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Finding common ground amidst difference : discussions and perceptions of race and ethnicity in interracial and interethnic friendships

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Amidst Difference:
Discussions and Perceptions
of Race and Ethnicity in
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how friends talked about and developed their

perceptions of one another's race and ethnicity in interracial and interethnic friendships.

Members of seven friendship dyads were interviewed separately, resulting in fourteen

individual interviews. Participants ranged in age from 25 through 37; they were diverse

in gender, length of friendship, and how they identified racially and ethnically. Members

of all friendships dyads reported that they identified differently, racially and ethnically,

from one another. During their interviews, participants discussed their own ethnic and

racial identities, their friend's ethnic and racial identities, communication about race and

ethnicity within the friendship, ways in which differences in race and ethnicity have

affected the friendship, and how they have developed their perceptions of their friend's

race and ethnicity.

Data from the interviews was analyzed using constant comparative analysis.

Themes were identified across individual interviews, as well as across friendship dyads,

and were organized into four categories: 1) roles that race and ethnicity played within

friendships, 2) parallels and differences in how friends talked about their own and one

another's racial and ethnic identities, 3) how people developed perceptions of their

friend's racial and ethnic identities, and 4) the communication that friends had about race

and ethnicity. Findings demonstrated the importance of friendships in deepening

people's understandings of races and ethnicities other than their own and expanded on

understandings of how friends develop their perceptions of one another's race and

ethnicity.

FINDING COMMON GROUND AMIDST DIFFERENCE: DISCUSSIONS AND
PERCEPTIONS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN INTERRACIAL AND
INTERETHNIC FRIENDSHIPS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has long prided itself on being a country that welcomes immigration and diversity. The government's official website refers to the United States as "a nation of diverse cultures" and notes that "the United States has a long history of welcoming immigrants from around the world" (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, n.d.). Yet, ethnic and racial diversity in this country has long been accompanied by tension. Dominant racial and ethnic groups have subjected minority groups to prejudice and discrimination. As well, tensions have existed between minority groups. Friction between ethnic and racial groups has manifested in a number of forms, including conflict, violence, and segregation (sometimes voluntary, sometimes forced).

According to categories listed in the U.S. Census, the United States' population is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. The white population, which has long been the majority racial group in the United States, has decreased from 83% of the population in 1980 to 74.7% in 2005 (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002; US Census Bureau, 2005). The percentage of people of color (including Black, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and other) has grown from 16.9% in 1980 to 25.2% in 2005. The Hispanic population, which is the sole ethnic group identified in the U.S. Census, has doubled from 6.4% in 1980 to 14.5% in 2005 (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002; U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). This rise in racial and ethnic diversity brings with it the potential for more interracial and interethnic interactions. These interactions

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have the potential to enhance understanding and comfort levels between people from differing ethnic and racial backgrounds, or they can increase prejudice and anxiety.

Researchers have examined interactions between people of different races and ethnicities, searching for variables within these experiences that affect the development of prejudices, as well as of tolerance and understanding between groups. Theorists have created models outlining the contours of interactions that are most likely to decrease prejudice (Allport, 1954; Durrheim & Dixon, 1995; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000a; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000b; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Hewstone, 2000). Interethnic and interracial friendships fit within criteria outlined by these models for supporting interactions likely to dismantle prejudice and build understanding and tolerance (Pettigrew, 1998). According to theorists and researchers, the long-term nature of friendships, the equal status of members within friendship dyads, and the tendency of friends to engage in collaboration to accomplish joint goals create an environment in which people can overcome stereotypes to interact within one another on a deeper level. What research and theory have yet to explore is how friends develop their perceptions of one another's race and ethnicity, as well as how they come to understand the similarities and differences between them.

This study attempts to gain a better understanding of these issues and to look at how members of interracial and interethnic friendships communicate about race and ethnicity. The study's primary research question is: how do members of interracial and interethnic friendship dyads communicate about and develop perceptions of one another's race and ethnicity?

In looking at interracial and interethnic friendships, I hope to gain a better understanding of how two people who have chosen to maintain a close relationship come to understand the roles that their ethnic and racial identities play within their friendship. This research can help inform how social workers practice within multiracial and multicultural environments, how we attempt to foster interactions between people from different races and ethnicities, and how we understand the support networks that clients create within diverse communities. An understanding of interethnic and interracial interactions can help us conduct more culturally sensitive work by contributing to our insight into how we develop perceptions of clients and co-workers who identify, racially or ethnically, different from us. It can also give us insight into how others develop perceptions of us.

This thesis continues, in Chapter II, by providing an overview of literature that contributing to our understanding of interracial and interethnic friendships. The literature reviewed focuses on three areas: racial and ethnic identity development, intergroup relations, and friendship. Chapter III outlines the qualitative methods used in collecting and analyzing data for this study. Chapter IV recounts prevalent themes found within the data. Chapter V discusses implications of the study's findings, as well as limitations of the research and possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review three areas of literature that inform discussion on how interracial and interethnic friends perceive and talk about differences in their race and ethnicity. I begin with a review of definitions for race and ethnicity that are prevalent in the United States. I then present theories and research addressing racial and ethnic identity development. Especially relevant to this thesis is literature that looks at how an individual's ethnic and racial identities affect her interactions with people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. The third section presents an examination of theories of intergroup relations, paying close attention to G.W. Allport's Contact Hypothesis, Tajfel's and Turner's Social Identity Theory, and subsequent models that developed from their work. The fourth section is dedicated to looking at research and theory on friendship, especially as it relates to interracial and interethnic friendships. In conclusion, there is a discussion of how these three areas relate to the current study.

Definitions: Ethnicity and Race

In the United States, race and ethnicity are two of the most common variables used by people to understand and categorize the world around them (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). But, definitions of these concepts vary depending on who is writing about them, the context within which she is writing, her agenda, and her own experiences

with race and ethnicity.[1] In literature on race and ethnicity, some authors define these two concepts generally, while others make lists of specifications. Time also changes definitions. The concepts of race and ethnicity are fluid, changing as world situations alter. In the United States, definitions of race and ethnicity have often been altered to serve purposes of exclusion, as well as to maintain systems of power and hierarchy.

In understanding ethnicity, most authors recognize the concept as membership in a group that shares common ancestry, often including similar customs, languages, traditions, values, and physical features. According to constructivist theory, the significance of a person's ethnicity transforms as world situations alter and as she adjusts to changes in her own life (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998; Lee, McCauley, Moghaddam, & Worchel, 2004). For instance, when a person emigrates from one country to another, the salience of her ethnicity may increase or decrease. Her method for relating to her ethnicity may also change, as she chooses to follow various customs more strongly while neglecting other facets of her ethnicity. As Cornell and Hartmann (1998) wrote: "Ethnic identities are constructed, but they are never finished" (p. 73). Instead, they are forever changing.

In their writing on ethnicity, Cornell and Hartmann followed a definition proposed by Schermerhorn in 1978: "an ethnic group is 'a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood'" (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998, p. 19). The authors noted two important

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[1] For the sake of ease and because the majority of participants in this study are female, I have chosen to use female pronouns throughout this document.

aspects of ethnicity: 1) members of an ethnic group think of themselves as distinct, and 2) ethnicity is something that is both assigned by others, as well as created by members of the group. An *ethnic category* is that which is assigned to someone by others (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998) and an *ethnic identity* comprises the aspects of ethnicity that someone chooses and defines for herself (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998; Negy, Shreve, Jensen, & Uddin, 2004; Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995).

Like ethnicity, race is fluid, being constantly redefined as world situations and sociopolitical structures shift. Race's variability can be seen in the changing racial categories outlined in the U.S. Census Bureau. In 1870, the Census listed five races in the United States: White, Colored (Blacks), Colored (Mulattoes), Chinese, and Indian. Eighty years later, these categories had changed to White, Black, and Other. Forty years after that, in 1990, the categories had again expanded: White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Indian (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998). In 2000, the categories were different: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and White. Since 1977, people filling out the Census survey have had the choice of identifying with one of two ethnic categories: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

People's shifting understandings of race and their tendency to alter the concept's parameters to suit the needs of a situation corroborate its existence as a socially constructed phenomenon. For instance, throughout the nineteenth century, courts of law changed definitions of racial categories, such as white and black, to reflect their ideas of who should and should not be allowed citizenship in the United States (Higham, 2002; Jacobson, 1998). Despite changes in how we understand race, our concept of what race

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is remains tied to a, largely defunct, belief that race is biologically based. Often, we seek to determine someone's race by physical features such as skin color and hair texture. Cornell's and Hartmann's (1998) definition of a racial group captures this: "a human group defined by itself or others as distinct by virtue of perceived common physical characteristics that are held to be inherent" (p. 24). People often ascribe someone a racial category by looking at and interpreting her physical appearance. The aspects of race that a person chooses to recognize and define for herself are her racial identity.

Ethnicity and race differ in that ethnicity is often tied to geography, whereas race is often tied to someone's physical appearance. In that race is based on the physical, it is often more visible than ethnicity. Race also differs from ethnicity in the consistency with which it has been used to perpetuate discrimination, as well as oppression and hierarchy within sociopolitical systems (Helms, 1995). Ethnic differences, too, have been used for discriminatory purposes, but not to the extent that racial differences have been used. Race and ethnicity *do* overlap, and someone may consider her racial and ethnic identities to be one and the same. Because of the variance in people's definitions of race and ethnicity and because people's understandings of their racial and ethnic identities often differ from how others classify them, it is important to look to individuals for their understandings of their own racial and ethnic identities instead of relying on general definitions of the two concepts.

Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Theories

Racial and ethnic identity development is the process by which people come to recognize and relate to their race and ethnicity. A person's perceptions of her race and ethnicity change over time, as do the roles that they play and the salience they have in her

life. How someone perceives her race and ethnicity can affect who she chooses to

interact with, as well as how she interacts with people from her own and other racial and

ethnic groups. Considering racial and ethnic identity theories is important to this thesis in

that how participants perceive their own race and ethnicity may play a role in how they

perceive their friend's race and ethnicity and how they communicate about race and

ethnicity within their friendship.   This section looks at racial and ethnic identity

development models, factors affecting racial and ethnic identity development, and how

racial and ethnic identity development influence interpersonal interactions.

Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models

Race and ethnicity carry varying significance in people's lives at different times

in their lives. A person may identify strongly with certain aspects of her racial and ethnic

identities during one period of her life, while feeling less connected to these same facets

of her identity during another stage in her life. In the 1970s, theorists began looking at

how people develop understandings of their racial identities. These models paralleled

one another in that they focused on African-Americans' experiences and had similar

formats. The changes that people experience in how they relate to their racial identity

were organized into stages that people moved through in a linear fashion. In her writings

on racial identity development, Janet E. Helms' (1990a) provided a comprehensive

history of these models. In the 1990s, Helms applied the theories proposed in racial

identity development models for African-Americans to white Americans. She outlined

two processes, one for black racial identity and one for white racial identity. These two

models differed to account for white privilege and the effects of systemic racism existing

in the United States (Helms, 1990c).

Helms' (1990a, 1995) black racial identity development model paralleled those that came before it. It proposed that people go through five stages, or ego statuses, in developing an understanding of their racial identity. During the first stage, Conformity, a black person devalues her own group and adheres completely to white norms. In the next stage, Dissonance, a person becomes aware that she is different from the dominant group and enters a state of confusion about her own racial group and identity. In the third stage, Immersion/Emersion, she idealizes her own racial group and denigrates everything connected to the dominant group. The fourth stage is called Internalization and is characterized by a commitment to her racial group and an evaluation of people and things connected to the dominant group. In the final stage, Integrative Awareness, a person comes to value her collective identities and to empathize with members of other oppressed groups.

Helms' (1990c, 1995) model for white people contained six stages. In the first stage, Contact, a white person is satisfied with the racial status quo and is oblivious to her participation in racism. In the second stage, Disintegration, a white person faces irresolvable racial dilemmas that force her to choose between loyalty to her own group and humanism. The third stage is called Reintegration. During this stage, the person idealizes her own racial group and is intolerant of other racial groups. The fourth stage, Pseudoindependence, is characterized by a commitment to her own socioracial group and a deceptive tolerance for oppressed groups. Immersion/Emersion is the fifth stage and is defined by a quest to understand how she benefits from racism. The final stage is called Autonomy and is characterized by a positive racial commitment and the capacity to relinquish privileges she has gained through racism.

According to Helms' models, people can experience more than one stage at once, and can move backward and forward through the stages. The stage that someone experiences affects many aspects of her life, including how she interacts with people from her own and other racial groups.

Helms' models have been praised for setting a foundation for understanding racial identity development. They have also been critiqued for a variety of reasons, including lack of empirical evidence and the impossibility of testing them due to their abstractness (Row, Behrens, & Leach, 1995). Theorists and researchers have remarked on the models' focus on African-Americans' and whites' experiences and their neglect of other minority groups (Casa & Pytluk, 1995; Negy et al., 2003). The models also received criticism for their assumption that white people will, at some point, become cognizant of their privilege (Negy et al., 2003) and will spend time researching racism and its effects (Row et al., 1995).

Despite the above criticisms, Helms' models followed a framework upon which other theorists have continued to build. The stages proposed in subsequent models have paralleled those laid out by Helms, but have been expanded to pertain to other oppressed groups. Casa and Pytluk (1995), in their discussion of Hispanics' experiences in the United States, recommended employing racial and ethnic identity development models that incorporated acculturation (adaptation to the dominant culture) and enculturation (socialization to one's own ethnic group) processes into their stages. They recommended Aureliano S. Ruiz's Crisis and Resolution model (1990), which includes consideration of the influence of parental messages in shaping attitudes toward ethnicity, the effects of living within a community that reflects someone's ethnicity, and the use of another

language. Other models have incorporated the development of appreciation for both minority and dominant racial and ethnic groups.

Newer racial and ethnic identity development models have strived to relate to a variety of ethnic and racial groups (Phinney, 96; Smith, 91). Some models focus on people's growing awareness of others' ethnicities (Isajiw, 2000). In Isajiw's model, the final stage of development is characterized by becoming aware that being different is an inherent part of being human.

Other identity development models, instead of focusing only on race and ethnicity, have attempted to address all manners of oppression and the processes necessary for coming to terms with oppressed aspects of one's identity. Sevig, Highlen, and Adams (2000) proposed a Self-Identity Inventory in which a person moves through seven stages, from Absence of Conscious Awareness to Transformation. The model addresses issues that can be applied to a variety of forms of oppression, including feelings of alienation, as well as feelings of pride and acceptance toward others. Miller and Garran (2007) proposed a holistic social identity development model. In creating this model, the authors sought to consider the complexity of people's identities. They argued that one aspect of identity, such as race or ethnicity, can not be separated from other aspects of identity, such as socioeconomic class or gender. Instead, these facets of identity influence one another. Miller and Garran proposed different processes for targeted (oppressed) identities and agent (privileged) identities. In both processes, an individual moves through seven fluid and overlapping phases. The phases parallel those proposed in previous models, and an individual moves from a beginning awareness of difference to comfort with her own identity (whether it be a target or agent identity), and

then to committing herself to working toward social justice. Miller's and Garran's model expands on previous models in its consideration of a number of dimensions associated with how someone relates to her identity, as well as a variety of resolutions that someone can come to in how she relates to her identity.

While ethnic and racial identity development has been reviewed from various theoretical standpoints and ethnic and racial identity development models are respected as lenses through which to understand identity development, they lack the support of ample empirical evidence (Sevig et al., 2000). One recent study looked at and found parallels between having higher levels of psychological well-being and reaching higher statuses in Phinney's ethnic identity development model (Seaton, Scottham, & Sellers, 2006). Phinney's (1996) model outlines four stages, or statuses, of ethnic identity development, including identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement. Research examining aspects of racial and ethnic identity development, such as how people progress through proposed stages, would contribute to the validity of these models, as well as our understanding of them.

Although ethnic and racial identity development models differ in their discrete stages and in the aspects of identity that they focus on, they parallel one another in their progression from a lack of awareness of one's racial or ethnic identity to both awareness of and comfort with one's racial or ethnic identity and openness toward people from other ethnic and racial groups. Most models also include a period of conflict in which people struggle with how much they identify with their own ethnic or racial group and how much they identify with the dominant racial or ethnic group.

Factors Affecting Racial and Ethnic Identity Development

A variety of factors contribute to someone's ethnic and racial identity development process. As people mature, they become more aware of their ethnicity and race and what roles these identities play in their lives (Negy et al., 2003). People living in pluralistic societies often have an increased awareness of their ethnic and racial identities, which contributes to their ethnic and racial identity development (Sodowsky et al., 1995). Also contributing to a person's racial and ethnic identity development are her family members' perspectives on race and ethnicity, her acceptance of the dominant culture, and her acceptance by the dominant culture (Sodowsky et al., 1995).

Especially significant in ethnic and racial identity development is whether someone is a member of a dominant group or a minority group. Racial and ethnic identity is often more salient for members of minority groups. In the United States, this is especially true for people who have darker skin: their status as minority group members is visible, and therefore more noticeable to themselves and others. Throughout their lives, they may experience more incidents in which they are forced to be aware of and to consider the effects that race and ethnicity have on their lives. They may also experience incidents of discrimination. Members of ethnic and racial minority groups usually become aware of their ethnicity and race at a younger age than members of dominant groups. In that their race and ethnicity are more salient, and they become aware of these aspects of identity at a younger age, their ethnic and racial identities may be stronger than those of members of the dominant group (Ethier & Deaux, 2001). They may also reach higher statuses of racial and ethnic identity development earlier than members of the dominant group.

Members of dominant racial and ethnic groups usually become aware of their race and ethnicity later in life. Because they are members of a dominant group, their racial and ethnic norms are mirrored by external cues. They may see people like themselves in the media; they may blend in with people around them. They receive broader external acceptance and are, therefore, not forced to think about their race and ethnicity (Smith, 1991). As Brewer (2001) pointed out, members of the dominant group are less differentiated than members of minority groups. Isajiw (2000) explained dominant group members' unawareness:

> "The groups who have power, i.e., whose culture and identity determine
> the character of major social institutions, tend not to see, nor to define
> themselves, as ethnic groups. They tend to perceive their own ideologies
> or policies as universal, i.e., as applicable to all people…" (p. 8).

For this reason, members of a dominant group often develop their ethnic and racial identities more slowly. In the United States, white people, as members of the dominant racial norm, may not have experiences motivating them to examine their racial and ethnic identities until later in life (Tatum, 1997).

