

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF THE DIVERSITY
EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATES AT A
PRIVATE, RELIGIOUSLY-AFFILIATED UNIVERSITY

A DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Ellen, and our two sons, Tyler and Seth. Ellen, I love you more than words can express. You have been my constant supporter and cheerleader throughout this journey. I could never have accomplished it without you.

The journey was only made complete with you by my side.

Tyler and Seth, you are the pride of my life. No other accomplishment comes close to having the two of you as sons. Each time I see you my heart swells with thanksgiving. My prayer is that both of you will have the courage, confidence and encouragement to follow and accomplish your dreams as I have mine.

Important Note:

My life is dedicated to my Savior, Jesus; whether it be a dissertation or simply speaking kindly to those I pass, my desire it to honor Him with my life. It is my hope and prayer that I have accomplished this task in a manner that has done just that.

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ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: A Phenomenological Examination of the Diversity Experiences of Undergraduates at a Private, Religiously-Affiliated University

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The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. Sixteen undergraduates from a Midwestern private, religiously affiliated university were interviewed and described their diversity experiences. The key components of their experiences revealed five emergent themes: Types of diversity experiences, Forms of diversity experiences, Influence of previous context, Benefits of diversity experiences, and Faith issues regarding diversity experiences. These over-arching themes were viewed through van Manen's (1990) notion that phenomenological themes may be defined as the structures of experience. This examination of a progression or flow of the themes explained how the following progression or flow worked within a system of contextually related experiences to help bring about benefits of student and faith development within the participants' educational lives.

The progression began when forms of diversity experiences enabled different types of diversity experiences to take place in the undergraduates' lives. In turn, the dynamics created within those types of diversity experiences instigated critical reflection

of the participants' previous context and previous held beliefs and values. This process of reflection/critical thinking enabled personal reassessment/transformation to take place as the benefits of diversity experiences produced life change within the undergraduates' lives. In sum, the progression or theme flow enabled significant individual student and faith development to take place as a result of diversity experiences within the undergraduates' educational lives.

Embracing van Manen's (1990) concept of themes defining the structure of experiences may allow the progression or flow of themes to provide the possibility for colleges/universities to chart an intentional course along that progression directed towards achieving the positive benefits that diversity experiences can bring to undergraduates' within their educational lives.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Stephen Macedo (2000) claimed that diversity, as a defining issue of our time, is not always valued. Diversity is a term that has invoked many efforts to understand how and why the social constructions of diversity impact all aspects of society, including higher education. Ryu (2009) reported that the demographics of American higher education are changing. During the time between 1995 and 2005, he reported that minority enrollment in our nation's colleges and universities rose by nearly 50 percent from 3.4 million students to 5 million students. The enrollment of Caucasian students increased from 9.9 million to 10.7 million, a gain of 8 percent; while students of color made up 29 percent of the nearly 17.5 million students on America's campuses. The increase in Hispanic enrollment led all racial/ethnic groups, up by 66 percent to more than 1.7 million students; while Asian-American enrollment increased to more than 1 million over the 10-year period between 1995 and 2005, up 37 percent. As a result of these changing demographics, Johnstone (2005) asserted that institutions of higher education would continually need to restructure to become a multicultural environment.

The importance of diversity within higher education is not only because of changing demographics (Banks, 2009). Research has made clear the benefits of a diversified campus are far reaching in a student's educational life. Justice Sandra Day

O’Conner understood this when she stated, “These benefits (of diversity in the college student body) are not theoretical, but real” (O’Neil, 2008). Certain aspects of growth as a human being may not be realized unless that person is around groups of people that differ from him or herself (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004). The ability to recognize, understand and confront personal biases and prejudices does not come about unless those biases and prejudices are confronted with a better and more applicable understanding of truth. The research also noted individuals of different racial groups, as well as within racial groups, could sometimes have strikingly different perceptions, values and beliefs. Therefore, a strong diversified presence increased the possibility that students will encounter someone on campus who does not share his or her experiences, views or values. These experiences provided opportunities for enhanced critical thinking about how one has formerly viewed a person, a group or differing cultures (Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

Even though diversity benefits the educational process, Milem, Chang, & Antonio (2005) claimed that not all universities pursued diversity for the same reasons. Bernasconi (2006) stated that private, religiously affiliated universities “possess distinct mission statements and declaration of principles, consistent with the orientations of their sponsoring organizations” (p. 303). Arthur (2008) asserted that private religiously-affiliated institutions have reason to be concerned if pursuing diversity from a secular public agenda. This process could result in a muted and thinned-out language for mission and identity. If the process goes unchecked, it could result “in a loss of the institution’s *raison d’être* and renders it almost impossible to identify, or determine what it means to be, a religiously affiliated college or university” (p. 201). It is important that private, religiously-affiliated universities work to pursue a diversified campus. At the same time,

it is also important that they not marginalize their commitment to the faith principles consistent with their distinct mission and the orientation of the sponsoring organization (Muntz & Crabtree, 2006).

The influence of religion on American higher education is nothing new for academe (Plant, 2006). Higher education's inception within the United States began when a church or religiously-affiliated group began most of our distinguished institutions (McArthur, 2005). Arthur (2008) claimed that private, religiously-affiliated colleges were concerned with diversity not only for educational purposes but for reasons that belonged to religion and personal faith. Private Christian institutions had a moral concern that human development was about the "whole of humanity for whom Christ died" (Plant, p. 27).

