant, reported the same feeling. Susan recalled having absolutely no idea how the Civil War influenced race relations in the present day or why it was important to learn that at one time the American Constitution considered Black people to be three-fifths of a human being. Susan stated, "It never did compute with me." The above statements identify a perception about race and ethnicity being confined to the past with no real connection to the present day.

Still, there were moments when students were asked to think critically about what they were learning in class as it related to race and ethnicity in the present. Kristina, a 2011 White alumna, reported:

> In English class, I remember reading Tom Sawyer. In the book it uses the N-word and the teacher opened up a whole discussion about whether or not when we read the text we should read the word aloud. I remember there being different opinions even between Black students about whether or not it was okay to say the word. It was a discussion that did not just stay in the classroom. We ended up talking about it outside the classroom as well.

Kristina's comments point to how students struggled to make sense of what they were learning and the inclination they had to apply the information learned to the present day. Kristina explained that her class decided not to read the N-word aloud in class. Kristina added she felt it was the right decision, because she did not like the history behind the word and found it offensive. Further, Kristina discussed how she felt uncomfortable discussing topics dealing with slavery or racial and ethnic issues in class. She explained, "It's like something so big in your head that was wrong that you don't even want to bring

it up because you don't want to do or say something wrong." This feeling was shared by other study participants who reported feeling uncomfortable, awkward, and unprepared to really talk about racial and ethnic topics.

Student reports about being reticent to engage in conversations about race and ethnicity in the classroom were associated with a fear that they might offend someone else. In the case of SOC, there were feelings of not wanting to be the spokesperson or representative for their entire race. Lucy, a 2012 White alumna, reported:

I remember learning about topics dealing with race and ethnicity, but it was always hard to talk about it. I always felt it was so important to use the right terminology and tone because it is such a sensitive thing to talk about.

Having the right language to engage in conversations dealing with race and ethnicity was considered crucial by the participants in this study. Jackie, a 2009 White alumna, reported, "It's [racial and ethnic diversity] a hard conversation, and I had none of the tools to have it."

Jackie further explained that while she wanted to discuss issues dealing with race, she did not know where to begin, what to say, or how to say it. Her comment underscores the feeling expressed by participants of being afraid they might say or do the wrong thing and offend someone, so instead, they remained silent.

Kristina reflecting on a time students were asked to join in on a conversation dealing with racial and ethnic diversity shared:

I remember one time in History class one of the African American students from the diversity club said, "It would be nice if other people came, too." I thought it was cool they were inviting White people to be included, but I found it kind of

intimidating to think I would have to talk about the issues they were going to talk

about. I was afraid I would offend someone.

Kristina's concern that she might offend others prevented her from participating in racial

and ethnic dialogue. This same concern characterized how other participants in the study

felt as well.

The SOC in the study expressed an additional concern of having to be the

spokesperson or representative for their race. This feeling was clearly articulated by

Tasha, who reported:

When you are the only Black person in class and slavery comes up, people

assume you have something to say about it. I know people are going to expect me

to say something because it's a Black issue, and I'm Black. But at the same time,

I didn't feel I needed to be the spokesperson for those situations because like

every other student, I was learning about what was going on at that time. I wasn't

there and I can't provide everyone with a firsthand experience.

Tasha's account of how she felt when topics like slavery came up in class

highlights how other SOC in the study felt about being one of the few minorities in class

when racially sensitive topics were brought up. Further, Tasha's comment about slavery

being a "Black issue," instead of an American issue, reveals a certain burden that was felt

by the SOC. This burden made the SOC feel like they were always placed in the position

of having to defend or represent their racial group.

The feeling expressed by the SOC of having to be the spokesperson for their

racial group was further highlighted by the behavior of their White classmates. Jackie, a

White student, who was curious about issues dealing with race, reported that when

slavery was discussed in her class, "I couldn't help but look at the two African American kids in the room." Jackie wondered how those two students felt. She wanted to hear from them, but was afraid to raise any questions that might cause offense. The fear of saying the wrong thing and the feeling of being expected to be the spokesperson for a racial or ethnic group caused participants in this study to avoid participation in classroom conversations involving race and ethnicity.

The development of racial awareness outside the classroom. Participation in team sports, clubs, and school-related programs and activities were reported by participants as ways they became more knowledgeable about people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Opportunities to interact with diverse students outside the classroom provided participants with a unique experience that helped to inform their racial and ethnic understanding. Erin reported, "I feel like when I did learn about race and ethnicity it wasn't formal. It was more like a social part of my life where I was interacting with kids from my class and other classes from different backgrounds." Erin's comment demonstrates how study participants felt they learned more about race and ethnicity outside the classroom than inside of it. Further, her comment shows that intergroup contact is critical to the development of racial understanding.

Sports played a big part in bringing students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds together. Natalie, a Hispanic alumna, explained, "I guess sports was one of the things that showed we are all just people because we are all on the same team whether you like it or not, and we are working toward the same goal." Playing sports together made the participants in this study feel unified and dependent on one another for the good of the team. Bobby, when reflecting on his participation in sports, stated:

When you practice as a team together and you've got a good sweat going and you're excited about the game or something, you are not thinking about race and ethnicity. In those moments, we would just slap one another up and you learn to trust one another.

Bobby also recalled what it was like to spend lots of time with SOC as one of the only White students on the basketball team. He stated:

The seventh grade basketball team was almost all Black. It was different than any other Dewey experience I had. These kids were different from any other kids I met. They knew it, I knew it, and everybody knew it. It's not like I had not met Black kids or inner city kids before, but spending so much time with them on like riding the bus was super interesting for one thing. Seeing them walk down the hall was super interesting too because there had never been a group of kids like that walking down the hall. It was also crazy to see how an African American girl I knew since 4th grade responded to having other kids of color around. She seemed to talk differently around those kids, dress a little flashier, and be more comfortable trying out a different personality.

Bobby's statement reveals how playing sports helped to bring students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds together. However, Bobby also recognized there was a danger in perpetuating a stereotype about Black students only being at Dewey to play basketball. He admitted it was shocking to see so many Black students on the team, but he was glad it happened because of everything he learned about interacting with the SOC. Further, Bobby learned that by spending time around SOC and getting to know them, he was able to develop a closer relationship with the SOC. This relationship allowed him to

interact with SOC in ways he was unable to do so before he joined the basketball team. The opportunity to play sports with people from different backgrounds helped participants in this study to develop cross-racial relationships that facilitated racial and ethnic understanding.