In discussing ethnicity, race, and the processes of identity development, it is important to note that, in the United States, race is more salient than ethnicity. Race is more visible, has a longer history of oppression, and is more readily used as a determinant of status. For this reason, ethnic identity development tends to follow racial identity development (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998; Smith, 1991).

Other aspects influencing a person's racial and ethnic identity development are whether the person is biracial or bicultural and whether she has immigrated to this country. Research is sparse in both of these areas (Crumly-Suzuki & Hyers, 2004;

Nesdale & Mak, 2003). Crumly-Suzuki and Hyers (2004), in their research on biracial identity found that most biracial people identified with both of their racial identities. Participants in their study who did not identify biculturally often identified with their minority racial identities. In their explorations of immigrant ethnic identity in Australia, Nesdale and Mak (2003) found that feelings about one's ethnic identity were related to an immigrant's ability to speak English, as well as her feelings of cultural distance from the dominant culture. Racial and ethnic identity development for biracial and bicultural individuals and for people who have immigrated to another country would benefit from additional research.

Understanding racial and ethnic identity development is important to the current study in that participants' perceptions of their ethnic and racial identity may differ depending on where they are in their racial and ethnic identity development. This may affect how they talk about themselves and how they talk about their friend's racial and ethnic identity. It may also affect how cognizant they are of differences between their own race and ethnicity and their friend's race and ethnicity. Where both friends are in their racial and ethnic identity development processes may also affect how they relate to one another. As shown in the aforementioned research, participants who identify with the dominant racial and ethnic groups in the United States may be less aware of their race and ethnicity than participants who identify with minority racial and ethnic groups.

Effects of Racial and Ethnic Identity Development on Interpersonal Interactions

In the aforementioned racial and ethnic identity development models, a person moves through a number of stages, each one speaking to how she understands her own race and ethnicity, as well as how she perceives others' race and ethnicity. The stage that

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someone is at in her ethnic and racial identity development affects how she interacts with members of her own and other racial and ethnic groups. Helms (1990b, 1995) created a racial identity interaction model, outlining the types of interactions that people have, depending on the developmental stage they are experiencing. Helms stressed that people's racial classifications are not as important as their expressed racial identities. Most important are the stages being experienced by each person in the interaction. Parallel interactions take place between people who are at similar stages, while regressive and progressive interactions occur between people at different stages. In parallel interactions, tension is avoided because people have similar schemata. In regressive interactions, the dominant participant is less advanced in her racial identity development than other participants and causes them to interact in a more regressed fashion. In progressive interactions, the dominant participant is more advanced in her racial identity development and causes others to interact in a more advanced manner. In summary, Helms proposed that, whatever their racial classification, people communicate best if they are at parallel stages in their racial identity development. She also proposed that people at more advanced stages in their racial identity development have more positive interactions with people from other races. Helms' theories on interracial interactions are limited in that 1) they have yet to be researched, and 2) she spoke only to interactions in which a pronounced power difference between participants exists. For instance, her writings applied to clinician/client, parent/child, and teacher/student dyads. She did not account for relationships in which both members are, theoretically, equal.

A number of studies have noted that someone with more positive feelings about her own ethnic and racial identities tends to have better interactions with people from

other racial and ethnic backgrounds. For instance, Phinney', Ferguson', and Tate's (1997) research on intergroup attitudes and interactions among high school students found that students with more positive attitudes toward their own ethnic groups (stronger ethnic identity) had more positive feelings toward members of other ethnic groups. These findings were corroborated by a study of African-American, white, Latino, and Asian high school students completed by Hamm & Coleman (2001), but only for African-American students.

Other theories have proposed that people with stronger ethnic identities have more prejudice toward people from other groups and may, therefore, have more negative interactions with members of other ethnicities and races. For instance, Tajfel's and Turner's (2001) Social Identity Theory proposes that the more someone identifies with her own group, the more bias she has toward members of other groups. This in-group bias has been revealed in a variety of studies (Negy et al., 2003), as have its negative effects on interactions (Sherif, 2001).

A number of studies have looked at people's abilities to adapt to environments in which they must interact with people of other races and ethnicities (Downie, Mageau, Koestner, & Lodden, 2006; Ethier & Deaux, 2001; Hamm & Coleman, 2001; Negy et al., 2003; Shelton & Richeson, 2006). Downie et al. (2006) asked college students to rate their interracial and interethnic interactions. The researchers also examined whether participants changed their behaviors in cross-racial and cross-ethnic interactions. They found that ethnic minorities who had integrated their relationship to their heritage culture with their relationship to the dominant culture (advanced stage in racial and ethnic identity development) had more positive interactions with people from other ethnic and

racial backgrounds than those ethnic minorities who had not integrated their relationships with their heritage culture and the dominant culture.

In considering findings from the aforementioned studies, it seems important to consider the effects that racial and ethnic identity development have on people's interactions with members of races and ethnicities other than their own. Strong racial and ethnic identification may both facilitate and inhibit interracial and interethnic friendships. How a person identifies with her race and ethnicity may affect how comfortable she is in interacting with people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. If she does form interracial and interethnic friendships, her racial and ethnic identity development may affect the communications and interactions she has within those relationships. Also important to consider are the racial and ethnic identity development processes of the people with whom she is interacting. These issues are relevant to the current study in that each participant's racial and ethnic identity development process will affect how she understands her own ethnic and racial identities and her friend's ethnic and racial identities, as well as how aware she is of race and ethnicity within her friendship, and how she communicates with her friend about race and ethnicity.

Intergroup Relations Theories

Intergroup relations theories examine dynamics in interactions between groups of people. The theories in this section look at negative biases created by perceptions of difference between groups, as well as interactions that can diminish people's negative biases. This section is divided into three sub-sections: in-group and out-group theories, the Contact Hypothesis, and modern interaction theories. At the end of the section, I look at intergroup relations theories' implications for interpersonal interactions, and how these

theories may contribute to understanding perceptions of race and ethnicity within friendships.

In-group and Out-group Theories

Intergroup relations theories function under the premise that every person identifies with, or considers herself a member of, a number of groups or social categories. A group or social category can range from something as broad as a national identity to something narrower, such as a biological family. Groups to which we belong are our in-groups, whereas groups of which we are not members are our out-groups. Theories on intergroup relations attempt to explain our interactions with members of both our in-groups and out-groups.

One of the foundation studies shaping our understanding of intergroup relations is that completed by Sherif and his colleagues in 1961 (Sherif, 2001). In this study, researchers divided boys at a summer camp into two groups. Throughout the summer, they slowly made the two groups aware of one another. Then, they created situations in which the boys interacted as two groups and as one group. The researchers found that, even before interactions between the two groups took place, simply knowing that another group of boys existed caused the members of both groups to develop hostility toward their out-group and positive bias toward their in-group. This study sparked research into in-group preferences and out-group biases. The studies that followed supported the idea that people develop positive biases toward their in-groups (Gaertner, Dovidio, Rust, Nier, Banker, Ward, Mottola, & Houlette, 1999; Hogg & Hains, 2001; Lalonde, Moghaddam, & Taylor, 2001) and negative biases toward out-groups (Billig & Tajfel, 1973).

Subsequent research and theories have attempted to understand whether in-group preferences and out-group negative biases are intrinsically correlated. The Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2001) suggests that people's self-image is derived from their group memberships and to maintain positive evaluations of themselves, people must maintain good impressions of the groups to which they belong. Social Identity Theory (SIT) also posits that people evaluate the groups they belong to by comparing them with other groups. According to SIT, to maintain a positive image of their own groups, people are forced to evaluate other groups more negatively than they evaluate their own. So, SIT followers believe that negative biases towards out-groups are a necessary outcome of in-group preferences. A number of studies have supported the connection between positive biases toward in-groups and negative biases toward out-groups. Although an exploration of this literature is beyond the scope of this study, a number of resources proved valuable in completing this review (Negy et al., 2003; Phinney et al., 1997; Tajfel & Forgas, 2000). Other research has supported the opposite of what SIT suggested; these studies have implied that positive perceptions of one's own group actually promote positive perceptions of out-groups (Hamm & Coleman, 2001; Phinney et al., 1997).

Research on in-group and out-group relations has looked at perceptions of similarities and differences among in-group and out-group members. Social Identity Theory asserts that people view members within their own group as more similar to themselves and members of out-groups as more different from themselves. Research has supported this idea (Hogg & Haines, 2001; Tajfel & Forgas, 2000). SIT also suggests that people perceive more heterogeneity among members of their in-group, while perceiving members of the out-group as an "undifferentiated mass" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 21).

Although this theory has been supported by some research, a study by Simon and Brown (2000) showed that members of minority groups may perceive greater heterogeneity among out-group members than they do among in-group members. The results from this study may be related to findings that members of minority ethnic groups may identify more strongly with their ethnic groups than do members of non-minority ethnic groups. It may also be related to findings that children who are members of minority groups show greater knowledge of the dominant group than dominant group members show for the minority group (Teichman & Zafrir, 2003).

Intergroup relations theories provide a framework for understanding how we perceive ourselves in relation to the groups with which we identify, as well as how we perceive people who we classify as members of those same groups and people who we classify as belonging to different groups. In relation to race and ethnicity, the above theories imply that we may perceive people who share our racial or ethnic identities as more similar to us than people who do not. The theories also imply that we may think more highly of people who share our ethnic and racial background than we think of people who do not.

Intergroup theory contributes to our understanding of interracial and interethnic friendships while also raising many questions about the subject. In regards to the current study, intergroup theory may help explain how friends understand one another's similarities and differences. It raises questions about friends' perceptions of one another. When friends perceive each other as members of different racial and ethnic groups, do they attach judgment to these differences? How do they understand these differences?

Are they able to perceive friends of different races and ethnicities as unique from other members of those racial and ethnic groups?

The Contact Hypothesis

A pivotal theory shaping understanding of intergroup relations is the Contact Hypothesis as proposed by G.W. Allport in 1954. Its basic premise is that contact between people from different groups promotes tolerance and dismantles stereotypes. Allport's theory asserts that people of different races and ethnicities are essentially alike and that the differences that people perceive will dissipate when they are given the opportunity to interact with people from different backgrounds. Allport's theory stresses similarities and diminishes differences.

Allport (1954) outlined a number of conditions necessary for creating interactions that reduce prejudice: 1) minority- and majority-group members need to have equal status during the interaction; 2) members from the two groups must work toward a common purpose; 3) the interaction must occur in a cooperative or independent setting; 4) and the event must have the support of authorities or an institution. Criticism for Allport's theory has targeted this list, arguing that such specifications make the theory difficult to apply to everyday life, in which interactions are usually neither planned nor extensive. The criteria also ignore the power dynamic inherent to interactions between people from a dominant racial or ethnic group and those from a minority racial or ethnic group (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005).

A number of studies have actually shown intergroup contact to *increase* prejudice and stereotyping. Durrheim & Dixon (2005), in their review of these studies, argued that prejudice increases when the subordination and superordination inherent in race relations

is not considered. Although a review of research addressing in-group and out-group

interactions is beyond the scope of this paper, Durrheim and Dixon (2005) cited a number

of studies showing instances in which contact has increased prejudice.

Another oft-critiqued aspect of Allport's theory is his assumption that people are

similar and simply need to discover their similarities. This supposition allows people to

ignore the ways in which they differ from others. By ignoring these differences, contact

may produce conflict instead of cooperation (Lee et al., 2004). In downplaying

differences and assuming similarities, Allport also implied that people are not capable of

handling the differences between them and should instead focus only on their similarities

(Bramel, 2004; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005).

At the same time that the Contact Hypothesis has garnered significant criticism, it

has also gathered ample support. Numerous studies have found that contact between

people from different groups increases their ability to get along, as well their positive

ratings of one another (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Goto & Chan, 2005; Hamm &

Colemann, 2001; Phinney et al., 1997; Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

During the past twenty years, theorists and researchers have strived to hone Allport's

theory by better understanding what conditions within interactions contribute to

dismantling prejudice and how these changes occur.

Pettigrew (1998), in his research on the Contact Hypothesis, identified four ways

in which contact decreases stereotyping and prejudice: 1) people learn about the other

group through interactions, thereby gaining more accurate understandings of what it

means to be a member of that group. 2) Interactions are a method of behavior

modification, and changes in behavior can lead to attitude changes. 3) Contact can

produce affective ties between members of different groups. 4) Interactions can lead to

reappraisals of the out-group and its members. Pettigrew determined that, to allow for

these four processes to occur, contact over an extended period of time is necessary. He

added this criterion to Allport's list.

The Contact Hypothesis forms the base of modern interaction theories and hints at

the important role that interracial and interethnic friendships play in dismantling negative

biases and promoting more positive and profound understandings between people from

differing racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Modern Interaction Theories

A number of theories have sprung from Allport's proposal that contact decreases

prejudice. These theories are also informed by aspects of Social Identity Theory. The

primary goal of each model is to describe interactions that decrease negative attitudes

toward out-groups. The theories address intergroup, not interpersonal, interactions. This

section outlines three of these theories: the Mutual Differentiation, Decategorization, and

Recategorization Models. These three models, although created separately, have been

proposed to work in conjunction with one another (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Gaertner &

Dovidio, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998).

Proposed by Hewstone and Brown in 1986 (Hewstone, 2000), the Mutual

Differentiation Model speaks to recognizing differences between individuals from

differing groups. It supports intergroup interactions in which individuals represent the

groups to which they belong. Through interacting, participants gain a more complex

understanding of people from groups other than their own. They are then able to

generalize their new, more complex understanding of members of these other groups onto

other members of the same groups (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000b; Hewstone, 2000). In this way, stereotypes about the group are modified and new understandings of group members are formed.

The Decategorization Model was originally proposed by Brewer and Miller in 1996. It suggests that interactions most likely to decrease prejudice are those in which group differences are downplayed and participants are viewed as individuals instead of as group members. Those who support this model believe that, as people get to know one another, they place more import on information gained through individual contact than on generalizations they have about the group. Instead of perceiving group members as an undifferentiated mass, they come to understand each person as a unique individual. Studies have supported the idea that viewing people as individuals instead of as group members can decrease negative stereotyping (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Gaertner et al., 1999).

The Recategorization Model suggests that the most effective way to reduce negative perceptions of out-group members is to create a superordinate group to which members from various groups can belong (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000b; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005). As members of this new group, participants can both work toward a common goal and recognize similarities between themselves and other group members. This model's creators stressed that it is not necessary for participants to forsake their membership in other groups; they must simply recognize membership in a new group. Studies have supported this model by showing that positive feelings toward out-group members generated by sharing membership in a superordinate group were generalized to other out-group members who had not partaken in the shared group experience (Gaertner

& Dovidio, 2005; Gaertner et al., 1999; Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, & Pomare, 2000; Dovidio, Gaertner, Niemann, & Snider, 2001).

Instead of being exclusive to one another, the three models in this section can work in conjunction (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000b). Pettigrew (1998), who noted that dismantling prejudice is a long-term process, recommended following different models during different stages of interaction. At initiation, he recommended following the Decategorization model. As bonds between participants strengthen, Pettigrew noted that Mutual Differentiation can be used to explore group memberships. Then, through Recategorization, individuals can come to see one another as members of a superordinate group.

These three models, as well as the Contact Hypothesis, refer to intergroup interactions. How do these theories relate to interpersonal interactions? Intergroup and interpersonal interactions are different, and authors have critiqued the aforementioned theories for assuming that interpersonal interactions will generalize to people's understandings of groups (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). In differentiating between interpersonal and intergroup interactions, Tajfel (1982) noted that interpersonal interactions take place between individuals and are determined by individual characteristics and relationships between the individuals. Intergroup interactions are determined by group membership and have little to do with individual characteristics and personal relationships. Considering these differences, can theories applied to group interactions also be applied to interpersonal interactions?

In that our interactions usually take place between individuals, the aforementioned theories are pertinent to interpersonal interactions and can inform how

we understand interethnic and interracial friendships (interpersonal connections).

Numerous authors and researchers have noted the important role that friendships play in

intergroup relations (Aberson, Shoemaker, & Tomolillo, 2004; Fong & Isajiw, 2000;

Pettigrew, 1997, 1998). Pettigrew (1998), especially, believed in the power of

friendships, as they allow for long-term, equal status interactions. Friendships also tend

to fulfill at least three of the criteria outlined by Allport as necessary in creating positive

interactions between people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds: 1) both

members of a friendship dyad usually maintain equal status to one another, 2) friends

often work together to achieve common goals, and 3) friends' interactions often occur in

cooperative or independent settings.

In looking at interpersonal interactions, discussions of whether we stress

differences or similarities in our interactions with people from groups other than our own

are especially relevant to this study. Whereas the Mutual Differentiation model stresses

the recognition of differences, the Recategorization model supports the recognition of

similarities through common group membership. The Contact Hypothesis, too, stresses

the importance of finding similarities between people from different groups. In our

interpersonal relationships, do we put more stress on our similarities with others or more

stress on our differences? If we stress our similarities, is it to the detriment of

recognizing and honoring our differences? Will friends participating in the current study

focus on similarities between one another? And, will they have accurate understandings

of one another's racial and ethnic identities and how these aspects of their identities make

them different from one another?

Friendship

This section provides a preliminary glance at research on friendship, focusing on literature that addresses dynamics within close friendships and research that has explored interracial and interethnic friendships. At the end of each sub-section, I raise questions relevant to the current study.

Closeness in Friendships

Friendships serve a variety of purposes, from providing support, companionship, and comfort to offering a safe outlet for expression and questioning. Our friends provide us with mirroring, giving us opportunities to better understand aspects of our own identities, including our strengths and weaknesses (Apter & Josselson, 1998; Rubin, 1985). As Rubin noted in her writing on friendship,

> "We learn much about ourselves in our relationship with friends—learning that comes partly at least from who they are, how they respond to us, what we see reflected in their eyes. For friends become for us a mirror on the self" (1985, p.40).

At the same time that we look to friends to gain a better idea of who we are, we do not always show them our whole selves. We tend to convey certain parts of ourselves according to who we are interacting with, so that each of our friends may see some, but not all, aspects of who we are. Our close friends are those people with whom we share the most of ourselves (Rubin, 1985). They are also those people who have the most potential to influence our behavior and whose behavior we are also able influence. The more dependent on and responsive to our friends that we become, the closer we may feel to them (Berg & Clark, 1986). The power of close friendships is unique: they have the potential to shape who we are and to influence our perceptions of ourselves. In the

current study, I have chosen to focus on close friendship dyads because of the dynamic within these relationships. Through close friendships, we are able to learn about our own identities, our friends' identities, and to form our identities within the context of the friendship. This is also true for our racial and ethnic identities. The mirroring and challenges that take place within close friendships enable us to learn about and develop our racial and ethnic identities while also better understanding our friends' racial and ethnic identities.