Beyond sports, participants felt the Diversity Roundtable Club and the Horizons program, in particular, made them more aware of race and ethnicity. Participants recalled the diversity club as a good opportunity to engage with students from different backgrounds and to hear different perspectives. The purpose of the club was to bring students from different backgrounds together to discuss a broad spectrum of issues dealing with diversity. The club provided those who attended with a safe way to discuss and explore racial and ethnic differences. Students in the club were also exposed to students outside the Dewey community via collaboration and conversation with local students who attended city schools. Beverly, one of the few White students in the club, described what she remembered about the experience:

> Diversity club put everyone in a room to be able to talk about it. There's like stereotypes and certain things you don't want to talk about without having an adult in the room because it can get heated sometimes. We would bring up conversations like, White people touching Black people's hair and just going up and doing it without asking and how it's not cool, and how White people have no idea what goes into Black people's hair. It's just hilarious how ignorant everybody is. Some of the stuff was so funny, but it made it really obvious how divided everything is. The overall experience was positive and fun. We came back together every week. The tension was there because it's the tension in the

outside world and were just talking about it in that room. It's more positive and constructive feedback, as opposed to being in the real world not being able to talk about it, just kind of existing with it.

Beverly's comment demonstrates how exposure to and dialogue with people from different backgrounds helped participants in this study further develop their racial and ethnic awareness. Students reported being able to talk about stereotypes, differences, and cultural values in a way that was non-offensive and that brought them closer together. The diversity club served as a good place for students to explore racial and ethnic differences in a safe and supportive way. It is also worth noting that some of the study participants who chose not to participate in the diversity club expressed some regret for not taking advantage of the opportunity to interact more with people from different backgrounds. For example, several of the participants indicated they felt participation in the diversity club would have better prepared them to interact with diverse people in college.

Additionally, at Dewey, all students are required to perform community service and many chose to volunteer in the Horizons program because it offered them an opportunity to work with underprivileged kids. Horizons is a 6-week academic summer program designed to reinforce critical math, literacy, and life skills low income students need for success in the classroom and beyond (Horizons National, 2015). The Dewey Horizons program was started in 1995 and was reported by several of the participants as an experience that opened their minds and made them think about race and ethnicity in new ways. Tyrone reported:

Teaching Horizon kids from the city to swim definitely increased my awareness and understanding of people from different backgrounds and getting used to people with different names was unique. For example, one of my classes had all Hispanic kids and I had to learn to pronounce their names. I remember thinking about it at the time and saying to myself, this is very different and I am glad I am doing it.

The experience working as a volunteer for Horizons also made participants more aware of racial and ethnic socioeconomic differences. Erin reported, "It was eye-opening working with Horizon kids and just seeing how different their lives were from mine, and they live so close to me." Although Erin lived in the city, she had never really interacted with SOC. She was surprised to find out about many of the socio-economic challenges faced by the students in the Horizons program. Kristina had a similar reaction adding, "Working at the Horizons program opened my eyes not even necessarily to race but to different economic backgrounds that students had in the program." Kristina's comment reveals how race and socioeconomic class intersect in a way that can further separate social groups.

The economic disparity participants noticed between their own experience and that of the Horizon students was made more evident by the coexistence of a day camp attended mainly by Dewey students. Gloria reported:

There was a weird dynamic between Dewey Day Camp and Horizons, because the day camp would have different things, and Horizons was mainly African American and Latino. People assumed all the SOC were in the Horizon's program.

Lucy, a 2012 White alumna, who worked as a lifeguard for both the Horizon Program and the Dewey Day Camp, noticed the division as well, stating:

When a line of White kids come to the pool and then a line of African American kids comes to the pool, you notice it and you're like, "My God." You have a reaction. All the Horizon kids come from really poor families, and all the day camp kids come from middle class families or families with money.

The Horizons program exposed participants in this study to different racial and ethnic realities that intersected with socioeconomic class. Additional realities were brought to light through cross-racial contact while riding the bus with teammates and lunch room conversations.

Racialized activities and spaces: The importance of personal connections. Engaging in activities or occupying the same space with people from different or the same racial and ethnic background was reported by participants as another example of how racial and ethnic awareness was formed. Participants recalled incidents and interactions involving peers that exposed them to both positive and negative experiences dealing with race and ethnicity. Bobby, a White student, reported:

I remember on the bus, one of the things we learned how to do was make beats and rap and the SOC showed the White kids how to do it. We would jump in and say something goofy or cheesy, but it was okay to come out. It taught me there is an okay goofiness, but at the same time, if you take it too far, it could become hurtful. There was something beautiful about joking and making beats with kids from a different background.

Bobby's comment describes a personal connection he made with peers from a different background. The experience provided him with a sense of happiness and willingness to engage in something different that allowed him to learn from others. Furthermore, it demonstrates how humor and the ability to joke around helped participants in this study to make personal connections with people from different backgrounds.

Laughter and the feeling of being a part of a group was important among students with similar backgrounds as well. Natalie, a Latina student, in recalling how all the SOC sat at lunch together, explained:

It was always evident. There were so few of us and we all sat together in the lunch room. We came from the same background, and we felt comfortable with each other. We were close and like they [White students] had their groups and we had our group, but at the same time we were all friends. We would even joke about it and people would be like "Oh look, there is the colored table."

Natalie's comment reinforces what other participants of color in this study reported, which was a need and desire to be around students who had a similar background. Although students of color felt good about sitting together at lunch, there was a contrary feeling expressed by some of the White participants in this study.

Kristina, in recalling a lunch conversation with other White students, reported:

One time someone made a comment at lunch and said something like, "Have you ever noticed that all of the Black students seem to sit together?" I was like, I kind of noticed that was kind of a thing. And then I thought, that's a bad thing. It seemed like it was separation, but it wasn't forced and everyone got along as

friends so I guess it wasn't bad, but it did make some [White] people feel

uncomfortable. It was kind of strange when you look at it, like, "why is that?"

Kristina and her friends felt uncomfortable seeing a lunch table full of SOC. To them, it

seemed like the SOC were separating themselves and did not want to have a personal

connection with the rest of the students. The SOC, on the other hand, just felt

comfortable in the presence of one another and wanted to spend one of their few

opportunities to be together at school.

The feeling the SOC in this study expressed about spending time together was

important because they did not always feel they could personally connect with White

students. Tasha, an African American student, reported:

There were times when I tried to connect with people from a different race, but it

just didn't work out. Sometimes the parents would act funny around me or the

student would want to hang out with me outside of school, but when we got to

school I was not cool enough. Sometimes when I would go to people's houses,

their parents would just stare at me and I would like not even get an introduction

or hello.

Tasha felt it was hard for her to make connections with the White students in the

community, a feeling that was magnified by an experience she had when she went

shopping with one of her friends outside of school. Tasha conveyed:

I went shopping with my friend and her mom. I was standing in line with them

and the lady at the cash register looked at me and she was just like, "What are you

doing here, like can I help you?" She was like, just being really rude and I was

like, I am here with them. My friend and her mom were shocked this was

happening and they didn't really defend me, like say, "she is with us." They were

just silent the whole time. I just felt like, I don't want to deal with it. You had to

deal with too much to be someone's friend. I'm going to stick with the friends

whose parents I know will welcome me in.

Tasha felt she did not fit in with the White students at Dewey and did not receive the

same level of support she received from other SOC and their families. The ability of

study participants to make personal connections with peers who were similar to them or

different played a key a key role in how they came to perceive race and ethnicity.

Tasha's story also hints at the third theme in this chapter, which explores the role of

privilege and power in the development of racial and ethnic awareness.

        Privilege and power: The intersection between race and socioeconomic class.

The participants in this study described a social divide at Dewey that placed rich White

students on one side and poor White students and minorities on the other side. The

delineation along socioeconomic lines led to the perpetuation of stereotypes that

intersected with race and ethnicity. Moreover, study participants felt that socioeconomic

status was a major underlying factor in shaping their understanding of race and ethnicity.

Tasha, an African American student, reported:

These kids are wealthy. These kids are rich. I've never been around people with

so much money. The stuff they would do, like they would say "let's go to NYC

for the weekend" or "let's go on the boat" . . . I couldn't afford to do that. I could

not participate in all the activities that went along with hanging out. That was

another thing that separated us.

Tasha's comment demonstrates the financial power that study participants believed most of the White students at Dewey possessed. Further, Tasha's comment shows how socioeconomic status (SES) can drive a wedge between people from different backgrounds.

Beverly, who referred to herself as an economically poor White student, made a similar observation about the perceived gap between the students whose families had lots of money and those who did not. Beverly conveyed:

I was the poor White kid who had nothing and there is a lot of rich White people at Dewey. They would go to Hollister and Abercrombie and go on shopping sprees for fun. I didn't have money to do that and I really could not relate to anything they had to offer. I became friends with the poor people who happened to be minorities.

Beverly's comment demonstrates how SES can crossover social divides to bring people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds together. In this case, Beverly felt she had more in common with those students she could relate to on an economic level. It did not matter to her that they were SOC, because she felt more comfortable with the lived experience she shared with the SOC.

Furthermore, Beverly felt the rich White kids behaved as if they did not need or care for anyone else. She reported:

Like those kids who had everything, they hung out with other kids who had everything and that's who they related to, and a lot of times, those were the most racist freaking kids ever who would say terrible things in my presence. It made me uncomfortable but they did not need to have friends who did not have money.

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According to Beverly, the "rich White kids" did not need friends like her because she did not measure up to their expectations. Beverly felt the "rich White kids" had friendships that were based on material things, such as, going to Starbucks daily or shopping at high-end retail stores every weekend. Whereas her connection with SOC was based more on quality time spent together doing things that did not cost money, such as playing sports or making up songs together.

The social class divide described by Tasha and Beverly was reported by participants as something that was always there, but never really discussed. The divide was also most visible along racial and ethnic lines. Additionally, study participants indicated they felt that regardless of an individual's SES, there was still a certain social privilege that benefited the White students compared to the students of color.

The phrase "White privilege" was used by participants in this study to describe the feeling of never having to really think about your race or worry that others may see you differently because of your race. Jackie reported, "As a White person, it was very easy to go through Dewey without having to face race at all." Jackie's comment expressed the reality participants felt of being in a predominantly White environment. The school curriculum, pictures hanging up in the hall and classrooms, the faculty and staff, and the students themselves were all majority White. Bobby, in reflecting on his experience as a White student at Dewey, stated:

> I personally had a privilege of not being in a position where race was ever thrown
>
> into my face. I was surrounded by a lot of opportunities to fit in and I never felt
>
> myself sticking out too much. I was free to try things without my race being a

factor and I didn't mind looking a little goofy doing it, because it did not kill my soul.

Bobby's comment demonstrates a certain confidence and ease of mind about one's race that was not found in the responses of participants of color in this study. Bobby articulated a racial freedom that allowed him to try new things without worrying about whether or not others would view him differently based on his race. He also felt he could make a mistake or do something embarrassing without it negatively impacting the essence of who he was as a human being. On the other hand, Bobby's comment indicates he believed SOC had to consistently think and worry about how people perceived them based on their race. Bobby felt the SOC would somehow be emotionally damaged or devastated if they did something embarrassing in the school community.

In contrast, study participants of color expressed a feeling of overcoming what they felt were stereotypes of who they were supposed to be. Tasha reported, "They wanted me to represent Kwanzaa because I was Black. It was weird—because I felt like, as a Black person, I had to take on this perception they had of Black people."
Natalie, a Hispanic student, reported a similar feeling:

> When I came to Dewey, I felt like I had to beat the stereotype and show them I
> was just as smart even though I came from a city school. I wanted them to know I
> was just as capable as a rich White student.

Tasha and Natalie's comments demonstrate a social pressure that was felt by the SOC to overcome the perceived characterization people had of them. Tasha felt that people at Dewey expected her to participate in certain activities because she is Black. Likewise, Natalie felt that because she is Hispanic and previously attended a city school,

she had to prove that she was intelligent and capable of doing just as well academically as the "rich White kids" at Dewey.

Along the same lines, Elvis, an Asian student, reported he felt like he had to be a "model minority." In his eyes that meant he had to be really good at math, and get straight A's in all of his classes, so that he could go to an Ivy League school. His parents expected him to enroll in a top university and all of his peers expected him to excel in math. In general, the SOC in this study reported feeling social pressure to behave or perform in certain ways based on their race and ethnicity. This same social pressure was not reported by White study participants.

When students graduated from Dewey, they took the experiences they had with them. Participants in this study described themselves as being intellectually ready to tackle topics dealing with race and ethnicity, but socially and emotionally they felt they had a lot to learn. This leads us to our fourth and final theme which discusses how participants described their ability to interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in post-secondary settings.