Men and women may determine closeness with friends in different ways. Research has shown that men and women interact differently in their friendships (Goodman & O'Brien, 2000; Rubin, 1985). Whereas women feel that *talking* brings them closer to one another, men often feel that *doing* things together brings them closer. Female friends may spend much of their time together discussing, whether it be to review events that have happened in their lives or to explore feelings that they are having (Tannen, 1991; Goodman &O'Brien, 2000). Men frequently spend their time together doing activities.

Although communication in friendships between men and friendships between women varies, the reasons that women and men are attracted to their friends are similar. People seek out friends who are like them (Johnson, 2001; Kandel, Davies, & Baydar, 1990; Perlman & Fehr, 1986). We tend to be attracted to what is familiar, and what is similar often feels familiar. The concept of seeking out people who are similar to us is called homophily. The Reinforcement Theory of friendship asserts that we like to be rewarded, and we like people who are associated with those rewards (Perlman & Fehr,

1986). Being mirrored by a friend who is similar to us can feel both satisfying and rewarding.

If we seek out and maintain friendships with people who we perceive as similar to ourselves, how do we understand the differences between ourselves and friends who do not share our racial or ethnic identities? It's possible that we perceive similarities in other areas of our friends' and our own identities. Also possible is that our perceptions of similarities grow as our friendships develop. A study by Morry (2005) revealed that high ratings of satisfaction within friendships correlated with higher ratings of similarities between friends, and as satisfaction within a relationship increased, so did perceptions of similarity. Do differences in race and ethnicity become peripheral as similarities in other areas of identity become stronger? If these differences do become peripheral, are friends able to perceive them fully?

Interracial and Interethnic Friendships

If people are attracted to similarity, do differences in race and ethnicity pose an obstacle in forming interracial and interethnic friendships? As noted previously, race and ethnicity are two primary variables that people use to identify and differentiate one another. If this is so, do people perceive these two variables as differences large enough to impede forming friendships?

In their study on homophily in friendship, Kandel et al. (1990) found that in both adolescence and adulthood, the most important sociodemographic factor in determining friendships was ethnic homogeneity. People chose friends who were of the same ethnicity that they were. Other studies have corroborated this finding: in research on friendship, Fong and Isajiw (2000) found that members of ethnic minorities tended to

have friends who were also ethnic minorities and often had very few friends who

belonged to the ethnic majority. In their review of literature on friendship, Fong and

Isajiw (2000) cited several American studies (Alba and Golden, 1986; Massey & Denton,

1989) showing that people with darker skin who are living in the United States are less

likely to have friends outside of their own ethnic and racial groups.

But, interethnic and interracial friendships do happen. Certain environmental

factors may make interracial and interethnic friendships more likely. For instance,

Pettigrew (1997) found that the more education someone from the dominant ethnic group

received, the more likely she was to have friends outside of her own ethnicity. Fong and

Isajiw (2000) found that people who have had cross-racial and cross-ethnic friendships

while growing up are more likely to pursue friendships with people from diverse

backgrounds as adults. Living in a diverse neighborhood can also contribute to the

likelihood of having interethnic and interacial friendships (Fong & Isajiw, 2000; Phinney

et al., 1997). But, living in a diverse neighborhood of high density can *decrease* the

likelihood of developing friends from other ethnic groups (Fong & Isajiw, 2000). Fong

and Isajiw also found that members of ethnic minorities were less likely to have

friendships with members of the dominant ethnic group if their incomes were lower.

The body of research on interracial and interethnic friendships is not large;

especially lacking is research addressing the formation and maintenance of friendships in

adulthood. Literature on interracial and interethnic friendships has often focused on

childhood and adolescent friendships that develop within classroom settings (Hallinan &

Williams, 1987; Hunter & Elias, 2000; Jaasma, 2002). Studies about interracial and

interethnic friendships that have focused on young adults have been limited by their focus

on friendships that develop within college settings (Antonio, 2004; Mollica, Gray, & Travino, 2003). Most of the literature that I have found on interracial and interethnic friendships has centered on factors that either facilitate or inhibit the initiation and development of friendships. The content of interracial and interethnic friendships was explored in only one study that I found: A.L. Antonio's (2004) qualitative analysis of diverse and homogeneous friend groups within a college setting.

The lack of research on interracial and interethnic friendships reveals an area that would benefit from study. Examining the content of these friendships and the communication between friends would give a better idea of how differences in race and ethnicity affect close friendships. Research on these subjects would also contribute to our understandings of how friends talk about differences in their races and ethnicities and how they develop perceptions of similarity to and difference from one another.

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

This chapter reviewed three research areas—racial and ethnic identity development, intergroup relations, and friendship—in hopes that looking at literature in these areas will inform the space where they intersect: interracial and interethnic friendships. This is relevant to the current study, which focuses on the research question: in an interracial and/or interethnic friendship, how do both members of the dyad talk about and develop perceptions of one another's ethnicity and race? Literature from these three areas has contributed to the formation of interview questions enabling participants' to elucidate on their perceptions of their own and their friend's ethnic and racial identities, the communication they have about race and ethnicity, and how differences in race and ethnicity affect their friendship.

Racial and ethnic identity development theories purport that how people relate to their race and ethnicity changes as they go through life. According to most models, people experience a number of stages, and during each stage, they relate differently to their race and ethnicity. Depending on what stage someone is going through, her race and ethnicity may mean different things to her. She may be more or less aware of her race and ethnicity, and she may find that the frequency with which she thinks about her race and ethnicity changes. She may find that race and ethnicity provide a prominent lens through which she views her life or that these two aspects of her identity fade into the background. These theories are relevant to the current study in that the racial and ethnic identity development of each member of a friendship dyad may play a significant role in whether these two people initiate a friendship with one another, how they maintain that friendship, and the shape that the friendship takes. The friends' racial and ethnic identity development processes may also play a significant role in how they communicate about their own ethnic and racial identities, as well as how they perceive one another's racial and ethnic identities.

Intergroup relations theories look at how people relate to groups of people who they perceive to be different from them. The theories examine trends in people's perceptions of members of their in-groups and of out-groups. The theories also look at methods for facilitating interactions that will foster the development of positive intergroup relations. Intergroup relations theories hint toward dynamics that exist within interpersonal relationships, including assumptions of similarity and difference that close friends may make about each other. These theories also outline the importance of interracial and interethnic friendships in breaking down negative stereotypes and

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promoting positive understandings of people with differing racial and ethnic identities. Pettigrew (1998) and other modern theorists have proposed that friendship is one of the most effective ways for enhancing intergroup perceptions. But, research has not looked at how interactions within friendships are effective in helping friends break down stereotypes. Durrheim and Dixon (2005) noted the need for qualitative research on mechanisms behind the Contact Hypothesis. By looking at friends' perceptions of one another's race and ethnicity within interracial and interethnic friendships, this study uses qualitative methods to examine one aspect of the Contact Hypothesis.

A look at literature on friendship shows that close friends have a unique capacity to strongly understand and influence one another. In a relationship with these qualities, two people have the opportunity to get to know one another at a level not possible in many other relationships. They also have the space to gain insight into someone who they perceive as both similar to and different from themselves. Close interracial and interethnic friendships provide a unique environment in which we can gain insight into our own ethnic and racial identities, as well as a friend's ethnic and racial identities. This study looks to explore how friends talk about and develop perceptions of one another in their close interracial and interethnic friendships.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Using qualitative research methods, this study explored how members of

interracial and interethnic friendship dyads understood and talked one another's racial

and ethnic identities. My primary research question was: In interracial and interethnic

friendships, how do both members of a friendship dyad talk about and develop

perceptions of one another's ethnicity and race? My interview questions focused on

friends' communication about and perceptions of their friendship, themselves, and one

another within that friendship. In asking *how* friends came to understand one another's

ethnic and racial identities, my research question was exploratory in nature and lent itself

to qualitative methods. I conducted fourteen qualitative interviews using a semi-

structured format and employing a brief interview guide. Information from this study is

meant to provide a preliminary look at how people understand differences in race and

ethnicity within their close friendships.

Obtaining a Sample

In recruiting participants for this study, I sought out friendship pairs in which both

members considered themselves different from one another racially and/or ethnically. I

did not limit recruitment according to particular races or ethnicities, but instead

concentrated on finding friends who perceived racial or ethnic differences between

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themselves. An important aspect of recruitment was that participants *self-identified* as having different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Other criteria for participating in the study were that both friends considered their friendship to be close and identified the friendship as having endured for at least one year. Both friends needed to be between the ages of 25 and 40, and both needed to be able to participate in individual, face-to-face interviews. As I was only able to conduct interviews in English, both friends needed to be English-speakers. Other aspects of identity, including gender, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, and education level were not considered among inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Participants were recruited through the distribution of announcements explaining the study (See Appendix A), as well as through word of mouth. Announcements were disseminated through listserves connected with academic programs, sports leagues, and other interest groups. I also circulated study descriptions through friends and colleagues. In some instances, a snowball sampling technique was used as participants in the study spread word to people who they believed would be interested in participating. The final sample was one of convenience, in which participants were self-selected: they volunteered to participate in the study. These recruitment techniques may have contributed to homogeneity in the sample.

Of the final sample, three friendship dyads heard about the study through word-of-mouth, one dyad was informed of the study through another pair that had participated, and two dyads read about the study on academic listserves. In all instances, one member of the friendship pair contacted me to inform me of the pair's interest. I then contacted each member of the friendship dyad separately and asked them to complete a series of

screening questions that confirmed their age, the length of their friendship, their racial

and ethnic identities, their friend's racial and ethnic identities, and whether they identified

themselves as being of a different racial or ethnic background than the participating

friend (see Appendix B). After both members of the friendship dyad answered these

questions, I scheduled individual interviews with each person. All of the interviews were

held in neutral, public places. All of the interviews started with the distribution of a

consent form and a list of referrals and resources in the area (see Appendix C). The

consent form outlined the study, including explanations of possible benefits and risks

associated with participating. Participants were given the opportunity to read the consent

form and ask any questions before signing it. They were informed that they could refrain

from answering any of the questions asked during the interview and that they could

withdraw from the study at any time before April 1st, 2007. Participants returned a

signed copy of the consent form to me and kept another copy for their records.

In instances when friends were interviewed on separate days, I asked both

participants to refrain from talking with one another about the contents of the interviews

until both friends had completed their interviews. This was done to avoid creating bias in

the answers given by the friend interviewed second.

Sample Description

The final sample consisted of seven friendship dyads. The participants ranged in

age from 25 to 37. Thirteen of the participants lived in the Boston area; one participant

lived in New York and completed the interview while visiting Boston. Of the fourteen

participants, twelve were female and two were male. Both male participants completed

the study with a female friend. In answering the screening questions, participants defined

how they identified racially and ethnically. They were not asked to fit themselves into pre-determined categories, but instead determined their own definitions for their race and ethnicity. Racially, six participants identified as white, three identified as Asian, two identified as African-American, one identified as multiracial, one identified as Latin American, and one identified as Indian. Ethnically, two people identified as African-American, one as Irish, one as Chinese-Vietnamese, one as Chinese, one as Western European and English, one as Jewish, one as Columbian Indian, one as Syrian and European-American, one as Japanese-American, one as Columbian, one as American, and one as Indian. One person was unsure of her ethnicity. Of the participants, ten were born in the United States. Of the four who were born outside of the United States; three immigrated to the United States as children. One participant came to the U.S. in her early 20s.

In each friendship dyad, the members acknowledged themselves to be of different racial and ethnic identities. As mentioned previously, six of the dyads contained one member who identified, racially, as white, and one member who identified as a person of color. In one dyad, both members identified as people of color. Table 3.1 breaks down friendship dyads according to members' racial and ethnic identities. The names listed in this table and used throughout the thesis are pseudonyms.

In each dyad, the friends recognized their relationship as enduring at least one year. The range in duration of friendships spanned one to 19 years, with the mean duration being 6.9 years and the median duration being five years. Table 3.2 breaks down the friendships according to their length.

Although participants were not screened for level of education, information gathered during the interviews revealed that all participants had completed an undergraduate education, and many (86%) had completed or were en route to receiving a graduate degree.

Table 3.1

Racial and Ethnic Identities of Friendship Pairs

Dyad #	Name	Race	Ethnicity
Dyad 1	Jennifer	African-American	African-American
Dyad 1	Allison	White	Unsure
Dyad 2	Karen	White	Irish
Dyad 2	Dana	Asian	Chinese-Vietnamese
Dyad 3	Chris	White	Western European
Dyad 3	Alicia	Multiracial (Black, White, Indian)	Columbian Indian
Dyad 4	Jeff	Asian	Chinese
Dyad 4	Rebecca	White	Jewish
Dyad 5	Nora	White	½ Syrian; ½ European-American
Dyad 5	Melinda	Asian	Japanese-American
Dyad 6	Kaya	African-American	African-American
Dyad 6	Lidia	Latin American	Columbian
Dyad 7	Tara	Indian	Indian
Dyad 7	Melanie	White	American

Table 3.2

Length of Friendships

Dyad #	Friends' Names	Length of Friendship
Dyad 1	Jennifer & Allison	6.5 years
Dyad 2	Karen & Dana	18.5 years
Dyad 3	Chris & Alicia	1.75 years
Dyad 4	Jeff & Rebecca	5 years
Dyad 5	Nora & Melinda	13.5 years
Dyad 6	Kaya & Lidia	1 year
Dyad 7	Tara & Melanie	1.5 years

Data Collection

Each person who responded to and was eligible for the study participated in an in-person interview that lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. Each interview consisted of two segments: 1) demographic questions that expanded on the questions asked during screening (see Appendix D), and 2) a series of guided, open-ended, semi-structured questions (see Appendix E). The semi-structured quality of the interview allowed me to cater my questions to the needs of each participant. Although my primary questions stayed the same across all fourteen interviews, the prompts that I used varied slightly and enabled me to ask specific questions that helped participants expand upon their initial answers.

By maintaining similar wording and ordering of questions across all interviews, I was able to maintain a level of consistency and to ensure that an interview with one member of a friendship dyad did not vary greatly from the interview held with the other member of the dyad. This standardization helped me limit the influence that answers

given during the first interview had on how I asked questions during the second interview.

After receiving approval for the study design from the Human Subjects Review Board at the Smith College School for Social Work (see Appendix F), I conducted one pilot interview. With the feedback from this interview, I made slight changes to some of the prompt questions asked during the interview. I also added a final question to the interview that addressed participants' feelings about answering the questions asked during the interview. I made one more set of changes to the interview questions after completing the first two interviews. Working from feedback given by these two participants, I added additional questions to help clarify the information I was looking for. Some of the added questions were more concrete than the initial questions, asking participants to discuss specific examples. In asking about the effects that race and ethnicity had on paticipants' friendships, I added prompts that asked about positive influences that race and ethnicity had on the friendship and how aware participants were of the differences in race and ethnicity between themselves and their friend. For a full list of the interview questions, please see Appendix E.

To ensure each participant's confidentiality, identifying information, such as name, place of residence and exact age, was disguised when interviews were transcribed from audiotape. Each transcript was assigned a coded identifier that was used in place of the participant's name, and the connection between the audio recording and transcript was maintained in this way. Transcripts of friends' interviews were also connected through assigned coded identifiers.

Data Analysis

I audio-recorded and transcribed each interview. After the transcriptions were complete, I reviewed each one using coding methods associated with a method called *constant comparative analysis* (Padgett, 1998). This method involves using both inductive and deductive analysis to identify codes within each interview and then look for themes across interviews. I first reviewed each transcript, applying one or more codes to each section of text. As I proceeded to other transcripts, I considered codes that had surfaced in readings of previous interviews. I then applied these codes to relevant segments of other interviews. As I continued with the coding process, I refined and added codes. I then returned to previously-read transcripts and made appropriate changes and additions to keep the coding consistent. After completing this process, I charted the codes found within all of the interviews and looked for those that occurred repeatedly across interviews. I then identified common categories within the codes and looked for themes within those categories. After identifying themes, I reviewed all of the transcripts to confirm quotes pertaining to each theme and to identify additional instances of the themes.

The categories identified from the codes were fairly broad. I identified approximately 20 categories. Some of the more prevalent categories were comprised of comments about: the friendship, the friend, personal ethnic and racial identities, friend's ethnic and racial identities, friend's perceptions of personal racial and ethnic identities, conversations about race and ethnicity, differences between friends, and similarities between friends. From these categories, a number of themes emerged. These themes included, but were not limited to: positive traits identified in the friend, qualities

contributing to closeness within the friendship, factors contributing to participant's understanding of own racial and ethnic identities, factors contributing to participant's understanding of friend's racial and ethnic identities, types of conversations about race and ethnicity, strengths in the friendship due to differences in race and ethnicity, and difficulties within the friendship due to race and ethnicity.

At the same time that I looked for themes across individual interviews, I also looked for themes occurring within and across interviews from members of each friendship dyad. To code information from dyads' interviews, I looked for similarities and differences between each dyad member's answers to the questions. I also looked for similarities and differences in the language that friends used. Some of the themes I found when coding for dyads included: parallels and differences between how people talk about themselves and how friends talked about them, parallels and differences between how people talked about themselves and how they talked about their friends, parallels and differences in friends' perceptions of their conversations about race and ethnicity, and similarities and differences in friends' racial and ethnic identities.

The most prevalent themes were chosen for discussion in this thesis. They will be elaborated on in the following chapters. In looking at these themes, it is important to remember that this study is exploratory in nature. Because of the small sample size, as well as the diversity of participants and of their friendships (in terms of length of friendship and gender of friends), the information gathered from this study can not be generalized to all interethnic and interracial friendships.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

By individually interviewing both members of seven interracial and interethnic

friendship pairs, I have sought to better understand how close friends talk about and

perceive one another's racial and ethnic identities. This study provides an initial look at

friends' communication about race and ethnicity, as well as their understandings of one

another's racial and ethnic identities and how they develop these understandings. This is

an exploratory study, highlighting a number of areas for further exploration.

In this chapter, information from the fourteen interviews is presented

thematically. The chapter focuses on four major themes arising from the data: 1) the

roles that race and ethnicity played within friendships, 2) parallels and differences in how

friends talked about their own and their friend's racial and ethnic identities, 3) how

people developed their perceptions of their friend's racial and ethnic identities, and 4) the

communications that friends had about race and ethnicity. The information is presented

in accordance with these themes. Sub-groupings within the themes highlight especially

interesting and prevalent trends in the collected data.

Theme #1: The Roles That Race and Ethnicity Played Within Friendships

To gain a better understanding of how differences in race and ethnicity affected

friendships, I asked participants to talk about the following topics: 1) times when they

had been especially aware of their own or their friend's race or ethnicity; 2) aspects of

their own racial and ethnic identities that they felt were either unexpressed or more

pronounced in the friendship; 3) times when they acted differently in this friendship than they did in friendships with people of their own race or ethnicity; 4) any miscommunications or misunderstandings that they had with this friend due to race or ethnicity; 5) strengths in the friendship and learning opportunities that had come about due to differences in race or ethnicity. This section presents trends in participants' perspectives on each of these topics.

Increased Awareness of Race and Ethnicity

In asking about times when participants felt more aware of their own race or ethnicity, their friend's race or ethnicity, or the differences in race or ethnicity between them, I hoped to gain a better idea of what, if any, circumstances made them think more about race or ethnicity within the context of their friendship. Of the fourteen participants, twelve pointed to circumstances in which their awareness of race or ethnicity increased. Of these twelve, eleven said that they felt more aware of their friend's and their own race or ethnicity when they were around other people. In general, participants said they wondered how other people perceived them (n=7). Some noticed people looking at them and questioned whether these looks were attributable to differences in race and ethnicity between themselves and their friend. Allison, a white woman who participated in the study with Jennifer, an African-American woman, remembered feeling this way when she went jogging with her friend:

> "We used to run around the pond all the time together and we would pass groups of black people, white people, and I would wonder what this group of black people is thinking about this black woman running with a white woman and being friends with a white woman, or what these white people are thinking. [Jennifer] and I talked about it, and she felt the same way. There were two black women, in particular, who would sort of look at us, and we both attributed it to race. I do

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remember that piece and thinking about being in the world with her and wondering maybe what other people are thinking or assuming."

Of those who said they were more aware of race and ethnicity when they were around other people, some noted that this was especially true when they were in situations that felt less diverse. As Alicia, a multiracial Columbian woman who participated in the study with a Caucasian friend, noted: "If Chris and I went around walking in a black neighborhood or in a very white neighborhood, I would feel it, only because you notice where people's eyes go." Dana, a Chinese-Vietnamese woman, said that she was more aware of her own and her white, Irish-American friend's race and ethnicity when they were in "non-white situations." She added, "I'm less aware of it when we're more surrounded by [people of the] majority [racial group] because I think that's more common, and I think it's more common to see Asians mixed in than, say, somebody from another race."

Some participants worried about whether people were judging them (n=3). For instance, a woman of color conveyed concern about how people of color perceived her close friendship with a white woman and whether they judged her for having that friendship. Others worried about the well-being of their friends in environments where other people were present (n=2). In these situations, they felt protective and wanted to make sure their friends would not be hurt in any way. Lidia, a Columbian woman, explained her concern about taking Kaya, her African-American friend, to a Latin American event:

> "In the place that I invited her to, I was very aware that it was something she was not used to, and there wasn't a better person to take to something like that because she can adapt anywhere. But, it wasn't her I was concerned about; it was other people. And not that I think anything would happen, but people can be very

ignorant. My fear would be to put her in a situation where I've invited her and her feeling-- and she's a strong person, she would definitely be able to handle anything, and she would probably not have a problem with it. It would be my discomfort of putting someone in a situation where someone will say something stupid."

Several participants (n=3) said that they became more aware of their own race and ethnicity, as well as the race and ethnicity of their friend, when the friend talked in a language that they could not understand. Hearing the friend speak another language was a concrete manifestation of the differences between them. Although two of the three participants who mentioned language said that this reminder of their differences was not negative, one participant remarked that hearing the friend speak another language felt "weird" and "alienating."

For many of the participants in this study, viewing themselves within the context of others highlighted differences between themselves and their friends. Differences that fell into the background when they were alone with one another gained significance when they took their friendship into a public context.

Unexpressed or Accentuated Aspects of Ethnic and Racial Identity

When participants were asked to talk about aspects of their racial and ethnic identities that felt less pronounced, hidden, or unexpressed in their friendships, most (n=8) said that there were no parts of their racial and ethnic identities that felt hidden or unexpressed within the relationship. When asked to explain, many identified the friendship as being so close that they felt open in talking about all aspects of their racial and ethnic identities. As one woman pointed out, "I've known her forever, so I feel like there really isn't very much that I keep from her." Others said that the amount of

communication they had with the friend increased their comfort in talking about issues of race and ethnicity.

Of participants who identified aspects of their racial and ethnic identities that felt less expressed within their friendships (n=5), three noted an absence of discussions about race and ethnicity. One participant said:

> "We don't talk about the fact that I'm white and she's black. I mean, we acknowledge it. We both know it. It's not like we don't ever say anything about it. We obviously do. But, we don't talk about what it maybe means to have a friendship between a black woman and white woman. And, we don't talk about how that is for her or how it is for me. And, we don't talk about how it is for her to be black or how it is for me to be white in the world. And, I'm often curious as to why I don't ask."

A white woman, Nora, who felt that she did not share information about her Syrian ethnicity with friends said that she didn't always know how to talk about experiences connected with her ethnicity:

> "There have been times that I've gone to visit my family and I'll come back and feel like, not that I couldn't tell them, but that I can't describe what it was really like, which impedes people from knowing that part of my life."

Nora also expressed feeling that, because her ethnicity was not readily visible, it had not always been attributed significance by others.

Of the other two participants who said they felt that aspects of their identities were less expressed within the friendship, one talked about wanting her friend to see more of her interactions with her family, which she felt revealed aspects of how she related to her race and ethnicity. The other participant mentioned that she was conscious of being unable to speak her native language with her friend.

In addition to asking about parts of their identities that felt less expressed within the friendship, I asked participants about aspects of their racial and ethnic identities that

felt more pronounced. Six participants said no parts of their racial and ethnic identities

felt accentuated within the friendship. A seventh was quick to explain that the ways in

which his race and ethnicity felt more pronounced were small and not enough to cause

problems in the friendship. Three said that aspects of their ethnic and racial identities felt

more pronounced when they were with their friend around other people or when they

thought about their friendship within the context of other people. Those who said that

aspects of their identities felt accentuated gave a variety of answers as to what felt more

pronounced for them. Their answers included: differences in emotional and physical

boundaries between themselves and the friend, their own physical appearance and accent,

differences in how they and the friend experienced the world, and language differences.

Differences in Interactions Between Friendships

Participants were asked to talk about differences in how they interacted with the

friend partaking in the study versus how they interacted with friends who shared their

race or ethnicity. Six people said they did not act any differently with this friend than

they did with other friends. Eight people pointed to ways in which their interactions with

this friend differed from interactions with friends of the same race or ethnicity. The

answers among participants varied as to how their interactions with the friend differed.

Two white participants and one participant of color said that they were more conscious of

race when interacting with the friend participating in the study. Both white participants

said that they made efforts to be more sensitive about race issues. As one noted: "I would

never want to say anything that would be offensive to her or even think anything that

would be offensive to her." The woman of color who said that she was more aware of

race when talking with her friend said: "Maybe I don't talk about [race] with [my friend] because she is white, but I feel like I could tell her [about racial issues]."

Four people noted differences in how they talked about issues of race and ethnicity with friends who shared their race or ethnicity versus friends who did not. One woman explained these differences as an "in-group/out-group" issue. She and another participant said that there were times when they felt more comfortable joking about ethnicity and race with friends who shared their background. Two participants mentioned a mutual understanding and connectedness that existed between friends of the same race or ethnicity. Jeff, a man of Chinese descent who had many white friends, explained, "I try to be the same person. I don't do anything differently at all. But, there're some things that just are taken for granted, just taken as understood ahead of time [with other people of Chinese descent]."

Three participants talked about feeling more comfortable interacting with friends whose race or ethnicity differed from their own than with people who were assumed to share their ethnic or racial background. A Japanese-American woman said that she sometimes felt uncomfortable with other Asians and that she worried about their prejudice toward Japanese people. Alicia, who was of Columbian heritage, said that she often had more difficulty talking with and finding common ground with Columbian people than with someone like her friend, Chris, who was white, but with whom Alicia shared the common trait of being American.

Miscommunications and Misunderstandings Connected with Race and Ethnicity

When asked about recent miscommunications or misunderstandings that resulted from differences in race and ethnicity, most participants (n=13) in the study said that

there were none. Members of one friendship dyad identified a period in their relationship

when they became more distant due, in part, to differences in their race and ethnicity and

to their racial and ethnic identity development processes. Both of these women reported

these issues as having taken place at least ten years ago and said that they did not

currently play a prominent role in their friendship. Another woman noted a conflict

between herself and her friend that had occurred during high school and may have been

due to differences in race and ethnicity. The incident had occurred about seven years

ago, and the two had since talked about it.

Although most participants denied any miscommunications or misunderstandings,

several participants (n=3) noted feeling sensitive and editing what they were saying when

talking about issues of race with the friend. One participant thought that ethnic

differences between she and her friend had "kept [them] separate to an extent" in that

neither woman had attempted to integrate her friend into her other friend groups. Other

participants (n=3) reported that any potential miscommunications or misunderstandings

were discussed between the friends, and one participant (a Columbian woman who's

friend, Kaya, was African-American) recalled an incident that led to a learning

opportunity for both her friend and her:

> "In Latin America, *negro* is usually a term of endearment. *Negro, negrito*. I was
> with my friend, Veronica, who is Puerto Rican. And we were talking about how
> she calls her husband *Negro*. And, I was like, 'Oh yeah, I call my brother *Negro*
> too.' And Kaya was there. And later, I was talking to Veronica about it, and I
> was like, 'Did Kaya say anything about that?' I'm like, 'Oh my God, I didn't
> even think about it.' And then I asked her, 'By the way, I don't know if you
> remember when I said this.' And she said, 'I remember this.' I said, 'I just
> wanted to tell you, it's actually something in Latin America. We do that, and I
> call my brother *Negro* all the time. It's not at all bad. And she was like, 'Oh, I
> didn't know that.' So, the fact that she didn't know that. I wonder how many

things I've said that might go in one ear and out the other, but at the same time that might not… We had a good conversation about it."

According to participants' responses, some had experienced miscommunications and misunderstandings due to differences in race and ethnicity, but most felt that these incidents did not currently impede their friendships.

Strengths and Learning Opportunities Due to Differences in Race and Ethnicity

When participants were asked about the effects that differences in race and ethnicity had on their friendships, they identified a number of positive results. When asked, specifically, about strengths and learning opportunities that came about from differences, every participant had something to say. Most (n=10) mentioned opportunities for learning that the friendship provided. Some (n=8) talked about cultural knowledge they gained from the friendship. Kaya, an African-American woman who participated in the study with Lidia, a Columbian woman, spoke of learning that came from becoming familiar with another person's world:

> "I think for both of us, the strength is that we are a little bit more adept at understanding people, just having known each other. I think that I have another opportunity to support me in learning a new language. I have a wonderful opportunity to learn how somebody else expresses herself. And what I mean by that is just very simple things. I learn these new phrases that sometimes so eloquently convey a simple message… The strengths, I think hers might be similar in just being exposed to my world and kind of how I operate and how I was brought up and maybe what my family is like. And opportunities for her to at least be able to intellectually understand how I experience the world as an African-American."

Other participants (n=6) talked of learning about themselves through the friendship. Lidia spoke about the benefits of having a friendship that challenged her perceptions and made her think about the stereotypes she adhered to. Kaya, too, talked about their friendship's ability to "either shatter or confirm some preconceived notions."

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For some participants, having an interracial or interethnic friendship meant gaining sensitivity to people from other ethnic or racial backgrounds (n=3). For others, it meant gaining comfort in communicating with people from other races and ethnicities (n=3). For several, this friendship provided a unique opportunity to explore issues of race and ethnicity (n=5). For others, this relationship helped them feel more comfortable with aspects of their own identities (n=2). Dana, a Chinese-Vietnamese woman who was friends with a white, Irish-American woman, said: "Because we are so close, I think she has made me feel that I can identify with the white [Americanized, middle-class] part of myself, and I think just be more comfortable with it."

Many participants (n=10) felt that differences between themselves and their friend added "fun", "interesting", and "intriguing" aspects to their friendship, and that their differences often gave them something "to talk about." Melanie and Tara articulated others' sentiments when they described their friendship. Melanie noted that their differences created "excitement" in the relationship, "in terms of: we have a lot of things that are very different about us, and yet, somehow, we can find some common ground. So, I think it keeps things interesting. I guess I'm always learning stuff about her." Tara felt similarly: "I think there is another level that we bring to the picture. I mean, we are friends but we are coming from different backgrounds, so that kind of adds a flavor to it."

This section looked at a number of roles that race and ethnicity played within participants' friendships. The areas examined related directly to questions asked during the interviews and were arranged accordingly.

Theme #2: Parallels and Differences in How Friends Talked About Their Own and Their Friend's Race and Ethnicity

Each participant was asked to talk about her own ethnic and racial identities, as well as her perception of her friend's ethnic and racial identities. Questions about her perceptions of her friend included: 1) what role do you think being [race/ethnicity] plays in your friend's life? 2) What do you know about your friend's race and ethnicity? 3) Is there anything that she's told you about being [race/ethnicity] and what it's been like for her? Each participant was also asked to quantify the significance of the role that race and ethnicity played in her friend's life. These questions paralleled questions that each person answered about her own ethnic and racial identities. In comparing how people answered questions about their own ethnic and racial identities to how they answered questions about their friend's racial and ethnic identities, I was able to gain insight into the similarities and differences in people's ideas about their own and their friend's identities. Then, by comparing answers given by the members of each friendship dyad, I was able to look for parallels and disparities in how each person talked about herself and how her friend talked about her.

In this section, I look at some of the more prominent trends that arose in friends' discussions about their own and their friend's ethnic and racial identities. The section is divided into two sub-sections: 1) parallels and disparities between self descriptions and friend's descriptions of each participant's racial and ethnic identities; and 2) parallels and disparities between each person's description of her own and her friend's ethnic and racial identities.

Comparisons Between Self Descriptions and Friends' Descriptions of Race and Ethnicity

This sub-section focuses on friendship pairs, looking at parallels and disparities in how people described their own racial and ethnic identities and how the participating

friend described them. This section is divided according to four themes that stood out

when comparing how people talked about themselves and how their friend talked about

them: the first section looks at a friendship pair that had difficulty talking about one

another's racial and ethnic identities; the second section looks at unique trends among

friends who had known each other since childhood and adolescence; the third section

examines trends in friends who had known each other for one or two years; and the last

section looks at a friendship pair who knew each other within the context of a close friend

group.

"I don't know." At the time of their interviews, Jennifer and Allison had been

friends for about six-and-a-half years. Jennifer identified as African-American, and

Allison identified as white. Of the seven dyads interviewed, this dyad had the most

difficulty talking about one another's racial and ethnic identities. Both women felt at a

loss when asked to describe one another's racial and ethnic identities; their responses to

these questions both began with "I don't know." Their difficulties in talking about one

another may have reflected a number of factors, including their limited communication

about personal experiences related to race and ethnicity, Jennifer's feeling that her racial

identity did not play a large role in her life, and Allison's conflicted feelings about being

white.

Both Jennifer and Allison said that, when discussing racial and ethnic issues, they

usually talked about other people more than they talked about themselves. They said that

their conversations maintained a light-hearted, joking feel. Despite this, each friend was

able to recount stories that the other had told her about her childhood. Allison

remembered Jennifer's stories about going to school in a predominantly white

neighborhood. Jennifer recalled Allison's descriptions of growing up as a racial minority in another country. But, both women felt unable to talk in depth about one another's racial and ethnic identities. Allison said of Jennifer, "I don't know, in terms of like how she walks around in the world, what it feels like to her to be a black person walking around in the world." Jennifer's description of Allison was equally vague, and she pointed out: "We really don't talk about it that much."

The friends' difficulty may have reflected their understandings of their own ethnic and racial identities. Jennifer said that her racial and ethnic identities did not greatly inform her life. When asked to quantify the significance that being African-American had in her life, Jennifer said its role wasn't very big: a three on a scale of one to ten (one being not significant; ten being very significant). In that she did not consider her race and ethnicity to play large roles in her life, she may have discussed them less with Allison than members of other dyads in the study. When asked about her ethnic identity, Allison had difficulty talking about it and said that she didn't usually think about it. About her racial identity, she had conflicted emotions. Her confusion about her ethnicity and her conflicted feelings about her race may have affected how and how much she talked about her race and ethnicity with Jennifer.

In the absence of personal conversations about one another's ethnic and racial identities, both Jennifer and Allison had turned to their general knowledge to inform their understandings of one another. In talking about Allison, Jennifer referred to her "text-book" knowledge of what it means to be white. In talking about Jennifer, Allison spoke about her general knowledge of racial discrimination in the United States.

In this relationship, the friends' understandings and descriptions of one another's racial and ethnic identities reflected trends in how they talked about race and ethnicity and how they perceived their own racial and ethnic identities.

"We've been friends for a really long time." The two friendship pairs who had known each other for the longest amounts of time (18.5 years and 13.5 years) were able to talk about one another in detail. The factors that each person used to describe herself often matched the factors mentioned by her friend when her friend was asked to describe her. These parallels were visible in the responses given by Dana and Karen, who had been friends for 18.5 years at the time of the interview.

In describing her own racial and ethnic identity development, Dana emphasized a period during her early 20s when she immersed herself in a queer, Asian community and somewhat "rejected" the culture and the people connected with the town where she grew up. Karen, too, spoke in depth about the time when Dana identified more strongly with this community and felt that Karen was too "mainstream" for her. In describing her own ethnic and racial identities, Karen talked about the "white guilt" she felt while growing up. She also talked about her struggles with religion, which she considered to be an aspect of her ethnic identity. Dana mentioned both of these phenomena when talking about Karen's ethnic identity development. Neither woman's description of her friend corresponded completely to her friend's description of herself, but the parallels between what they discussed were significant.