It's a different world than where I come from. Most participants in this study reported feeling sheltered and unprepared for the racial and ethnic realities they found in their postsecondary experience. Life at college and in the workforce provided participants with a much different picture of race and ethnicity than what they experienced at Dewey. Some participants reported becoming more aware of racial inequality and having more opportunities to learn about race and ethnicity by taking specific classes. Additionally, the study participants of color all reported a confidence in their ability to interact with people from different backgrounds, especially with White

students. Some White students in the study reported feeling uncomfortable interacting with people in racially- mixed settings mainly due to limited exposure to people from different backgrounds. At the same time, other White students in the study reported having positive experiences being able to interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds based on previous experiences they had with people of color at Dewey.

Jackie, who attended a private liberal arts college in the Northeast, recalled realizing for the first time during her freshman year at college that the world was a different place than she thought it was based on her experience at Dewey. Jackie reported, "When I got to college, I started realizing the world was not just, equal, or a happy place, especially when it came to African American and White relationships." Jackie found that other Dewey graduates she talked to had a similar reaction, stating, "It's interesting to hear graduates talk because they get out of Dewey and, "they're like, 'oh my God!' This is not the world I thought it was." The perception expressed by study participants of being unprepared for the racial and ethnic disparities they discovered outside of Dewey was further supported by Erin who attended a state college in the Northeast. Erin reported:

> Once I got to college, I kind of realized wow, there's still so many issues dealing with race and ethnicity that I never realized were going on. I thought it was something of the past. I was never really taught about what was happening.

These comments are consistent with what study participants described as being in a bubble and not really knowing anything outside of Dewey. Whereas, after graduating from Dewey, study participants felt they were exposed to a much different world.

The postsecondary experience provided the study participants with the opportunity to create a broader and more contemporary awareness of the complexities surrounding race and ethnicity. Tasha, who attended a private Catholic university in the Northeast, reported:

> The college I am at now is similar to Dewey. However, the difference now is I have classes where I learn about issues dealing with race. These classes taught me about racism, White privilege, and how race connects to all these different things.

Tyrone, who attended a private liberal arts college in California, reported:

> In college, there were just way more people of color than at Dewey. I entered a sort of campus-wide dialogue that existed in academic classes and socially on campus dealing with social awareness, racial disparity, and social justice. I don't think my peers who left Dewey had that same experience.

The opportunity to discuss and learn more about racial and ethnic issues on an intellectual level was reported by study participants as something they felt prepared and ready to do. The study participants felt the liberal education they received at Dewey taught them to have an open mind, think critically, and to question things that seemed unjust or unfair.

The study participants of color, in particular, reported feeling confident in their ability to interact with people from different backgrounds at the postsecondary level. The experience of attending a predominantly White high school and then going to a college that had more diversity, but was still predominantly White, proved to be less of a culture shock for them. Tasha reported: "I know how to deal with people of a different race,

mainly White, because most of the classes and organizations at Dewey involved majority White people, so at college, I was used to it."

Natalie, who also attended a private liberal arts college in the Northeast, described having a similar experience to Tasha in college. However, Natalie also noticed a difference between how her friends of color who grew up in large urban areas adjusted to college compared to her own transition. Natalie reported:

> I have friends at college who grew up in NYC with lots of African Americans or Latinos around them and when they first came to my college, which is similar to Dewey, they had a huge culture shock. I think for me Dewey opened up my mind to better interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and it made the transition to college easier for me.

The information reported by Tasha and Natalie demonstrates a feeling of comfort students of color in this study had when interacting with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The study participants of color felt the experiences they had at Dewey provided them with a good foundation and the skills needed to interact with people, especially White people, from various backgrounds at the postsecondary level.

On the other hand, some of the White participants in the study reported feeling uncomfortable interacting with people in racially-mixed settings mainly due to limited exposure to people from different backgrounds. Gloria reported: "I feel my college experience is very similar to Dewey. Everyone is liberal (open-minded and respectful of differences) and very accepting, but there really is not a lot of racial or ethnic diversity on campus." Gloria felt the lack of exposure she had to people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds was one of the reasons she felt uncomfortable interacting with people

in diverse group settings. She expressed having a fear or concern that she might say or do the wrong thing and offend someone. The concern of not having enough exposure to people from different backgrounds was further supported by Erin, who stated:

> My college is not really diverse. It is a state school and a lot of the people are local and the student population is mainly White. Like in my education classes, especially, they're all female and all White. I don't think there's a single person who is of a different race, which is sad. I think I am open-minded, but having the opportunity to work with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds would have been really helpful.

Erin's comment demonstrates a desire to learn and interact with people from different backgrounds, but because there are very few students of color in her education classes, she feels she does not have any real opportunity to do so.

In contrast, other White students reported having good opportunities to interact positively with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Bobby reported:

> Now in my apartment building, there's plenty of kids from the city, and I know how to look them in the eye, and I know how to play games with them that I learned playing in high school. Looking back, I definitely appreciate the experience I had with students from different backgrounds while playing basketball in high school.

Bobby's comment demonstrates how the exposure and interactions he had with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in high school made it easier for him to interact with them in postsecondary settings. Bobby also felt that being able to spend

quality time with people from different backgrounds was an important factor in his ability

to interact with them positively now. He further reported:

> There is an edge at first when you confront people that are different than you,
> because they have a different background. However, if you have good
> opportunities to hang out and have fun with those people, you can learn how to be
> totally comfortable with them. I got a lot of great opportunities to learn how to do
> that, that I still benefit from today.

Beverly's report further supported the importance of having early exposure and

quality time with people from different backgrounds:

> I think it's just more about exposure to different people than anything else. For
> example, it was like the classroom was the conduit to meet these people, to get to
> know them, to really want to explore their culture and background. It was like if I
> hadn't made such good friends with people in high school from various racial and
> ethnic backgrounds, I probably would not have been as motivated to explore
> different races, but being in a classroom with different people, having lunch with
> them, and becoming friends made me realize what I was taught about other races
> growing up was kind of ridiculous.

Beverly's comment reveals that the classroom provides a way for people of different

backgrounds to learn about one another. Further, Beverly's comment shows that cross

racial interactions can lead to the development of friendships across racial lines and the

undoing of negative racial stereotypes.

The postsecondary experience reported by study participants indicates the lifting

of a veil that caused them to see race and ethnicity in a more global and contemporary

context. Experiences at college and in the workforce provided participants with more racial and ethnic awareness. Additionally, the participants expressed different degrees of success interacting with people from different backgrounds based on their own race and ethnicity, opportunities available, and previous experience or lack of experience interacting with diverse groups of people.