The same was true for two women who had been friends for 13.5 years: Nora, a white woman who identified as Syrian and Western European, and Melinda, a Japanese-American woman. Each woman's description of her friend corresponded highly with her

friend's description of herself, and their parallel accounts incorporated mention of similar phenomena. Melinda's and Nora's descriptions of one another also highlighted something that was unique to the two friendships pairs who had known each other for extended periods of time: the friends were able to identify the changing nature of one another's relationship to her racial and ethnic identities. When Melinda talked about her own racial and ethnic identities, she emphasized feeling different from fellow students during her childhood and adolescence. She also talked about feeling more comfortable with herself as an adult:

> "As a kid, I always had this subconscious thought that I was different, and I was weird, and my nose was flatter than everyone else's, and I just didn't fit in, and my mom made me take off my shoes at home. Little stuff like that; as a little kid, it really bothered me. And, I felt weird. And I wished a lot about how I could just be white or something. And then, as I got older, maybe towards the end of high school or in college, I actually started to appreciate part of my biculturalness and having this other culture that not very many people knew about."

Nora also recognized these changes in her friend's relationship to her racial and ethnic identities:

> "I think that it was hard [to grow up in a predominantly white community]. I think there was a part of her that never felt like she fit in, probably because of [being Japanese]. I know she said things like: she never thought that guys at our high school would like her because she was Japanese… I think it's hard, I think it's like you don't really fit in anywhere. But, I'm sure she also has pride in her ethnicity too. I think, definitely, as she got older, she got involved with the Japanese community at MIT… So, I think that she's sort of embraced her race and ethnicity a little bit more as she's gotten older or maybe thought about it a little bit more."

Because they had been friends since their teenage years, these women witnessed each other's growth in many areas, including in their racial and ethnic identity development.

"*It comes up when we talk about whatever daily struggle is going on.*" In friendship pairs whose members had known each other for less time (one or two years),

friends often had in-depth understandings of one another's current racial and ethnic

identities, and their descriptions of themselves often paralleled their friends' description

of them. Unlike friends who had known each other for extended periods of time, they did

not speak to changes in ethnic and racial identities that friends had experienced earlier in

life. These friends' understandings of one another's racial and ethnic identities often

appeared to have developed around issues that they were currently dealing with. For

instance, Melanie's understanding of her friend's ethnic identity centered on conflict

between Tara's Indian values and how they intersected with American values. This

conflict was especially salient in Tara's life because she was continuing to adapt to

differences between Indian culture and American culture after moving to the United

States ten years before. During the two years that Tara and Melanie had been friends,

this issue had come up repeatedly. In describing Tara's ethnic identity, both friends

addressed Tara's struggle. Tara said the following about her ethnic identity:

> "I have managed to not be swayed by the freedom that's so part of this
> country…In a lot of ways, I feel that that has made me learn about the American
> culture a lot more than some of my other friends. But, I've also managed to hold
> on to my own identity… Being [in the United States] by myself, there really is no
> one to restrict me, but those are invisible restrictions that I kind of put on myself."

Melanie said something similar about her friend's ethnic identity:

> "I think [being Indian] is very important to her. I think, in some ways, she
> sometimes wishes she didn't have to deal with all of the expectations and rules
> about it. I mean, I think a lot of what I see in terms of that tension between
> feeling American and Indian both is…I think she loves certain things about being
> an Indian, and also, she resents certain things about it in terms of like feeling like
> she can't fully be who she wants to be."

Their descriptions of one another's ethnic and racial identities reflected current concerns

in their lives, which were the subject matter of the friends' conversations.

Kaya and Lidia, who had been close friends for one year at the time of the interviews, had strong understandings of one another's ethnic and racial identities, and their descriptions of one another strongly paralleled their descriptions of self. They had gained knowledge of each other, in part, through a number of discussions they had had about race and ethnicity, as both of them were interested in the topic. They had also developed their understandings through discussions about romantic relationships, which were at the forefront of their conversations because both women were experiencing salient dating issues. Probably because of the friends' frequent conversations about relationships, each woman talked about the role that her friend's racial and ethnic identities played in her dating life.

For all dyads, and especially those participants who had been friends for shorter periods of time, friends' understandings of one another's racial and ethnic identities reflected aspects of their lives that were of current concern and that played large roles in their conversations. For pairs who had known each other for one or two years, friends' descriptions of one another were most detailed and most reflective of friends' descriptions of themselves when they were talking about current concerns in their friends' lives.

"Like some of our other friends…" At the time of their interviews, Rebecca, a white Jewish-American woman, and Jeff, a Chinese-American man, had known each other for approximately five years. The friends' descriptions of one another strongly reflected what each person said about herself/himself. Their descriptions also strongly reflected their membership in a close group of friends. Their understandings of one another took place within the context of this friend group, and in their descriptions they

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included comparisons of themselves and one another to other members of the group. For instance, when talking about Rebecca's Jewish identity, Jeff said: "She identifies herself as Jewish, and she does some of the holiday stuff. But, she's not really into it like some of our other friends are… I don't know how much that it influences her life." When describing herself, Rebecca also compared herself to a friend:

> "One of my housemates is Jewish and is very much a part of this Jewish social group in Boston. So, she hangs out a lot with a lot of people who are Jewish and is on committees for events and things like that. So, [I'm] deciding it's nice to hang out with Jewish people, but how much of that is really important to me for my friendships? Or like, dating, it's important to my housemate to date someone that's Jewish. And for me, that's never mattered."

In describing Jeff's ethnic and racial identities, both friends said similar things about him and compared him to other members of their friend group. As Rebecca said about her friend:

> "I think that to him [being Chinese] doesn't mean that much. Like I think it's not something that he talks about a lot. I have other friends who are Asian and they'll just talk more about, 'Oh, it's important to my parents that I only date someone who's also Asian…I mean it's definitely a part of who he is, …but I don't think it's something that's really a big part of his life."

Jeff spoke similarly about himself: "[Being Chinese] plays a role in my life in that, it plays a role in family life, it plays a role in just like who I am, but not so much… I'm not totally immersed in my own culture, like some people I know." This tendency to compare themselves and each other to other friends was somewhat unique to this friendship pair.

Overall, the friends who participated in the study had insight into one another's ethnic and racial identities. Their descriptions of their friends' ethnic and racial identities corresponded with their friends' descriptions of themselves. Not surprisingly, the

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descriptions did not match one another completely. The ways in which the friends'

descriptions of one another reflected their descriptions of themselves seemed to depend,

in part, on how they communicated about race and ethnicity, how long the friends had

known each other, and in what context their friendship had developed.

Comparisons Between Each Person's Self Description and Friend Description

This section compares how people talked about their own ethnic and racial

identities and how they talked about their friend's ethnic and racial identities. A trend

that stands out in making these comparisons is the similarities between the two. Ten

participants showed parallels in how they talked about their own identity and how they

presented their friend's identity. For some, these parallels manifested in the aspects of

identity that they chose to focus on for themselves and their friend. For others, parallels

were evident in that they presented the friend as having had experiences similar to their

own. This section is divided into two segments reflecting the two aforementioned

themes.

Focusing on similar aspects of identity for self and friend. Several people talked

about similar aspects of ethnic and racial identities when describing themselves and their

friend. Some used similar words in their descriptions of themselves and their friends;

others focused on the importance of similar parts of ethnic and racial identities. This

section looks at examples from several dyads.

Jeff and Rebecca both described themselves similarly to how they described one

another. Jeff talked about how food and holidays played large roles in both of their

cultural lives. He also talked about how their ethnicities gave them unique perspectives

on the world, but didn't define who they were. About himself, he said, "it plays a role in

who I am, but not so much as [in how] I decided I'd like to do an engineering program and math." About Rebecca, he said, "It means that she identifies herself as Jewish, but it doesn't play a defining role in her life. She has her interests, and she enjoys what she does. But, her ethnicity doesn't play a role in those."

Rebecca, too, used similar markers to describe their ethnic and racial identities. She talked about relationships, and she compared Jeff and herself to other Asian and Jewish friends. In the previous section, I quoted Rebecca talking about her perspectives on race' and ethnicity's roles in her relationships. In the same section, another quote showed Rebecca speaking similarly about Jeff's view of relationships.

Kaya, in talking about her own and her friend's ties to their ethnic and racial groups, used similar wording. For both, she spoke of feeling connected. Of herself, she said, "there's a stronger sense of *interconnectivity* for me with other members of my race." She then explained Lidia's relationship to other Columbians: "This is who she is and she's strongly *connected*."

Jennifer, in explaining Allison's and her own relationships to their race and ethnicity talked about visible, concrete cues. When she talked about understanding Allison's ethnic identity, she said:

> "Some people who grow up, they'll be involved in certain ethnic and cultural groups and, maybe, kids go to a school and learn a different language, or they go and do a certain dance or something related to that. But, [Allison's] never mentioned that she's been a part of anything like that, like Scottish heritage or some other heritage group or that kind of thing. So, I never hear any Scottish music playing at her house."

In thinking about how Allison might perceive her ethnic identity, Jennifer said: "I mean, I also don't do anything specific, and I don't have African music playing at my house."

Jennifer looked to the absence of external manifestations of ethnicity in both Allison's and her own lives to understand their relationships to their ethnicities.

All of these participants drew parallels, whether consciously or unconsciously, between their descriptions of their own racial and ethnic identities and their descriptions of their friend's racial and ethnic identities.

Assuming similar experiences. Like participants mentioned in the previous segment, Dana talked about similar phenomena in describing Karen's and her own racial and ethnic identities. Dana's descriptions of herself and Karen also demonstrated another trend in participants' responses. A number of participants talked about their friend having experiences that were similar to their own. But, often, the teller had assumed that these experiences had taken place. For instance, when talking about Karen, Dana focused on an internal struggle that she believed her friend had experienced and that she thought was similar to the struggle she had faced in relating to different aspects of her own racial and ethnic identities. Of herself, Dana said:

> "I just feel like at this point in my life, I know who I am. I'm comfortable with who I am… I've grappled with my racial identity, and I've grappled with: there's a white part of me because of where I grew up and my surroundings and what I know… And, I understand all of that, and I'm conscious of all that."

Of Karen, she said:

> "I think Catholicism is probably, I would guess that it played a bigger role in her life… I would think that Catholicism's part of the Irish-American. She might have struggled with it the way that I struggled with my racial stuff."

After talking about Karen's struggle, Dana went on to say, "We've never really had an open conversation directly about [her struggle with Catholicism], so I can't say for sure. But, from what I know about her…" Dana's assumption that Karen had struggled to

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understand her relationship with Catholicism may have been accurate, as it was made from information that Dana had gathered over years of knowing, observing, and talking with her friend, but it was something that she had assumed.

Other friends made similar assumptions. Lidia stressed that both she and Kaya grew up in environments where there were people who looked like them and who shared their cultural heritage. Of Kaya and herself, she said:

> "[Kaya] grew up in a neighborhood that was, I think, we haven't talked about this; I mean I'm sure she felt very comfortable. And, I would connect that with the way I grew up in Miami, where I felt very comfortable with who I was."

Another example of this was Melinda's observations about Nora's relief in leaving their hometown. When asked about the role that race and ethnicity played in her friend's life, Melinda talked about the change that Nora experienced when she left their town to go to college:

> "Maybe she was excited to go to college, too, because she could meet people who weren't like her. In college, she had a lot of Asian and Hispanic friends. So, maybe as a white person in this white community, maybe she was kind of fed up with it and she wanted to just meet lots of new people."

Melinda's idea of the excitement that Nora felt in going to college mirrored the change that she explained in herself when she left their hometown to go to college: "Maybe just leaving my hometown and being in an environment where there's lots of other races, I felt like, 'Oh actually, I am kind of special, and this is cool to have two languages and, you know, whatever.'"

The assumptions that these friends made about one another were informed by information gained over time from observations of and conversations with the friend. They also seemed to stem from the teller's own experiences with her race and ethnicity.

Along with these assumptions, participants drew parallels between their own experiences and their friend's experiences. For many participants, their descriptions of their friend paralleled the friend's description of herself.

Theme #3: Developing Ideas About Friends' Racial and Ethnic Identities

Participants were asked to think about how they developed ideas about their friend's race and ethnicity. They were also asked to think about their friend's perceptions of their race and ethnicity and how the friend may have developed her perceptions. From participants' responses, I hoped to gain a better understanding of how people develop their perceptions of a friend's race and ethnicity. To supplement these answers, I examined responses to other questions for mention of phenomena that people felt contributed to their understanding of their friends. The most common avenues mentioned for gaining insight into a friend's race and ethnicity were: 1) generalizing knowledge and assumptions onto friends, 2) using readings or other learning to inform ideas about friends, 3) making observations, and 4) talking. These four themes are discussed in this section.

Assumptions

When asked directly, eight participants said that they did not assume things about their friends because of race or ethnicity. Yet, when participants were asked to explain their friend's race and ethnicity, a number of them (n=6) worked, at least in part, from assumption. When asked how they developed ideas about friends, three people mentioned that they used assumptions they had about that person's race and ethnicity to inform their ideas. In talking about how she had developed ideas about her African-American friend, one woman explained: "And then, any assumptions I've made would be

just that, just assumptions based on my own experiences, and probably don't relate to things she's said and may not even be true for her." Another woman commented on how she had developed ideas about her white friend: "I mean she is white, so I guess I just made my own assumptions."

The most common assumption concerned how much a person's awareness of her racial and ethnic identities was affected by whether she was white or a person of color (n=5). People assumed that white friends had less awareness of their race and ethnicity. As one participant said of her white friend,

> "I imagine that most white people think less about it than even the people who are non-white… Like, I'm sure it's worked for her in a lot of ways in her life. I don't know that she's necessarily conscious of it on a daily basis."

Several other participants noted that white people are not put in situations where they must think about their racial and ethnic identities, as they comprise the majority racial group in the United States.

Participants made assumptions that their friends of color had been forced to think more about their racial and ethnic identities. One woman said of her Asian friend, "I can only imagine that being aware of your minority status just colors everything." Another woman, when asked to quantify the significance that her friend's race and ethnicity played in her life, rated it as high as she possibly could. When asked what her rating meant, she said, "That she's a black person in the United States who has had a history of feeling different in certain situations."

Other assumptions made about friends were derived from experiences that participants had had with people of the same race or ethnicity as the friend (n=4). Lidia explained that she made assumptions about Kaya because of experiences she had with

other African-Americans. She then talked about how these assumptions intermingled

with her experiences of Kaya as they became more familiar with one another:

> "For me, I'm sure the way I experienced African-American people in general influenced the way I perceive her, and on top of that, it just so happens that I've talked to her and we're becoming friends, and so, it's like two separate things. One is my concept of what's being built in my head of what an African-American person is and separately who Kaya is as an African-American woman. So, I think those are two different things... They inform each other. But, at the same time, the closer I get to her, the more I can separate them. In the sense that I can see her more for who she is, and not just, 'there's this interesting African-American woman who works in my office and she's so sweet. Oh, she's so nice, whatever.' That's very superficial."

In her explanation of how her assumptions contributed to her perceptions of Kaya, Lidia

spoke about a process that many people may experience unconsciously. People's

assumptions may interact with and inform the ideas they gain through observations,

conversations, and direct contact with their friends.

Readings and Other Learning

Only two participants directly mentioned using readings and other learning

methods to inform their perceptions of their friend's race and ethnicity. But, several

other participants hinted at learning experiences, such as classes (n=2) and readings

(n=3), that enhanced their understanding of their friend's identity. The two women who

mentioned reading about the friend's race and ethnicity did not do so with the intent of

learning about the friend. Instead, they performed the readings in other contexts and

found that they could relate what they read to the friend. Tara, in preparing to come to

the United States, had read about American culture. She found that her reading helped

her better understand Melanie's actions and to place them within the context of being

American. Nora talked about readings that helped her better understand the dynamic within Melinda's family:

> "From what I've read… I've sort of learned that that's sort of the gender roles. Like the dad is the breadwinner and is like quiet and could be a disciplinarian when it's an appropriate time… [I've been reading about it] just more recently. And, I know one of our teachers at [graduate school], her dad is Japanese and her mom is white. And she says sort of the same thing…"

The other participants who mentioned readings and learning opportunities during their interviews had these experiences in the context of graduate school classes.

Observations

Eleven of the fourteen participants said that they gained insight into their friend's race and ethnicity through observations. Some of these observations were of concrete occurrences, such as seeing the friend interact with parents or attending a cultural event such as a holiday gathering or meal. Other observations were more abstract, such as witnessing a friend struggle with emotions related to racial or ethnic issues.

Observations that seemed especially significant to participants were those of the friend's family or of the friend's interactions with her family (n=5). The importance of families' roles in understanding and conveying facets of race and ethnicity were repeatedly mentioned. Karen gave an example of this when talking about how her observations of Dana's family contributed to her understanding of her friend's ethnicity: "I guess [I've developed my ideas] through these things that come up with her family, like the herbs or wearing a necklace that her mom wants her to wear because it protects you." Observing Dana's relationship to her family was also important to Karen:

> "She has a very big family, that's another part that seems cultural, like she has nine aunts on just her mother's side. And, they're just this network of support

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people… But, she has this giant group of people who, whether she's emotionally close to them I don't necessarily know, but they're there for her support."

Dana, who felt as though she'd learned about Karen through observing her friend's family, regretted that her friend hadn't had more interactions with her own family:

"I think there's still things she doesn't necessarily know [about my ethnicity], like details. Because, I don't think I've, say, invited people to family gatherings to make it normal or to see sort of what goes on in my family. I think I've talked about it, but I don't think that I've necessarily invited her in enough. Even though we grew up together, I think when we lived together I was very self-conscious about it."

In describing the absence of her friend's observations of her family, Dana highlighted the significance she believed that observing family interactions could have in informing ideas of race and ethnicity.

Participants' observations of their friend in other settings were also important. Several people talked about seeing the friend interact with other friends (n=7). Chris felt that he gained insight into Alicia's ethnic and racial identities by observing that most of her friends were from other countries. Nora felt that Melinda's interactions with friends and other students during high school helped her better understand her friend's racial and ethnic identities:

"I think that was really hard for her, because she had to be at the [Japanese] school with people who weren't her friends, who considered her friends foreigners. There was one time me and our mutual friend went into her Japanese school and everyone was like, 'there are foreigners here.' And then they were like, 'We're the foreigners,' and they laughed. But I think she kind of felt like an outsider there."

Nora also felt that she gained insight from seeing how Melinda "reacted to some of [her] other Asian friends" more recently.

Another significant source of observations for participants was attending cultural events with friends. Jeff talked about attending Jewish holiday dinners that Rebecca and

her friends hosted. He felt that he learned about traditions, history, and language through those dinners. Rebecca talked about going to eat *dim sum* with Jeff and his family. While at the restaurant, she felt that she gained insight into her friend by hearing him speak Chinese and by witnessing his knowledge of the dishes on the menu.

Kaya and Lidia both referred back to a Latin American dance party as being significant in the development of their understandings of one another. While Lidia expressed pleasure in having her friend come to an event that celebrated her culture, Kaya expressed excitement about having this window into her friend's life:

> "We go salsa dancing, which is very much a part of her identity as being Columbian. She loves it. I mean it's like she's truly at home and she glows and she's in the moment and just she's very in tune to that. We went to a Columbian party and she was so excited about my going there. She was just so excited about being there, and I know that through that observation, I saw just how great it was for her to feel connected to people who were from the same place she's from."

Observations of concrete events and experiences seemed to help friends create visual memories that contributed to their understanding of their friend. More abstract observations were also important. For instance, when asked how her friend had developed ideas about her racial and ethnic identities, Karen mentioned how significant it was that her friend had "been there through the development of [her] whole adult self." Dana, too, talked about an abstract observation when she explained how Karen had witnessed her "struggles" with her racial and ethnic identity.

Conversations

All fourteen interviewees said that they had learned about their friend's ethnicity and race through talking with them, listening to comments they made, or hearing stories they told. Conversations involving race and ethnicity occurred in a variety of manners.

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Although some were specifically about racial and ethnic issues, most discussions involving race and ethnicity seemed to occur within the context of other conversation topics. Nine participants said that references to race and ethnicity tended to be indirect or within the context of other subjects. According to participants, race and ethnicity seemed to come up when friends were talking about other subjects—subjects that often entered their everyday discussions. For instance, Allison said that she learned about Jennifer's racial and ethnic identities when they were talking about their families. Jennifer concurred: "[Race and ethnicity would come up] if we were talking about specific instances. So, certainly not regularly, but it comes up… It comes up when we talk about my in-laws. It's not every conversation when I talk about them, so, you know." More information detailing the conversations that participants had with their friends is addressed in the following section.

Two sets of friends mentioned having dialogues about race and ethnicity within a structured environment. For one set of friends, this was a workshop at work; for the other, it was an interview for a school project. During these sessions, friends talked freely about issues of race and ethnicity that might not be brought up during everyday conversations. Kaya talked about a workshop she attended with Lidia:

> "We were in a multicultural type gathering, and we had facilitators, and I think she may have gotten a strong sense of how I feel about my race or me as I identify in that, and how I was talking a little bit about how I feel responsible and how deeply connected I feel to my race. But, also kind of supporting the notion that in order for those who are considered in privilege, you know white people as opposed to other minority groups—whether that's Black, Latino, whatever minority group, including sexual orientation and all that. For there to be any level of balance, that those who are at the helm of privilege would have to be willing to give up some of the privilege. So, that may have made her more aware of my awareness of who I am and how I feel about it."

At the beginning of their friendship together, Alicia and Chris had a similar experience.

For a school project on diversity, Chris chose to interview Alicia about her experiences as

a person of color in the United States. He noted that:

> "I learned a lot then. Since then, we've talked about [race and ethnicity] a lot…
> You know, it's funny; when we first met, she just mentioned that she was
> Columbian and that her dad was black and her mom was white. And then, it
> didn't really come up in conversation again until I did that diversity project. But
> since then we've talked about it a lot more. So, I think, to some extent, that kind
> made it a safe topic because I kind of picked her brain about it at that point. So
> that kind of made it so we could talk about it more easily."

Chris felt that the structured nature of the interview allowed him to ask questions that he

might not have felt comfortable asking otherwise. Then, after the interview opened the

area for discussion, he felt more comfortable broaching issues.

Theme #4: Communication About Race and Ethnicity

To gain a better idea of how the friends talked about race and ethnicity, I asked

participants a series of questions about how race and ethnicity came up in conversations

with each other. Some of the questions about conversations included: how often do race

and ethnicity come up in your conversations? In what context do race and ethnicity come

up in your conversations? Is there anything that you can remember telling your friend

about your race or ethnicity? Is there anything that your friend has told you about her

race or ethnicity? This section examines the following aspects of friends'

communications about race and ethnicity: 1) how frequently conversations about race and

ethnicity occurred; 2) what the content of these conversations was; 3) what has inhibited

conversations about race and ethnicity; 4) and what has facilitated these conversations.

Frequency of Conversations About Race and Ethnicity

Answers about how frequently friends talked about race and ethnicity ranged from rarely to very frequently, and friends' answers often did not correspond with one another. While eight participants said that conversations about race and ethnicity with their friends were not frequent, six participants said that they talked about race and ethnicity frequently. Of the seven friendship pairs, three gave matching answers about how frequently they talked about racial and ethnic issues; three gave disparate answers, and one pair's answers were difficult to interpret. The inconsistency in answers may have been due to differing interpretations of the question.

A number of participants (n=9) said that conversations concerning race and ethnicity occurred more frequently when racial and ethnic issues were more salient in either or both friends' lives. When racial and ethnic issues were not at the forefront, conversations referencing race and ethnicity decreased. For instance, both Karen and Dana said that conversations about race and ethnicity were more prevalent for them during their early 20s, when issues of racial and ethnic identity development were more present in Dana's life and were affecting their friendship. Karen said, "In college and stuff, [race and ethnicity were] a topic of conversation or right after college when she was working for that advocacy organization." Dana agreed with Karen's sentiment:

> "I believe like ten years ago [race and ethnicity came up in conversation more frequently] because I think I was actively more conscious of things and dealing with it then. Whereas, I think we know who we are [now], so it doesn't get discussed."

Jennifer said that the events taking place in her life not only affected how often she talked about race and ethnicity with Allison, but also how she talked about them:

"It comes up when we talk about my in-laws. It's not every conversation when I talk about them. Maybe once or twice a month; just in a general offhanded kind of way… Almost like in a joking way because there's nothing specific going on with them right now. But, I might make some comment, just in a general way. Like, 'Oh yeah, they're racist.' Just in an offhanded way, not in a specific, ongoing kind of a way… When I met [Allison], I'm sure I told [her] the whole saga, but now, nothing specific ever comes up. It's an issue that we dealt with and now it's sort of in the past... It's not coming to a head any more. It's sort of like, the big battle's over and so now we just sort of joke about it in passing…"

Jennifer experienced a change in the tone of her conversations about race and ethnicity as the circumstances in her life changed. Other participants echoed this sentiment. Race and ethnicity continued to come up in conversation when no salient issues existed, but the tone of the conversations changed. Instead of having deep conversations focusing on racial and ethnic issues, some people moved on to making passing jokes (n=5) or to simply using racial and ethnic identifiers to clarify comments or to augment their conversations (n=2).

Content of Conversations About Race and Ethnicity

Conversations including mention of race and ethnicity ranged from discussions of general information, such as politics and social issues, to discussions of personal information, such as talking about incidents within one's own life. Sometimes, comments were brief; other times, conversations were more in-depth. This section outlines the range of conversations that friends mentioned during their interviews.

Many friends said that they discussed the roles that race and ethnicity played within politics and social issues (n=8). Alicia and Chris often talked about American politics and had recently found fodder in the controversies concerning a presidential nominee's racial identity. For Alicia, these conversations were very important:

"That's the kind of thing where I shake people, 'No, tell me what you think,' because I personally want to know what my blind spots are. And, when [Chris]

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says something, I really take it to heart. I know he can see things that I don't see."

Chris, too, valued these conversations:

"I'm usually really curious about whatever she's got to say. Like I think I sent her the link to that article about [the presidential nominee], and of course she'd already read it. I think, in a way, I turn to her for, like, what's the real deal on this when it comes to race. Which is maybe not entirely fair."

Conversations about politics and social issues, although retaining an element of the personal, were often about issues outside of the friends. How did friends talk about their own experiences with race and ethnicity? As mentioned, they often bought up issues that were currently affecting them. They also talked about customs or culture related to their racial and ethnic heritages (n=9). Or, they talked about what their race and ethnicity meant to them (n=9).

Most often, race and ethnicity came up within the context of other conversations. When friends talked about subjects that were common topics for them, race and ethnicity somehow entered their conversations. Often, these conversations were about relationships, family, work, friends, and traditions. For instance, when Kaya spoke about her friendship with Lidia, she explained that they had gotten close with one another while talking about romantic relationships.

"We're both kind of exploring these new relationships and we're the ones that know most about these other things. That's kind of what makes [our friendship] unique. I mean, we're definitely up on other parts of our lives, but, I think we're the go-to people for those [relationship issues] because it's new and we're both exploring and not sure about our feelings."

When asked about how race and ethnicity entered into their conversations, Kaya said that "most recently, it's about someone I've been seeing." So, for Kaya and Lidia,

discussions of race and ethnicity often fit into their frequent conversations about romantic relationships.

When describing her relationship with Jennifer, Allison said that they frequently bonded through talking about their families:

> "We really connect around talking about how crazy our families are. And, there's some real similarities between my and Jennifer's family or my and [Jennifer's husband's] family. Or, [my partner's] and Jennifer's family, and so, we spend a lot of time when we're all four together sharing stories of family and the stress and the struggles and the good things too, but mostly stuff like that."

Later, when she talked about how race and ethnicity came up in their conversations, Allison said that they often discussed race and ethnicity in relation to Jennifer's experiences with her in-laws. Again, discussion of race and ethnicity fit into their more prevalent conversations about family.

Race and ethnicity often arose as topics of conversation when friends needed to hash out current concerns. Melinda talked to Nora about her interactions with her boyfriend's friends, who were mostly Asian. Nora conferred with Melinda about a conflict she had with an Asian woman in her graduate school program. Tara talked with Melanie about how her ethnicity affected her dating life:

> "I'm having issues in a relationship. So, she has been seeing what my issues are in that, and my being Indian is affecting that a lot… She does the same thing. So, for me it is a glimpse into how she's leading her life. So, that informs me of her ethnicity."

Within conversations, friends sometimes used jokes to broach issues of race and ethnicity. Jokes seemed to allow for light-hearted discussions of serious issues. Five participants talked about joking about racial and ethnic issues during conversations with friends. As Melinda said:

> "We used to, we still do, make jokes. We have the same sense of a goofy humor, and I like to make fun of myself a lot. And, I make fun of my own culture sometimes. Or, I'll make fun of my mom's accent and stuff. And sometimes she'll go along with it, but in a cute way, not an offensive way."

This joking seemed to fit within the context of Melinda's and Nora's friendship; both women said that their senses of humor were similar and formed a strong connection between them. Kaya, too, talked about joking with Lidia about racial and ethnic issues: "I may say something about black people, 'Well, you don't want to mess with black folks when you're talking about xyz.' Just a very familiar type of joking, and maybe I wouldn't [do that] with other people." For Kaya, this joking symbolized a level of trust and comfort with Lidia that she did not necessarily have with other friends.

Another way that friends talked about race and ethnicity was to share aspects of their cultural heritages with one another. Jeff and Rebecca often found themselves partaking in these types of conversations. According to Rebecca, this fit within the nature of their relationship: "[Race and ethnicity come up through] just sharing information, and I feel like that's what Jeff and I do in our friendship a lot." Jeff, too, felt like he often shared aspects of his culture with Rebecca. Sometimes, he said, this sharing of information was more general, but it often became more personal as he related it back to his own life:

> "You tend to explain what [a custom] means in general and then, at the end of it, you're like, 'But for me, this thing, I don't really do that very often any more. I don't go there. Like, in general, Chinese New Year, the whole family's supposed to get together and you're supposed to go have dinner and something like that. For some people it's different than for others. And so, for me, this year I didn't go home because it's too out of the way. You explain things in the general sense, and then you explain things in the context of your own personal experience."

Nora often turned to Melinda to learn more about Japanese culture while they were

growing up:

> "Because she knew that I thought Japanese culture was cool, she could bring
> things from Japan that I would look at, like magazines and little toys and music.
> And she always thought it was really funny that she could make me a mixed tape
> with Japanese music on it and I would listen to it, I'd like it. Although in some
> ways, that's just sort of bringing pop culture to me."

Nora said that she and Melinda continued to talk about Japanese culture as adults, and

sometimes she would bring news of Japanese cultural phenomena to her friend. "If I read

a story about Japan or I hear of a Japanese artist, I'll be like… 'Have you heard about

this?'"

A number of participants (n=9) said that they had talked with friends about the

effects that race and ethnicity had on their lives. These conversations seemed to occur

less frequently and often touched on emotions that friends experienced in connection with

their race and ethnicity. These conversations seemed to be especially poignant for the

friend who listened, and several participants were able to recount, in detail, hearing about

a friend's emotional connection to her racial and ethnic identities. Chris talked about a

conversation he had with Alicia about her history of feeling different from people around

her:

> "One that goes in the poignant category is the conversation we had about her
> feeling like an outsider because of race and ethnicity. And, that always makes me
> a little bit sad because it just sounds like a lonely way to go through life… She
> talks about how she's just always been a bit of an outsider. Even growing up in
> her family, a lot of her cousins from Columbia came and stayed with them for a
> long time. Her mother would take them all out to a restaurant or something and
> there would be like five or six white kids and her mother was white and then her,
> and the people at the restaurant would always think that she was the family friend
> or the tag-a-long or something. Like, 'No, I'm the daughter. These are my
> cousins.' Yeah, she talks about how she hears what white people say about black

people and what black people say about white people because they both kind of forget that she's both."

Nora remembered a conversation with Melinda that stayed with her and greatly informed her understanding of Melinda's racial and ethnic identities:

"I found out that she, in high school, thought that white guys wouldn't like her, and that was pretty recently that she told me that. I just remember thinking, 'Wow, that really did have a huge impact.' I knew, but I didn't know the extent of it. And also, she said how, sometimes, she'll look in the mirror or she'll see a picture of herself and she'll be like, 'Oh, who's that Japanese person you guys are hanging out with?' and then she'll be like, 'Oh, that's me.' And, I think that really struck me too, that because she's surrounded by white people all the time, she sort of almost loses a little bit of herself."

As mentioned previously, these conversations about personal experiences of racial and ethnic identities seemed to occur less frequently. Instead, friends more often recounted talking about other people, such as friends, clients, co-workers, and family, and their interactions with these people. When asked whether they discussed the differences in race and ethnicity between them, every participant said "no." Despite this resounding "no," many participants *did* mention incidents in which they talked about differences between their own and their friend's racial and ethnic identities. The common sentiment was that they did not talk about sensitive topics raised by differences in their race and ethnicity. As Lidia explained:

"We talk about personality differences. We talk about race and ethnicity. Between us, we've had the conversation when she'll say, 'As an African American woman...' And I would say, 'As a Columbian woman, as an immigrant…' We kind of talk about it as… see, the thing is, her and I haven't had a conflict yet. We haven't had a fight yet. And I think in relationships, in any friendship, that can determine a lot of what comes up in that time. So, I think we've had moments of something a little bit uncomfortable… But never, we haven't had a deep, emotional discussion about our differences of ethnicity… Let's put it this way, more than other people, yes. Definitely. But, what we're capable of, probably not."

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In summary, friends' conversations about race and ethnicity ranged from the general to the personal. Most frequently, mentions of race and ethnicity were incorporated into friends' conversations about life issues, such as relationships, family, and friends. Conversations exploring emotions connected with their racial and ethnic identities occurred less frequently for most friendship dyads. Conversations directly addressing differences in the friends' racial and ethnic identities were especially rare.

Conversation Inhibitors

Friends mentioned a number of factors that could inhibit them from having conversations about race and ethnicity. For instance, these conversations seemed to be more difficult when either person felt nervous, self-conscious, unsafe, or unsure of how the other person might respond. As Chris, a white American man, noted, "Sometimes, even if it's just white people in general, it can be kind of an awkward conversation to have." Some friends talked about the inhibiting effects of white guilt (n=2), while others talked about the fear of hurting friends by saying something wrong (n=4). Several people of color spoke about feeling more comfortable talking with friends who "get it."

The two women who mentioned white guilt during their interviews both referred to it as something negative. One white woman referred to her feelings of white guilt as she was growing up: "I felt very guilty about being white, which wasn't probably helpful to me or to the friends of color that I was with. It was just sort of an impediment to all of us." A woman of color also talked about her friend's experience with white guilt: "I think I've also been conscious about talking about [race and ethnicity] with her because I knew she was experiencing white guilt and stuff before. I didn't want to hurt [her], and so I might have been more conscious about what I was saying."

This woman's quote highlighted the dilemma that a number of participants voiced: censoring themselves for fear of saying something that might offend their friend. For some people, this made them more careful about what they said to the friend. As one participant said, "I think, to some extent, I'm a little careful about what I say about race. Even though we've never had an argument about it and we're really comfortable having conversations, I still pay attention to what I say." Another participant spoke of the vulnerability she felt when she thought about the implications that racism had in her relationship with her friend:

> "It also makes me feel like I would never want to say anything that would be offensive to her or even think anything that would be offensive to her. And, I know I will, so there's vulnerability in that. And so, I'm really thinking about it and examining it. It makes it sort of more raw."

Another aspect that participants said affected their discussions of race and ethnicity was how much they perceived people as "getting it." Specifically, three participants of color said this about talking with people about racial and ethnic issues. All three said that talking with people who didn't "get it" was more difficult, although none said this about the friend with whom they participated in the study, "Getting it" seemed to imply understanding dynamics that racism and discrimination have created within the United States and in the world. As one woman pointed out,

> "I think I have some white friends who I feel 'get it', and so, that's the people I feel like I can say things [about race and ethnicity] to. So, yeah, I do shift my communication. I think it depends on how much I think people 'get it.'"

Conversation Facilitators

Participants talked about a number of qualities that made them feel comfortable talking about racial and ethnic issues with their friends. Throughout the interviews, they

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repeatedly mentioned the following factors as increasing their comfort in talking about race and ethnicity: curiosity (n=8), openness and open-mindedness (n=8), being nonjudgmental and accepting (n=5), and feeling comfortable in the relationship (n=10).