Summary of Results

In summary, five major themes emerged from the data. The first theme, *one big family of progressives*, detailed the feeling among participants of being in a school that was open-minded, accepting, and intimate. The theme also highlights the sense participants had of being sheltered and limited in their ability to interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The second theme, *race inside and outside the classroom*, focused on the various ways participants recalled developing racial and ethnic awareness inside and outside the classroom. It describes how classroom instruction and conversation, extracurricular activities, and personal connections influenced study participants' perception of race and ethnicity.

Racialized activities and spaces is the third theme and it describes informal interactions participants had while riding on the bus with teammates, hanging out in the lunch room, and both the success and challenge of making personal connections across social divides.

Privilege and power was the fourth theme and it detailed the intersection between socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity. The final theme, *it's a different world than where I come from* highlights the post-secondary experiences participants had negotiating race.

The final chapter of this study offers a detailed summary of the findings. Furthermore, implications and recommendations for practice and future research are identified as well as a discussion of the study's limitations.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to discuss the themes that emerged from this study in greater detail and to present implications guided by the research question. The research question is: How do independent school alumni describe the ways in which their schooling experiences facilitated racial and ethnic understanding and their ability to interact with people from different backgrounds in post-secondary settings? This question is important because American society is becoming more diverse, and therefore, being able to live and work with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is essential to maintaining a democracy (Gurin et al., 2002). Accordingly, it is important to understand how K-12 institutions prepare students to participate in an increasingly multiracial nation.

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological methodology to explore how independent school alumni describe the schooling experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. The study finding relate to the above research question and through the lens of intergroup dialogue theory will be highlighted. Conclusions aligning with the literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2 will be drawn and implications of such results for practice and future research will be suggested. Lastly, limitations of the study will be considered and presented.

Implication of Findings

Current diversity research indicates there are educational benefits associated with learning and working in racially diverse school environments (Hurtado et al., 2003; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Tatum, 1997; Welner, 2006). These benefits include better learning outcomes, social and psychological advantages that reduce racial fears, and increased civic engagement (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Jacobsen et al., 2012). Yet, there is empirical evidence that the mere presence of diversity in a school setting does not lead to cross-racial understanding (Gay, 2000; Landson-Billings, 1994). It follows then, that there is a need for more research on the types of schooling experiences students attribute to the development of their racial and ethnic understanding. The implication woven into each of this study's five themes is the importance of fostering a racially inclusive environment through positive interracial interactions and authentic dialogue across social-divides.

The school social environment played a key role in helping participants in this study appreciate racial and ethnic differences. More specifically, participants felt that being in a close-knit community where values associated with a liberal education were taught caused them to be more aware and accepting of diversity. A liberal education, as used in this study refers to what Nussbaum (1997) described as an education that "liberates the mind from bondage of habit and custom, producing people who can function with sensitivity and alertness as citizens of the whole world" (p. 8). The responses provided by participants in this study demonstrate a tolerance and appreciation for racial and ethnic differences that they attributed directly to the liberal education and cultural expectations they found at Dewey. On the other hand, the study participants felt

Dewey's smallness and lack of students of color limited their experience with and exposure to people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Research supports the notion that schools play an important role in the development of democratic values including how to participate in a racially and ethnically diverse society (Gurin et al., 2002). The ability to interact with people from various backgrounds is viewed as an essential educational outcome that demonstrates a student's college and career readiness (USDOE, 2010). Additionally, studies show that schools not only socialize students academically, but they do so racially as well (Arrington et al., 2003; Tatum, 1997). Dewey, through its mission and vision statements, strived to foster a learning environment that helped study participants to develop a better appreciation for people from different backgrounds. Moreover, by establishing a culture of acceptance, Dewey created an emotionally safe space that allowed study participants to explore race and ethnicity in a non-threatening way.

Contrarily, while Dewey's educational approach, school culture, and small population, supported racial and ethnic awareness, it also caused participants to feel sheltered and limited in their exposure to people from different backgrounds. This phenomenon is referred to in other studies as the "bubble syndrome" (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Jackson, 2010). According to Jackson (2010), the bubble syndrome is characterized by a sheltered, closed experience with little racial and class diversity. The participants in this study concurred that Dewey's smallness and predominantly White homogeneous environment made them feel like they were in a bubble. As such, study participants graduated with a limited view of the racial realities outside of Dewey.

Another aspect of Dewey that study participants attributed to their liberal education and school culture was the expectation for everybody get along with each other. This is similar to what Ottley (2005) found in his research and described as a "culture of niceness" or attitude of "go along to get along." However, Ottley found that this approach prevented the community from having authentic conversations dealing with diversity or racial concerns. The data from the interviews in this study supports Ottley's claim and suggests that meaningful conversations dealing with race and ethnicity was something study participants rarely experienced during their time at Dewey. These findings suggest that acceptance or tolerance of differences is not the same as intentionally engaging in dialogue that promotes racial and ethnic understanding. However, fostering a social environment where students felt accepted and included helped participants in this study feel more comfortable with people from different backgrounds.

Racial and ethnic awareness inside the classroom. The study participants shared memories of classroom instruction that was situated in the past and focused mainly on slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. Participants recalled having no connection to the information presented and how to apply it to contemporary issues dealing with diversity or race. This led participants to believe that issues involving race and ethnicity were subjects of the past with little to no connection to the present day. Additionally, participants reported there really were no classroom discussions that challenged their thinking about race, except for occasional discussions in English class. However, those discussions were still mainly in the context of the past and how things used to be without any real life application.

This finding speaks to the lack of a culturally relevant pedagogy that would help students thoroughly examine issues across social divides. The research shows that SOC often feel underrepresented or left out of the school curriculum (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Jackson, 2010). In this study, most of the formal instruction dealing with race and ethnicity centered on past events and did not provide participants with any exposure to more modern-day information. This type of instruction fits the color-blind storyline of "the past is the past" that reflects people's attempt to rationalize the racial order with material from their own lives (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). The emphasis on slavery and the Civil Rights Movement in the Dewey curriculum made it difficult for participants to conceptualize race and ethnicity in modern-day form.

Additionally, study participants reported feeling reluctant to engage in conversation topics that involved race and ethnicity. Data from the interviews shows that there was a feeling among White participants that they might say the wrong thing or offend someone, and thus they avoided participating in racial and ethnic dialogue. Students of color on the other hand, expressed frustration with feeling as though every time race was discussed, they were expected to be the spokesperson or representative for their entire race. The fear of saying the wrong thing and the feeling of having to be a delegate on behalf your racial group inhibited participants in this study from having authentic conversations dealing with race and ethnicity. As a result, participants were unable to build the type of racial awareness that comes from engaging in intergroup dialogue.