Several participants said that they were more likely to share information about experiences connected with their race and ethnicity if their friends expressed interest in hearing about these things. They could show this interest by listening to what a friend had to say or through asking questions. Nora had noticed that "when I've expressed interest, [Melinda] will talk about [her culture and ethnicity]." Jeff talked about how Rebecca showed her interest in him through asking questions. He compared this with other friends who did not ask as many questions.

> "[Some friends] are not as willing to learn as much… With Rebecca, she'll be, more often than not, the one who will ask questions. People just accept it, and they don't really want to delve as deep into it as Rebecca would. I think some people are just set in their ways, but Rebecca is very open to different things."

Similar to curiosity, participants also felt that open-mindedness was an important quality in creating open communication between friends. Nine participants talked about their friend as being open-minded and/or open to new experiences. Several (n=3) also believed that their friend considered them open-minded.

For five participants, feeling like their friend would not judge them for what they said helped them open up about their own racial and ethnic issues or helped them feel more comfortable asking questions about race and ethnicity in general. For some, this acceptance was built upon the length and strength of the friendship. Nora said of her friendship with Melinda,

> "From my end, [there's] a feeling of acceptance that I can say whatever I want and she's not going to get mad at me or anything… I feel very comfortable

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talking about [race and ethnicity] with her compared to other people. I think because we've been friends for so long…and because she's very nonjudgmental. I'm not afraid that she's going to react or be mad at me. She's just very understanding of where I'm coming from. I don't know if it's because she grew up with me or because she knows that I'm a good genuine person. But, I don't feel any fear around her talking about it."

Other participants said they felt comfortable talking with the friend because they did not

fear that she would use what they said to make assumptions or judgments about them.

Tara said the following about talking with Melanie:

"I feel I'm more open with her. I feel she's more accepting of my differences because what's happened is, even though I hold on to my ideas and I think I'm still very Indian, there are certain things that I don't feel comfortable talking with my Indian friends about. Like for example, if I were to date an American… I mean, I don't think they would care, but it's not something that's done, almost. And so, I feel comfortable talking to Melanie about it while, my other friends might know, but I don't know what they would think, so that would make me hold back."

For these participants, the friendship base they had created was strong enough to hold the

vulnerability they felt in expressing themselves. They trusted their friends to thin about

the information they were telling them without making judgements about their character.

Feeling comfortable within the friendship was also important in facilitating

conversations about race and ethnicity. Some participants talked about openness and

comfort as unique qualities that developed over time. Jeff said that his comfort with

Rebecca grew as their friendship grew stronger:

"In the very beginning though, you're a little hesitant and you try a little bit to find what you have in common first before you can get to investigate each other's differences. But, I think that's pretty much the same with most friendships. At first, you start at a common ground, and as you learn more about the other person, you can feel more comfortable to figure out what you have that's different. I think the difference between some friendships and others, like good friendships and less good friendships is that, those differences, sometimes make the friendship stronger, and sometimes it makes it work. For Rebecca and I, it's definitely something that makes it stronger."

For many people, openness and feeling comfortable within a friendship were two main criteria for feeling close with someone. This openness helped them feel more comfortable talking about their race and ethnicity and, in turn, contributed to their feelings of closeness.

This section examined conversations that friends had about race and ethnicity, looking at the frequency of these conversations, the contexts within which race and ethnicity are discussed, how they are discussed, and what factors inhibit and facilitate these conversations.

Summary

This chapter outlined findings from interviews with seven interracial and interethnic friendship pairs about their perceptions of and communication about one another's race and ethnicity. While the themes presented in this chapter were not exhaustive, they did address prominent trends in the data. Information from the interviews was grouped into four themes that addressed both perceptions and communication: effects that differences in race and ethnicity had on the friendships; comparisons in how people talked about their own racial and ethnic identities, how they talked about their friend's racial and ethnic identities, and how their friend talked about them; ways in which people developed their perceptions of their friend's racial and ethnic identities; and communications about race and ethnicity within the friendship. The following chapter explores the implications of these findings, relating them back to the reviewed literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how members of interracial and interethnic friendship dyads talked about and developed their perceptions of one another's race and ethnicity. This chapter is organized according to themes identified in the findings, and these themes are discussed within the context of the reviewed literature. At the close of the chapter, the study's limitations are discussed, as are implications for future research and social work practice.

Understanding the Findings Within the Context of the Literature

In the literature review, I focused on three areas informing our understanding of interracial and interethnic friendships: racial and ethnic identity development theories, intergroup relations theories, and friendship. In this section, I connect findings from the study to aspects of the reviewed literature. This section is organized according to themes identified in the previous chapter: roles that race and ethnicity played within friendships, parallels in how friends talked about their own and their friend's race and ethnicity, friends' development of ideas about one another's racial and ethnic identities, and friends' communication about race and ethnicity.

Roles that Race and Ethnicity Played Within Friendships

I asked participants a number of questions about how differences in race and ethnicity affected their friendship. In response, they talked about issues such as awareness of their own and their friend's race and ethnicity, differences in how they interacted with the friend participating in the study and with friends who shared their race or ethnicity, miscommunications or misunderstandings due to differences in race and

ethnicity, and strengths or learning opportunities due to differences in race and ethnicity. This section looks at significant findings within these themes.

Increased awareness of race and ethnicity. Of the twelve participants who pointed to times when they felt more aware of their own and/or their friend's race and ethnicity, all of them talked about situations in which differences between the two friends were highlighted. The majority of the situations were ones in which the two friends were around other people or were thinking about their friendship within the context of others. These situations seemed to create conditions in which friends were forced to think about themselves from others' perspectives. When they thought about how others might perceive them, they became more aware of the differences between them. Some friends talked about these situations with discomfort, while others noted the differences without emotion.

Within the context of intergroup relations theories, friends' differences may be understood as reminders that, although they belonged to the same in-group (their friendship), they were also members of different out-groups (racial and ethnic groups). Research on intergroup relations has shown that we emphasize similarities between ourselves and other members of our in-groups, while we perceive more differences between ourselves and members of out-groups (Hogg & Haines, 2001; Tajfel & Forgas, 2000). Social Identity Theory suggests that people develop negative biases toward members of out-groups to maintain positive perceptions of their in-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). Within this context, manifestations of differences between friends may have challenged their perceptions of their similarities. By reminding them of one another's out-group membership, these differences may have carried a subtle threat to the

integrity of the in-group that the friends had created and to their positive evaluations of one another.

Differences in communication between friendships. Participants were asked to talk about any differences they noticed between how they talked with the friend participating in the study and how they communicated with friends of their same race or ethnicity. Eight participants noted differences: some said that they were more sensitive to issues of race and ethnicity when talking with this friend, and others noted a unique understanding between themselves and members of their same racial and ethnic groups. These findings are significant in that, even in very close relationships, race and ethnicity have the potential to create areas of sensitivity and potential misunderstandings.

Miscommunications and misunderstandings. How friends handled potential misunderstandings is also significant. One friend's explanation of how she turned a potential misunderstanding into a learning opportunity for both herself and her friend emphasizes the importance of communication and openness. This experience required both friends' willingness to acknowledge and explore their differences. In this example, the participant feared that her friend might be offended by something she had said. So, she brought the matter up with her friend, explained her concern, and asked her friend how she felt about the situation. This method allowed both friends to process the incident and to find out more about one another's thoughts. This example of two friends successfully handling a potential miscommunication can inform methods that social workers use for facilitating communication among people from different backgrounds. It implies the importance of creating environments in which people feel safe voicing their

perceptions of a misunderstanding and hearing other people's perceptions of the same incident.

Strengths and learning opportunities. When asked to talk about strengths in their friendship due to differences in race and ethnicity, ten participants mentioned having learning opportunities. Most people talked about having the opportunity to learn about another person's experiences with her race and ethnicity. As one friend said, "I love that I can just be open to new experiences through her. I love that there's sharing, that we're able to invite each other into each other's worlds and families and friends." A number of participants talked about how the friendship helped them build their comfort and sensitivity in interacting with people from different races and ethnicities. Friends' reports about learning opportunities support Pettigrew's (1997, 1998) assertion that interracial and interethnic friendships are effective in shaping people's understandings of racial and ethnic groups other than their own. They also support Allport's (1954) theory that contact with people from other races and ethnicities increases our openness to and comfort in partaking in future interethnic and interracial interactions.

How Friends Talked About Their Own and Their Friend's Race & Ethnicity

Something that was striking in comparing how friends talked about their own and one another's race and ethnicity was the parallels that they drew between themselves and their friend. There were many similarities in how participants described themselves and their friends. There were also similarities in how participants described their own race and ethnicity and how their friend described that person's race and ethnicity. These findings reflect research on friendship, as well as aspects of intergroup relations theories.

The similarities in how participants talked about themselves and their friends may have been due, in part, to their friendship's influence on their understandings of themselves. Friends' conversations with each other likely influenced one another's racial and ethnic identity development processes. As close friends have the ability to shape our understandings of ourselves (Berg & Clark, 1986), conversations about a friend's experiences with race and ethnicity may influence the listening friend's understanding of her own race and ethnicity. For instance, a person may talk with her friend about issues of race and ethnicity that she is facing and, in turn, make her friend more aware of how these issues might be affecting her own racial and ethnic identities.

Similarities in how participants talked about themselves and their friends may have also resulted from participants' generalizations of their understandings of their own racial and ethnic identities onto their friends. People perceive their friends as being similar to them, so they may assume that their friends feel about their race and ethnicity as they do about theirs. Or, they may assume that their friends have had experiences similar to their own.

These parallels in how friends talked about themselves and one another raise questions. For instance, how do friends contribute to one another's racial and ethnic identity development? Do their conversations provide them language with which to talk about themselves and one another? Do friends have joint experiences that similarly affect their understandings of themselves and of one another? Are people attracted to friends whose concepts of their racial and ethnic identities are similar to their own?

Similarities expressed by friends in talking about their race and ethnicity may also reflect constructs proposed in intergroup relations theories. When friends perceive

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themselves as members of the same in-group, they may stress their similarities. This idea matches Tajfel's and Turner's (2001) assertions that members of the same in-group emphasize similarities between one another. It also reflects constructs proposed by the Recategorization Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000b, 2005). This model asserts that members of different ethnic and racial groups are more likely to have harmonious interactions when they recognize themselves as members of a superordinate group. As members of this group, they develop their ideas of things they have in common with one another. Close friends, in perceiving themselves as members of the same superordinate group, may stress their similarities and build upon these ideas. As they recognize more similarities between one another, their interactions may become increasingly satisfying and they may feel closer to one another. They may then extend perceptions of their similarities to their understandings of their race and ethnicity.

Developing Perceptions of a Friend's Race and Ethnicity

Friends identified a number of ways in which they developed their perceptions of one another's race and ethnicity. In the previous chapter, I discussed four methods used by friends for learning about one another's race and ethnicity: assumptions, readings and other avenues for learning, observations, and conversations. These findings expand on ideas proposed by intergroup relations theorists. As mentioned previously, Pettigrew stressed the importance of friendships in helping people decrease their stereotypes and develop their understandings of members of other ethnic and racial groups. Pettigrew (1998) talked about various qualities inherent to friendships that make them conducive to this process. Among these qualities are: friends' equal status, their collaboration in working toward common goals, and the long-term nature of friendships. Findings from

this study expand upon the qualities mentioned by Pettigrew. According to participants, friendships provide opportunities to: 1) closely witness someone's experiences and to accompany her in these experiences, and 2) talk about issues of race and ethnicity without fear of judgement.

The absence of judgement was mentioned by a number of participants and is especially important to enabling people to learn about one another. Race and ethnicity are sensitive topics which people often refrain from discussing for fear of saying something wrong, offending others, being misunderstood, or having others not "get it." In their close friendships, participants were able to overcome the discomfort of talking about race and ethnicity because they were not afraid that their friends would judge them. This made them more open to expressing themselves and to learning about the other person. Helping people to listen without passing judgement seems important to facilitating interactions that decrease negative stereotypes between groups.

The current study also expands on intergroup relations theories by identifying processes friends use in learning about each other. This study's participants revealed that, most often, friends learned about one another's race and ethnicity through observing each other in different situations and through talking. Friends' observations and conversations seemed to occur within the realm of their every day interactions. Often, conversations informing participants about one another's race and ethnicity happened within the context of everyday conversations about other subjects. In this way, learning about race and ethnicity seemed to take place subtly, without friends necessarily realizing that they were addressing issues of race and ethnicity.

The subtlety in how friends talked about race and ethnicity was reiterated in friends' responses when asked how frequently they talked about race and ethnicity. Although the majority of friends said that they did not often speak about race and ethnicity, most participants were able to talk about their friend's ethnic and racial identities in detail and to recount conversations in which they had discussed aspects of race and ethnicity with their friend. A similar phenomenon happened when friends were asked about conversations in which differences between one another's race and ethnicity were discussed. All of the friends said that they did not have these conversations, yet many friends talked about conversations in which differences between one another's race and ethnicity were addressed indirectly.

Qualities of participants' conversations about race and ethnicity, including subtlety and being interwoven into conversations about other topics, support theorists' ideas that learning about another person's race and ethnicity is better done in a long-term context. The long-term nature of friendship allows dyad members to integrate pieces of knowledge they've gathered over time into a more complex understanding of one another's racial and ethnic identities.

The importance of knowing someone for a long period of time was also revealed in responses given by friends who had known each other for extended periods. Instead of simply witnessing one another at one point in time, long-term friends were able to observe each other over years. Because of this, they gained perspective on how their friend's racial and ethnic identities changed over time. They witnessed positive aspects of a friend's relationship to her race and ethnicity, as well as struggles that she may have gone through in relation to her race and ethnicity. These friends also experienced

changes in the content, tone and frequency of their communications about race and ethnicity. Their understanding of one another's racial and ethnic identities seemed to be more complex than friends who knew each other for fewer years. Instead of simply gaining an understanding of one another's race and ethnicity, they came to understand each other's racial and ethnic identities.

Gaining insight into someone's racial and ethnic identities is different from gaining insight into her race and ethnicity. When a person begins to understand someone's racial and ethnic identities, she sees how that person relates to her race and ethnicity. She may then understand that each person's relationship to her race and ethnicity is unique. This may contribute to her ability to perceive heterogeneity among members of racial and ethnic groups other than her own. In this way, long-term friendships may contribute to decreasing people's stereotypes and increasing their ability to perceive members of other racial and ethnic groups as unique individuals.

Related to this process is participants' discussion of how they used assumptions to inform their understanding of their friend's race and ethnicity. One participant, Lidia, described the process of how she combined general knowledge that she had about her friend's race and ethnicity with her actual experience of her friend:

> "For me, I'm sure the way I experienced African-American people in general influenced the way I perceive her, and on top of that, it just so happens that I've talked to her and we're becoming friends, and so, it's like two separate things. One is my concept of what's being built in my head of what an African-American person is and separately who Kaya is as an African-American woman. So, I think those are two different things… They inform each other. But, at the same time, the closer I get to her, the more I can separate them. In the sense that I can see her more for who she is, and not just, 'there's this interesting African-American woman who works in my office and she's so sweet. Oh, she's so nice, whatever.' That's very superficial."

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Lidia's description of her process supports the Decategorization Model (Brewer and Miller, 1996). This model suggests that, as people meet and interact with members of other ethnic and racial groups on an individual basis, they begin to place more import on the information gained through their interactions than on assumptions they have about a person's race and ethnicity. Through these interactions, they gain a more complex understanding of the person and are then able to perceive others from the same ethnic or racial group as unique individuals instead of undifferentiated members of the same group.

Communication About Race and Ethnicity

Friends were asked to talk about a number of factors related to their communication about race and ethnicity, including factors that either facilitated or inhibited these conversations, and the frequency and content of their conversations. Friends said that issues such as "white guilt," fear of offending the friend, and feeling that the friend didn't "get" issues of racism inhibited their comfort in talking about race and ethnicity. Factors that facilitated conversations included feeling comfortable in the relationship, the friend's curiosity about issues of race and ethnicity, her open-mindedness, and her acceptance. Understanding what factors inhibit and facilitate conversations about race and ethnicity can help social workers improve their abilities to perform mediation and conflict resolution in diverse settings, as well as to facilitate potentially sensitive conversations about race and ethnicity.

Friends' responses, when talking about the content of their conversations, showed an interesting trend: talk of race and ethnicity was usually incorporated into conversations that were more common to the friends' relationship. These conversations occurred more frequently when issues of race and ethnicity were salient in one or both friends' lives.

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Many participants noted that they talked about race and ethnicity with their friends when these aspects of their identity were affecting their interactions with family, significant others, or friends. So, when a friend's racial and ethnic identities played more prevalent roles in her life, her issues tended to shape how race and ethnicity entered into the friends' conversations. This trend parallels Janet Helm's theory that a person's stage of racial identity development affects her conversations with people of other races (1990b). In the same way, how a person thinks about her race and ethnicity, the salience that race and ethnicity have in her life at a given time, and any events she is experiencing in which race and ethnicity play a role affect the way she talks about race and ethnicity with her friends.

Along with her theory that a person's stage in her racial identity development process affects how she interacts with people from other racial groups, Helms believed that, when several people converse, their stages of racial identity development interact to shape their communication. According to Helms, communication tends to be influenced by the dominant communicator's stage in her ethnic and racial identity development. This may lead others to communicate in either more regressed or more advanced manners than are typical for them. Helms also believed that the most comfortable communications occur between people who are in similar stages of racial identity development.

Although no concrete measure of racial or ethnic identity development was conducted in the current study, aspects of how participants related to their racial and ethnic identities were gleaned from answers to various questions. For example, participants' general feelings about their race and ethnicity became evident when they

talked about what it meant to them to be [their race/ethnicity]. In many friendship pairs, members paralleled one another in their awareness of their racial and ethnic identities. Reflecting Helms' theory that people at similar levels of racial identity development have more harmonious interactions, friends' similar levels of awareness and ways of relating to their racial and ethnic identities may have contributed to positive interactions with one another. These positive interactions may have enhanced friends' feelings of closeness.

Instead of Helms' assertion that the dominant speaker's racial and ethnic identity development plays the primary role in shaping the conversation, both friends seemed to contribute to the tone their conversations took. When a friend's race and ethnicity felt more salient for her or she found herself facing racial and ethnic issues that affected her daily life, her perspectives on race and ethnicity may have played larger roles in the friends' conversations. As the salience of these issues faded, the friend's racial and ethnic identities may have played less dominant roles in shaping conversations.