The hesitation of study participants to engage in racial conversations is supported by other studies. Jackson (2010), in examining how students of color integrated into a

predominantly White boarding school, found that participants felt uncomfortable discussing issues of race in the classroom. Similarly, Arrington et al. (2003) discovered that participants in their longitudinal study involving faculty and students in Grades 5-12 from various independent schools, more often than not, avoided racial discussions. Furthermore, data from the above studies reveal an attempt by independent schools to treat everyone the same which, in turn, marginalizes the SOC and represses discussions involving race (Arrington et al., 2003; Jackson, 2010). These findings support Ottley's (2005) earlier claim that the independent school "culture of niceness," prevented participants from engaging in authentic discussions involving race.

Moreover, the independent school context and tendency of study participants to shy away from racial topics exposes a danger that feeds into what Bonilla-Silva (2003) refers to as a color-blind ideology. At the time of this study, Dewey's culture of acceptance and emphasis on racial and ethnic topics situated in the past provided participants with a false sense of racial and ethnic understanding. Topics involving race were downplayed and participants were encouraged to embrace a "we-are-all-the-same" philosophy, which limited discussions involving differences. Research shows this color-blind approach can be detrimental to the development of the skills needed to interact with people from different backgrounds in a healthy and positive way (Arrington et al., 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Tatum, 1997).

Racial and ethnic awareness outside the classroom. Study participants felt the interactions they had with people from different backgrounds outside the classroom in sports, the diversity club, and the Horizons program all helped them to learn more about race and ethnicity. By playing on a sports team, participants were able to spend quality

time working toward a common goal with people from different backgrounds. Time spent together practicing, riding on the bus, and competing together helped participants to bridge social divides. This finding supports the component of intergroup dialogue related to relationship building through sustained communication among participants (Zuniga et al., 2007).

Likewise, the diversity club provided students with a safe space to explore racial and ethnic differences. Study participants were able to bring up topics and questions that served to broaden their understanding of race and appreciation of differences while simultaneously bringing them closer together. This finding fits the consciousness raising component of intergroup dialogue whereby through examination of differences, participants began to question personal biases and preconceptions and began to situate the perspective of others in a larger social context (Zuniga et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the Horizons program exposed participants to a large volume of people from different backgrounds. The time spent working with and teaching students in the Horizon's program made participants more aware of racial and ethnic differences. Additionally, participants expressed they felt more comfortable socializing with diverse people because of the experience they had in the program. Moreover, study participants who did volunteer work with the Horizons program, reported wanting to do more in the way of social justice. A finding that was further supported by participant's comments about going into the field of education to become teachers because of their experiences with the Horizons' program. This finding supports the notion that intergroup interactions can lead to the development of shared responsibility for challenging discrimination and advocating for greater social justice (Zuniga et al., 2007).

According to Killen and Rutherford (2010) there is an important link between playing, learning, and socializing with diverse people and the reduction of racial strife. More specifically, positive interactions with people from diverse backgrounds are connected to improvement of outlooks and viewpoints concerning race and a feeling of being more comfortable and optimistic about addressing issues dealing with race (Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Tatum, 1997). In this study, participants reported playing sports was instrumental in helping them to form relationships with people from different backgrounds. Playing on a mixed-race team created an opportunity for participants to interact with diverse people in a positive way.

Similarly, the diversity club provided participants with an opportunity to build understanding through authentic discussions dealing with race. Studies show that this type of intergroup dialogue can lead to positive interracial interactions and collaboration toward social justice (Allport, 1954; Tatum 1997; Gurin et al., 2002; Zuniga et al., 2007). The participants in this study who participated in the diversity club expressed a more nuanced understanding of diversity and desire to work with others to address issues of inequality. In the same way, exposure to diverse people through the Horizons program contributed to participants feeling more comfortable interacting with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and a desire to work against social injustice.

Racialized activities and spaces were associated with both positive and negative experiences for participants. The positive experiences were linked to a feeling of being included while the negative experiences were linked to the feeling of being excluded or different. One feeling points to a sense of belonging while the other depicts marginalization. In this study, the participants recalled moments when they laughed,

joked around, and did silly things like make songs together that reinforced their connection with one another. On the other hand, participants also described moments when people talked down to them or acted in a way that made them feel like they did not belong.

The dichotomy between belonging and marginalization is further supported by the research literature. Studies show that SOC in predominantly White institutions (PWI), in particular, often feel marginalized or isolated (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Jenkins, 2011; Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003; Lucas, 2005). In this study, while the participants of color liked their school experience, they also expressed sometimes feeling like they were outsiders. They also recalled wanting to have more students of color in the community with which to interact with. The desire to be around more SOC was expressed by both White and non-White participants in this study supports the critical mass argument for attaining a diverse student body reinforced by Justice Powell in Grutter v. Bollinger. The critical mass argument essentially states that there is a racial tipping point whereby having enough minorities in a community can make change happen (Gladwell, 2000). The presence of a critical mass of minorities in a racially-mixed school could have educational benefits like the prevention of minority isolation and stigmatization along with the belief students in the majority would benefit from interacting with diverse people (Elam, Stratton, Hafferty, & Haidet, 2009).

The findings in this study are consistent with previous empirical research that shows SOC and poor students in independent schools wrestle with feelings of not belonging that are further exacerbated by class (Jenkins, 2011; Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003; Ottley, 2005). Participants of color and poor students in this study felt there were certain

activities they were unable to participate in due to lack of financial resources. The privilege of being White combined with a higher socioeconomic class resulted in financial power not found among the SOC or poor White students at Dewey.

In contrast, the SOC in the study reported feeling like they had to overcome stereotypes that were associated with their race. There was a feeling among these participants that they had to prove themselves worthy by working hard to avoid reinforcing negative images associated with their race or ethnicity. This finding supports Claude Steele's (1995) theory of stereotype threat or the risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's social group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Participants of color in this study expressed concern with how others in the Dewey community viewed them. It was important for study participants to do well academically, avoid conflicts, and to fit in by not drawing attention to themselves. The main focus for these students was to graduate rather than to worry about how to socially integrate.

After graduation, participants found the world outside of Dewey was much different than what they had perceived, especially when it came to dealing with race and ethnicity. Dewey's small population of students, lack of SOC, and liberal orientation provided participants with what Bonilla-Silva (2003) coined a "color-blind" view of race. The image of diversity as a thing of the past was shattered by the experiences participants had at college and in the workplace. In college, participants were exposed to more contemporary topics involving diversity and in some cases, found themselves in a setting that allowed them to interact with more SOC. Exposure to current topics involving race and interactions with diverse people made participants more aware of the complexities

surrounding race and ethnicity. Similarly, study participants work experience provided

them new opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds. This

exposure led to new racial understanding and appreciation of differences.

Nonetheless, some of the White participants in this study reported feeling anxious

and uncomfortable interacting with people in racially diverse settings. A deeper analysis

of the responses from these participants revealed they had little exposure or experience

with diverse people beyond Dewey. Data showed these participants grew up in all-White

neighborhoods, went to an all- White churches, and spent most of their time at Dewey

socializing with White students. As a result, these participants were more apprehensive

about discussing race. A fact that was confirmed by the researcher's observations of their

uneasiness during the interviews for this study. The researcher observed the participants

responded to questions in a tentative manner and hesitated more often before responding.

On the other hand, the SOC in this study expressed confidence in their ability to

interact with people from different backgrounds, especially White people, in

postsecondary settings. This confidence is important given the fact that more often than

not, SOC will be in situations which involve interacting with White people throughout

their lives. Likewise, the White participants in this study who were exposed to and

interacted with people from different backgrounds early on felt more comfortable

socializing with people from different backgrounds in postsecondary settings.

Studies show that benefits associated with being in a racially-mixed setting

include reduced negative racial stereotypes and the likelihood of forming interracial

relationships (Black, 2002; Killen & Stangor, 2001; Wells et al., 2004). In this study,

participants who interacted with people from diverse backgrounds through sports, the

diversity club, and the Horizons program were more apt to form relationships and feel comfortable with people from diverse backgrounds in postsecondary settings than those who did not have the same experience. This finding is consistent with the research literature related to intergroup dialogue theory and further reinforces the argument for having a diverse student body (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Davis & Torres, 2013; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2001; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005). Indeed, this finding demonstrates that consciousness raising (awareness), relationship building (acceptance), and shared social justice (action) are essential to the development of essential skills students need to positively interact with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in post-secondary settings.

Limitations

Several limitations were identified with this study. First, the participant selection process only engaged students from one independent school located in the Northeast. The inclusion of independent or single-gender school alumni in other regions would have provided different perspectives. Additionally, participants in this study emphasized race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status. These primary categories could be expanded due to geographic differences. For example, schools in the West are more racially diverse, whereas, schools in the South are more racially isolated (Carter, 2007; Goldsmith, 2010).

Furthermore, this study only included alumni who graduated between 2009 and 2014. This 5-year period was selected because of the efforts made by the school during this time to build a more diverse community. However, including current students, teachers, administrators, or parents could have provided additional insights into the schooling experiences that socialize students racially.

The gender and racial make-up of the participants in this study was another limitation. The study included 12 people in total: eight White females, one Black female, one Hispanic female, one White male, and one Asian male. Although the study includes three students of color and two males, a more balanced racial and gender ratio could lend additional insights into the various ways each group perceived race and ethnicity.

Recommendations

The following discussion will provide two primary sets of suggestions both aimed at helping educators find more effective ways to help students learn and work together with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The initial recommendations will be suggestions for educators, in which curriculum ideas and instructional practices will be provided to teach students how to engage in meaningful cross-racial conversations while maintaining positive relationships. The second set of recommendations will be suggestions for establishing and cultivating a racially diverse student body without marginalizing participants.

Curriculum and instructional recommendations. The first recommendation for independent school leaders and teachers is to adopt a culturally-responsive curriculum and pedagogy to help students better understand and appreciate racial and ethnic differences. Gay (2000) defined culturally-responsive pedagogy as a method of teaching that uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. In other words, students are placed at the center of the curriculum which allows their experiences and backgrounds to be integrated into the classroom instruction.

According to Gay (2000), culturally-responsive teaching acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect student dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and is worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum. This style of teaching builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities (Gay, 2000). Furthermore, culturally relevant teaching is characterized by the use of a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles. It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's culture. It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all subjects and skills routinely taught in schools (Gay, 2000). Indeed, studies show that cultural responsive teaching fosters the skills that are essential for living in a racially and ethnically diverse society (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). By incorporating responsive teaching into the classroom, independent school educators will be able to help students' bridge social divides and become responsible citizens.

Establishing and cultivating a diverse student body. As an independent school educator, one of the major implications from this research which will assist with strategic planning and enrollment, is to understand the importance of establishing and cultivating a diverse student body. Over the years, independent schools have done more to attract students of color, however, from a structural standpoint of curriculum practice and educational programs, things have been slow to evolve. As a result, instructional techniques and programs that would advance racial and ethnic awareness are lagging.

As our society grows more and more diverse, it is crucial for students to learn how to live and work with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Gurin et

al., 2002). Independent schools will need to re-evaluate how diversity is cultivated and discussed in their community. This focus would include creating opportunities across all subject areas for both intergroup and intragroup dialogue that allows participants to openly and honestly discuss issues involving race. Additionally, there is a need to intentionally enroll more students of color in a way that benefits current SOC and the larger community as a whole. When the ratio of SOC reaches critical mass, it provides an anchor of support for SOC and exposes students in the dominant group to a more diverse population.

Future research. Future opportunities for research could extend this study to a more evenly mixed group of students or focus on socioeconomic status. Additionally, while this study utilized the lens of intergroup dialogue theory to examine race and ethnicity, it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study using Bonilla-Silva's (1999) color-blind ideology. This ideology would allow the researcher to examine racialized school experiences in a more systematic and structural way.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study draws on the principles of intergroup dialogue to explore how independent school alumni describe the schooling experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. The findings of this study further support the existing body of work on the benefits of having a racially-mixed learning environment. Furthermore, the findings reinforce the educational belief asserted by scholars that schools play a vital role in socializing students racially (Arrington et al., 2003; Tatum 1997).

This study utilized the recollected experiential knowledge of independent school alumni as well as field notes (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, school documents and participant-completed demographic forms were analyzed. The findings emerging from the data reveal five themes that all coalesced around the importance of fostering a racially inclusive environment through positive interracial interactions and authentic dialogue across social divides. In other words, the school culture, curriculum and programs, demographics, and philosophical approach all influenced how participants perceived race and ethnicity (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The study further identifies that the experiences students had with race and ethnicity in high school influenced their ability to interact with people from different backgrounds in post-secondary settings (Hurtado et al., 2003; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Tatum, 1997; Welner, 2006). The participants in this study expressed different levels of comfort interacting with people from diverse backgrounds in post-secondary settings. The SOC and White students who socialized with them on a regular basis felt comfortable with interracial interactions. Whereas, White students who had little exposure to people of color felt less comfortable in racially diverse settings.