At the same time that a friend's stage of racial and ethnic identity development may have had greater influence in shaping conversations when she was facing racial and ethnic issues that she needed to talk about, the listening friend's perceptions of race and ethnicity also contributed to the shape that conversations took. As a person responded to her friend's stories, she influenced how her friend talked about and interpreted her experiences. This dynamic was evident in Tara's and Melanie's discussions about the clashes between Tara's Indian cultural values and the American cultural values she witnessed in the United States. In talking about Tara, Melanie referred several times to the "restrictions" that Tara faced because of her cultural identity. Tara, when talking about herself and Melanie's perception of her, first referred to the "invisible restrictions

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that [she] kind of puts on [herself]." Later, she amended what she said: "I wouldn't call them restrictions, I just would call them my cultural values." Melanie's references to Tara's cultural values as restrictions may have influenced how Tara viewed the role that her cultural values played in her life.

Another example of how one friend's response can influence another's interpretations of racial or ethnic issues is Nora's conversation with her friend, Melinda, about a conflict she had with an Asian student in her graduate program. Nora's racial and ethnic identities have been more prevalent for her in the past year because her graduate program asks its students to think, in-depth, about racial and ethnic issues. After having an upsetting interaction with a fellow student, she reported the incident to Melinda, and Melinda gave her feedback. Melinda's feedback contributed to how Nora interpreted and responded to the event. This same pattern was present in other friends' reports about their conversations. While one friend may initiate a conversation about race and ethnicity in a manner that is shaped by her own perceptions, her friend responds in a way that is shaped by her own perceptions.

In conclusion, friends' responses support aspects of the literature, including Pettigrew's assertion that friendship is an important vehicle for enhancing people's understandings of members of ethnic and racial groups that are different from their own. Participants' responses contributed to intergroup relations theories by expanding on how people develop their perceptions of others. The idea that friendships have the power to shape our identities and contribute to our ways of thinking was also supported by friends' responses. In many of the interviews, members of friendship dyads seemed to share language and to influence one another's understandings of their own and of one another's

racial and ethnic identities. Participants' responses also seemed to support Helms' idea that people who are at similar stages of their racial identity development are likely to have more harmonious interactions. The research expanded on Helms' model by exploring how people with equal status communicate about issues of race and ethnicity. Findings from this study challenged Helms' ideas about how people's racial and ethnic identity development shapes communication.

Limitations

The ability to generalize the findings from this study is limited by a number of factors. The study's sample size is small and the friendship dyads that participated represent a self-selected group. Participants volunteered for the study, which implies that they were able to recognize racial and ethnic differences in one another, were interested in talking about the subject, and felt comfortable enough in their friendship to address these issues. Friends who experienced more conflict around racial and ethnic differences may have been less enthusiastic about participating in the study. Also, friends who were experiencing earlier stages of their ethnic and racial identity development may have been less cognizant of ethnic and racial differences between themselves and their friends. Also significant was the overall level of education had by the study's participants; every person in the study had graduated from college, twelve participants had completed graduate studies or were in graduate programs. Higher levels of education have been associated with the formation of more interracial and interethnic friendships and with decreased bias against other groups (Fong & Isajiw, 2000; Pettigrew, 1997). For these reasons, the study's participants comprise a unique group of people and do not represent all interracial and interethnic friendships dyads.

Often in research, a study's strength may also be seen as a limitation. When determining who could participate in the study, I chose to focus on the perception of difference between friends instead of limiting participation by the ethnic and racial groups to which people belonged. For this reason, the participants identified themselves as belonging to a variety of racial and ethnic groups. Inherent to these differing racial and ethnic groups are social dynamics that are endemic to living in the United States. Stereotypes of each racial and ethnic group differ, as do the discrimination by which these groups are targeted. Also affecting friendships may be the intergroup dynamics that are prevalent between different racial and ethnic groups in the United States. For instance, one woman in the study noted that Asians are often perceived as being more integrated into white culture than other racial groups in the United States. This dynamic may create tensions that are unique to friendships between Asian-Americans and white Americans, as opposed to friendships between Asian-Americans and African-Americans or African-Americans and white Americans. This study's focus on perceptions of difference may have prevented gaining a better understanding of how friendships dyads between people of certain races and ethnicities are affected by overall social dynamics between particular racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

Another limitation of the study was the racial make-up of the participating dyads. In six of the seven dyads, one of the participants identified as white and one person identified as a person of color. So, one person identified with the dominant racial group in the United States, and one person identified with a minority racial group in the United States. The social dynamic created by racism in this country may contribute to particular dynamics and communication patterns present in friendships where one person identifies

as a person of color and one identifies as white. In this study, only in one dyad did both participants identify as women of color. In this dyad, the participants' awareness of their racial and ethnic identities was especially high, and their communication about racial and ethnic issues often seemed more in-depth than the communication between members of other dyads. Was this level of communication due, in any part, to both women's identification as women of color? This is a possibility, and it implies that interviews with dyads in which both members identify as people of color may manifest results that differ from those witnessed in the current study. Another dynamic that was not explored in this study is that which occurs between two white friends who identify with different ethnic groups.

Another limitation to this study is my bias, as the creator of the interview questions, the person who conducted the interviews, and the person who wrote this report. I am a white, Jewish-American woman who has grown up in the United States and been affected by the racial and ethnic stereotypes and power dynamics present in this country. In conducting this study, there are aspects of interracial and interethnic relations that I have, no doubt, neglected to consider, as well as factors that I may be blind to because of my identity. My racial and ethnic identities probably also affected how participants responded to my questions. As one participant noted, "I do talk about race differently depending on who I talk to. Because you're white I'm talking about it totally differently to you than if you were Asian or black." So, as you consider the findings from this study, please take into account my biases.

Implications For Future Research and Practice

Contributing to understandings of friendship, as well as the ways that racial and ethnic stereotypes affect people's interactions with one another, would be research that focuses on dyads in which friends identify as members of specific ethnic and racial groups. For instance, a study that examines dynamics only within friendships between Chinese-Americans and white Americans or Chinese-Americans and Korean-Americans would highlight trends present in those relationships that might not exist in friendships between members of other ethnic and racial groups. Also beneficial would be research that focuses on friendship pairs in which both members identify as people of color but differ in their racial and/or ethnic identities, as well as research on friendship pairs in which both members are white, but differ in their ethnic identities.

Another interesting area for research is the impact of long-term interracial and interethnic friendships on people's concepts of their own and one another's racial and ethnic identities. Findings from this study hint at the influence that friends' interactions have on how they perceive their racial and ethnic identities. The longer the friendship, the more impact the relationship seems to carry. Long-term friendships often require friends to maneuver through periods of distance and closeness, as well as changes in how the friends relate to their own ethnic and racial identities. Research exploring how friends adjust to these changes in one another would contribute to our understanding of the effects that friendships have on our racial and ethnic identity development. It would enhance social workers' understanding of identity formation and the influence of peer relations.

Findings from this study are especially pertinent to social work practice in racially and ethnically diverse settings. Participants' discussions of how they developed perceptions of one another's ethnic and racial identities provide insight into how we build our ideas about people who are different from us. This knowledge can help social workers to facilitate interactions that lead to more complex, accurate understandings of people from different racial and ethnic groups. Participants' explanations of the contexts within which they discussed race and ethnicity, as well as what factors inhibited and facilitated their conversations about race and ethnicity can guide social workers in developing models for communication that decrease anxiety and increase comfort. Higher levels of anxiety can exacerbate people's tendency to resort to stereotyping and negative biases, while increased comfort levels enable people to remain open-minded and be more willing to share information about themselves.

One idea that can be extracted from the findings and applied to the creation of models for communication that enhance people's understandings of others' racial and ethnic identities is: communication about race and ethnicity often occur within the context of other conversations. Friends said that they learned about one another's racial and ethnic identities while talking about other subjects. Embedding communication about race and ethnicity within conversations about other topics may help people explore various aspects of their racial and ethnic identities. It may also help people discuss what are often considered to be sensitive topics without becoming defensive or shutting down. Also important to facilitating conversations that enhance understanding is creating an environment in which participants are able to listen to one another without judgement.

The bond between participants must be strong enough to allow them to challenge the vulnerability they feel in talking about race and ethnicity.

This study hinted at the importance of friendships in influencing people's concepts of their own racial and ethnic identities. We develop our understandings of ourselves within the context of others. Findings pertaining to the influence of friendship on ethnic and racial identity development are important to social work practice in a number of ways. They remind us that, as social workers, we must consider peer relations when exploring clients' identity formation. Talking with clients about their close friendships can give social workers insight into how clients perceive themselves, as well as what relationships they have that influence their self-concept. The findings also speak to the importance of working with clients to build and utilize their peer support networks. By attributing appropriate significance to friendships and their influence on racial and ethnic identity development, we can access a tool that can be used to empower clients, as well as to explore aspects of identity that might otherwise go unnoticed.

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COME TALK ABOUT FRIENDSHIP!

ARE YOU CLOSE FRIENDS WITH SOMEONE FROM A DIFFERENT RACIAL OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND THAN YOUR OWN?

If so, I am interested in talking with you and your friend! I am conducting a research study on friends' understandings of one another's racial and ethnic identities. I am looking for volunteers who fit the following criteria:

1) Between the ages of 25 and 40
2) Close friends with someone from a different racial or ethnic background for at least one year

Participants will take part in a 40-60 minute interview. All responses are kept confidential!

Interested?
Please contact me at:
(my telephone #) or mrocklen@smith.edu

Appendix B

Questions to Determine Eligibility

1) How do you identify racially?

2) How do you identify ethnically?

3) How does your friend identify racially?

4) How does your friend identify ethnically?

5) Do you consider yourself to be the same or different from your friend when it comes to your racial identity?

6) Do you consider yourself to be the same or different from your friend when it comes to your ethnic identity?

7) How old are you?

8) How old is your friend?

9) How long have you been friends with one another?

10) Do you consider this person to be a close friend of yours?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form and List of Resources

Dear Participant:

My name is Melissa Rocklen. I am a master's level graduate student at the Smith School for Social Work. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for my degree, I am conducting a research study about understandings of ethnic and racial identity within cross-ethnic and cross-racial friendships. For this research, I will be interviewing both members of friendship pairs about their perceptions of their own ethnic and racial identity, perceptions of their friend's ethnic and racial identity, and the role that race and ethnicity play within their friendship. The data collected will be presented in a master's level thesis and will be used for presentation and publication.

As a participant in this study, you have identified yourself as a member of a cross-ethnic or cross-racial friendship that has endured for at least one year and that you consider "close." You and your friend will each be interviewed individually. I kindly ask you not to discuss any information from or questions asked during this interview with your friend until both of your interviews have been completed. Discussions held prior to the completion of both interviews will undermine the study's value.

You will take part in a one-on-one interview lasting approximately forty to sixty minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about your ethnic and racial identity, as well as your understanding of your friend's ethnic and racial identity, and what role you believe race and ethnicity play within your friendship with this person. Each interview will be audio taped. I will individually conduct and transcribe each interview.

The possible risks associated with participating in this study include:

1) Feelings of discomfort that may arise from being asked to speculate on a friend's ethnic and racial identity and to discuss the friendship without the friend present.
2) Discomfort from being asked to think about how your and your friend's ethnic and racial identities may affect your friendship.
3) Discomfort because I am interviewing both you and your friend. Please be assured that everything you say during this interview is held confidential. Nothing you say will be repeated in another interview nor will affect the questions that I ask in your friend's interview. Everything that your friend tells me will also be held in confidence. Nothing she says will be repeated in another interview nor will affect the questions that I ask in your interview.
4) The possibility that you will recognize quotes from your friend's interview or that your friend will recognize quotes from your interview in presentations and publications of findings from the study. In presenting information from interviews, I will take all possible measures to disguise identifying information.

I will provide you with a list of resources and referrals, including mental health professionals, should you experience any discomfort during the interview.

The benefits of participating in this study may include having the opportunity to explore your ethnic and racial identity, as well as your friend's ethnic and racial identity. The questions asked may help you think and talk about your friendship in a way that you have not in the past, and the information discussed may provide insight into yourself and your friendship. Your participation will also further professionals' understanding of cross-ethnic and cross-racial friendships.

All of the information that you provide will be kept confidential. Identifying information, such as your name, your friend's name, and your place of residence, will be disguised to ensure confidentiality. Transcripts from interviews will be shared with my research advisor only after all possible identifying information has been disguised or removed. In using information from interviews in my thesis paper and in other presentations, I will maintain participants' confidentiality by presenting data as trends in the information collected from all participants as a group. In presenting any quotes or vignettes from interviews, I will ensure confidentiality by disguising any identifying information.

I am mandated by federal law to securely store all tapes, notes, and transcripts from this interview for three years. All of the materials associated with this study will be kept in a secure location, and I will be the only person with access to this information. After three years, all information will be destroyed. If it becomes necessary to keep information for longer than three years, all materials will be kept secure for the designated period of time and then destroyed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to answer any questions asked during this interview. You can choose to withdraw from this study at any time during the process. If you choose to withdraw before April 1st, 2007, all information collected from you will be destroyed.

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understand the above information and that you have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study, your participation, and your rights, and that you agree to participate in the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Thank you for your participation.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

If you have any questions, please contact:

Melissa Rocklen
(my phone number)
Mrocklen@smith.edu

List of Referrals

Community Health Centers offering Counseling and Mental Health Services

Cambridge Health Alliance
Program for Psychotherapy
Macht Building
Cambridge Hospital
1493 Cambridge St.
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-591-6033
Accepts a variety of insurances

Fenway Community Health
7 Haviland Street
Boston, MA 02115
617-927-6202

Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center
640 Centre Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617-983-4100
Accepts a variety of insurances

The Therapy Center
Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis
1581 Beacon St.
Brookline, MA 02446
617-277-3910
Offers sliding scale fees

Women's Mental Health Collective
61 Roseland Street
Somerville, MA 02143
617-354-6270
Accepts a variety of insurances and offers sliding scale fees

Resources for Finding a Therapist

To find a licensed, clinical social worker in your area:
Visit: http://search.socialworkers.org/default.asp?df=CSW&fn=

To find a psychologist:
Call: 1-800-964-2000
Visit: http://locator.apahelpcenter.org/

Appendix D

Demographic Questions

1) How frequently do you communicate with your friend?

2) How frequently do you see one another?

3) Think about other friends who you feel close with. How do they identify racially

and ethnically?

Appendix E

Semi Structured Interview Guide

1) **Friendship background questions:**
   a. Tell me about your friendship with F.
      i. How did the two of you become friends?
      ii. How would you describe your friendship?
      iii. Tell me a little bit about F.
   b. How do you think you are similar to one another?
   c. How do you think you are different from one another?
   d. What attracted you to him/her?

2) **Ethnic identity questions (self):**
   a. You said that you identify as [race and/or ethnicity]. What is it like for you to be [race and/or ethnicity]?
      i. What does it mean to you to be [race and/or ethnicity]?
      ii. What role do you think that being [race and/or ethnicity] has played in your life?
      iii. What are some experiences that you've had that you think are specific to being [race/ethnicity]?
   b. Please answer the next question using a number between one and ten, with 1 being "not at all" and 10 being "a lot." How big of a role has being [race and/or ethnicity] played in your life? [Repeat number mentioned by participant.] What does that mean?

3) **Ethnic identity questions (friend):**
   a. Tell me about F's ethnic/racial identity.
      i. What do you think it means to be [race and/or ethnicity]?
      ii. What do you know about F's racial and/or ethnic identity?
      iii. What role do you think that being [race and/or ethnicity] has played in her life?
      iv. Is there anything she/he has told you about her/his [race/ethnicity] and what it's been like for her?
      v. How have you developed these ideas about her race and ethnicity? (ie. Has she told you these things? Are they things that you've observed? Are they things that you have assumed?)
   b. Please answer the next question using a number between one and ten, with 1 being "not at all" and 10 being "a lot." How big of a role do you think being [race and/or ethnicity] has played in F's life? [Repeat number mentioned by participant.] What does that mean?

4) **Friend's perceptions:**
   a. If I asked F to tell me about your racial and ethnic identity, what do you think she would say?
   b. If I asked F to tell me what it means to you to be [r/e], what do you think she would say?
   c. Is there anything that you can remember telling her about your r/e?
   d. Is there anything that you think might influence what she thinks about your r/e?
   e. How would she have developed these ideas about your racial and ethnic identity? (ie. From conversations? Observations? Assumptions?)

5) **Communication about race and ethnicity:**
   a. How often do race and ethnicity come up in your conversations?
   b. In what context have race and ethnicity come up in your conversations?
   c. What have those conversations been like for you?
   d. Do you ever discuss the ethnic/racial differences between the two of you?
   e. Can you tell me about one or two of those conversations?
      i. What have those conversations been like for you?
      ii. What were the circumstances behind the conversations? (ie. Who initiated? What provoked the conversations?)

6) **Self within friendship:**
   a. Are there parts of your racial and/or ethnic identity that feel exaggerated or especially pronounced when you are with F? Please explain.
   b. Are there parts that feel hidden or unexpressed? Please explain.
   c. Do you think that you act any differently in this friendship because of differences in your race/ethnicity? (ie. Do you act differently in this friendship than you do in other friendships?)
   d. What is different about your interactions with F than your interactions with friends who you consider ethnically/racially similar to you?

7) **Racial and ethnic similarities and differences within friendship:**
   a. How do you think that your and F's racial and ethnic identities make you different from one another?
   b. How do you think that your and F's racial and ethnic identities make you similar to one another?

8) **Effects of race and ethnicity on friendship:**
   a. How do you think being of different races/ethnicities affects your friendship?

b. Have there ever been any miscommunications, misunderstandings, or arguments that have been caused by differences in your ethnicity/race?
c. Do you think that there are any strengths or learning opportunities for either you or your friend that come from this relationship?
d. Do you feel like you've discovered anything about yourself through this friendship?
e. How aware are you of the racial/ethnic differences between you and your friend? Are there any experiences/circumstances that make you more aware of the differences?

9) **What was it like to answer these questions and to do this interview?**

Appendix F

Human Subjects Review Committee Approval Letter

January 15, 2007

Melissa Rocklen
(my address)

Dear Melissa,

Your revisions have been reviewed and you have done a good job of handling everything we raised. I am glad you decided to let your participants decide if they both think they are "close". You have avoided a lot of possible difficulty. Everything is now in order and we are glad to give final approval to this most interesting study.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project. I hope you get lots of interested participants. I would think it would be quite interesting for your participants to think about these questions.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Shella Dennery, Research Advisor