Finally, the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices will assist schools with developing students who are globally minded and able to live and work with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. In order to accomplish this goal, it is recommended that schools do more to establish and cultivate a diverse student body through intentional actions, which include having ongoing, open, and honest dialogue about racial diversity.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Email Template for the Alumni

Dear Name,

Hello, I would like to invite you consider participating in a study being conducted by Hassan Jones, a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College. The purpose of this study is to explore how students who attended an independent, private, K-12 school recall the school experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. The title of this dissertation research is: Crucial Conversations: How Independent School Alumni Describe the Schooling Experiences that Facilitated their Understanding of Race and Ethnicity.

Participation benefits include contributing to an understanding of the topic, adding knowledge, and updating research literature.

If you decide to participate in this study, please respond to this email with your consent so we can schedule an interview via email.

Your participation will include:
- Completion of the informed consent and demographic form at time of the interview
- One hour of one-on-one interview (audio recorded)

Criteria to participate in this study include:
- Attended Harley for at least two years
- Graduated between 2009 – 2014
- Engaged in activities (clubs, sports, community service, etc.) at Harley with people from different racial or ethnical backgrounds.

The location, date, and time for the interview will decide via availabilities.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you will have the option of terminating your participation at any time without any penalty. Additionally, your participation will be confidential. During all aspects of the study, your identity will be protected with use of pseudonyms. Your institution will also be assigned a pseudonym as further effort of protecting privacy.

All documents and recordings collected or analyzed for this study will be kept in a secured locked file cabinet that only researcher has access to. These documents and recordings will be maintained for two years after the completion of the study after which time, all information will be destroyed by erasure and shredding disposal. For further information about the study or your role in it, you may contact: Hassan Jones via email at _____ or my Doctoral Advisor, Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason at _____. The research study is reviewed and approved by St. John Fisher College's IRB Review Committee.

I look forward to your participation in this study!

Hassan Jones

St. John Fisher College
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Study: Critical Conversations: How Independent School Alumni Describe the Schooling Experiences that Facilitated their Understanding of Race and Ethnicity.

Name of the researcher: Hassan Jones, a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher, Executive Leadership Program.

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason. Phone for further information: _____.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to explore how students who attended an independent, private, K-12 school recall the school experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. The study will seek to determine if the schooling experiences described by participants are linked to any of the educational outcomes associated with intergroup dialogue: consciousness raising, building relationships across differences and conflicts, or strengthening individual and collective capacities to promote social justice?

Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Place of study: The Harley School

Audio Recorder Consent:

The interviews will be audio recorded so I will have a record to help me remember what participants said. I will also write down things that were said at the meetings. Personal information, such as names, will not be identified in these records. Your audio recording may be transcribed by a professional transcription service. In regard to providing consent to access to audiotaped record, you may change your mind at any time by contacting the researcher listed above. By signing this form, you acknowledge and give us permission to include your interview in the audio recording session for our study.

Confidentiality

I will keep your personal information confidential. The participants will be granted pseudo names to protect you. If results of this research are published or presented in a talk, information that identifies you will not be used. The transcription of the information from the recording of the interview meeting will be stored on a secure computer. Your name and other information that could identify you will not be part of the computer record made from the audio recording. The audiotape will be destroyed after the termination of this project.

The computer record of the interview meeting will be retained for up to 2 years after completion of the project and then be destroyed. All other personal information collected for research purposes will be kept in locked cabinets in the research office until the project is finished, including this consent form.

Risks and Benefits.

I don't anticipate any risks, however since this study requires a small sample, I can't guarantee that you will not be identified. Problems involving the identification of participants, recruitment efforts or data collection are not expected.

Voluntary Participation.

Participation in this study is your choice and entirely voluntary. You are free to decline your participation for any reason. If you do participate and then decide you want to stop during the study, your decision will be respected. If you withdraw from the research study, all of your personal information and links to personal information will be destroyed. If this happens, no one will be able to identify you by looking at the research data. Your academic record or employment will not be impact by non-participation in this study.

Contact Person.

If you want more information about this study, please email Mr. Jones at _____. If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the dissertation chairperson, listed above. If you have any questions regarding human subject's rights, please contact Eileen Merges, Director of Human Subjects Research at St. John Fisher College, _____.

Consent

I have read this permission form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I have been given answers to my questions. I understand that the person listed above will answer any questions I have about the study or about participants' rights. I have received a signed copy of this consent form.

Participant's signature:

_____Date: _____

Participant's print name

_____

Appendix C

Alumni Demographic Questionnaire

Pseudonym: _____

1. Age: _____

2. Please indicate your gender:

   a. Female

   b. Male

3. Please indicate your race:

   a. Asian / Asian Pacific Islander

   b. American Indian / Alaskan Native

   c. Hispanic / Latino

   d. African American (Black, Afro-Caribbean)

   e. Caucasian (White)

   f. Biracial / Multiracial

   g. Other: _____

4. Please indicate number of years at Harley _____

5. Please indicate year of graduation _____

Appendix D

Individual Interview Protocol for Participants

Today's Date:
_____

Participant's Name:
_____

Pseudonym:
_____

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to explore how students who attended an independent, private, K-12 school recall the school experiences that facilitated their understanding of race and ethnicity. The study will seek to determine if the schooling experiences described by participants are linked to any of the educational outcomes associated with intergroup dialogue: consciousness raising, building relationships across differences and conflicts, or strengthening individual and collective capacities to promote social justice?

1. Describe the types of experiences you had at Harley that informed your understanding of race and ethnicity (i.e. friendships, classroom learning, lunch or informal conversations, sports, extracurricular activities, etc.).

2. While at Harley, how did you react to conversations dealing with race and ethnicity?

   a. How did your reactions then inform your reactions to similar conversations now?

3. How did your experiences with race and ethnicity at Harley affect your relationships with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in post-secondary environments (i.e. college, organizations, workforce, etc.)?

4. Tell me about any experiences you had at Harley that influenced how you currently perceive the race or ethnicity of a person with a background different than yours?

5. Looking back, what lessons did you take away from Harley regarding race and ethnicity that help you to engage with people from different backgrounds? (i.e., relationships, conversations, work, etc.)?