In many ways, the Christian institution's moral concern is closely related to the notion of the common good which has found enduring expression in higher education. Donlevy (2008) defined the common good as standing for concepts of personal autonomy, individual rights and freedoms, and the principles of fairness, justice, equality and respect for diversity. Private, religiously-affiliated institutions' commitment to the common good was also a part of the moral and spiritual fabric of what distinguishes those institutions (Bernasconi, 2006). As institutions of higher education and of the Christian faith, their commitment to the common good was given to them by the Apostle Paul as he wrote in Galatians 3:28 (New International Version) these words, "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." The common good is not only a declaration for human rights; it is a calling of their faith tradition to see the value and equality of all people as God's creation (Walsh, 2002).

Problem Statement

The literature claims that private, religiously-affiliated colleges were concerned with diversity for more than educational purposes (Arthur, 2008). The literature also acknowledges the significant shifts in the make-up of college students regarding diversity (Ryu, 2009) and the educational benefits that diversity brings to college campuses (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004). Without diversity, universities cannot provide the learning experiences necessary to train future leaders to help effectively govern and guide the growing multicultural and changing world in which we live (O'Neil, 2008).

These insights affirmed the fact that not all learning takes place in the classroom (Bollinger, 2007). An important part of the learning and growing process that college students engage in is the result of having experiences and interacting with persons who differ from them. Umbach and Kuh (2006) noted the evidence of the research on the impact of diversity experiences on student learning and development was very promising. However Umbach and Kuh also stated, "At the same time, we know very little about the factors and institutional conditions that promote and enhance students' experiences with diversity" (p. 171).

This study was conducted to fill that gap. Because research tended to focus on the benefits of diversity (Umbach & Milem, 2004), the problem addressed in this phenomenological study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. As a result, the study determined themes regarding the factors and conditions of students' experiences within diversity. As our world continues to become globally integrated, it is important that professionals working within institutions of higher education become more

knowledgeable in how to best enable students to experience diversity in constructive manners. It is hoped that this study and other studies like it have expanded our knowledge about how undergraduate students experience diversity.

Statement of Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. For the purpose of this study the following research question was pursued and provided focus to the research protocol: How is diversity experienced by some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university campus?

There are many arguments from much of the former research that diversity-related experiences benefit individual students (Umbach & Milem, 2004). Yet, Umbach and Kuh (2006) wrote, “we are only beginning to understand the relationship between diversity and student experiences while in college” (p. 169). These experiences are important to study because students who interact with people different from themselves learn about some of the realities that a multicultural world presents. Kuh (2003) noted that the very act of experiencing diversity during the college years enables students to develop habits that will influence decisions of the mind and heart after their college experiences end. Kuh’s insight became a reality for this researcher.

Subjectivities Statement

In light of Kuh’s (2003) insight and the notion of reflexivity (Russell & Kelly, 2002), it is important to state how the personal dynamics of my experiences factored into the research study. Watt (2007) advised all researchers to “carefully consider their reasons for conducting a particular study” (p. 85). Given my own involvement in this life-

changing process over 30 years ago, it was important that I describe my own history and experiences with diversity on a college campus.

I am Caucasian and was raised in the deep-south during the Civil Rights era of desegregation. In fact, the civil rights workers who lost their lives in Philadelphia, Mississippi were buried in a pond dam not 25 minutes from my childhood home. On one occasion the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in my grandfather's yard, which was located next door to us. They did so because he bought an old high school gymnasium for the purpose of rebuilding an African-American church that the Klan had burned down. Although at this time the Civil Rights Movement and Affirmative Action were helping to open the doors to fair and equal educational rights, the process was difficult and biases, prejudices, and hate were alive and well.

Being raised in Mississippi in the 60's when the Civil Rights Movement was at its height, I was a product of the racial myths and prejudices passed down from one generation to the next. Then, after graduating high school, I choose to attend a private, religiously-affiliated college in the Midwest that will be the site for this study. It was there that my prejudices and biases were challenged by faculty and I was impacted by a diverse student population. People of diverse backgrounds became my friends and, in many ways, my family. At every turn, they refuted the supposed truths I had been taught as a child and teenager.

My college experience was a place of discovery for me; especially in the area of understanding and appreciating the value of diversity. Coming from the south, my exposure to people of color was limited and what exposure I had was influenced by the overt racism of my culture. However, as I made my journey through my college

experience, my perception, relationships, openness, intellect and heart were transformed; particularly in the areas of race relations and human beings in general. Much of this transformation was due to my experiences of interacting with persons different than me.

Because of these experiences, a change of thought and heart began to take place inside of me. As I matured, I began to understand critical reasoning and began to try and critically justify my old philosophies and beliefs. The process left me more and more skeptical of the old truths and beliefs I had held. My life began a transformation process that I, in many ways, owe to the fact that I attended a college campus where diversity had a significant presence. That is why I understand the benefits that campuses obtain a richness that only a diverse presence can bring. Individuals on those diverse campuses gain opportunities to have their unfounded and unchallenged prejudices confronted and sometimes reversed.

My life is a testimony to this fact. I assert that the factors of subjectivity mentioned above were positive influencers, not negative ones, upon me as a researcher. Golafshani (2003) asserted that qualitative researchers embrace their involvement and role within the research and Patton (2002) stated, “the researcher is the instrument” (p. 14). In reality, my previous experiences have pre-conditioned me to look for, see, and celebrate these types of experiences. My background only fueled my passion to approach the research project in a manner that brings to light students’ voices. Learning more about how students’ perceived their experiences of diversity on the private, religiously affiliated campus, will enhance our ability to build multicultural educational environments. During the study, I heeded Watt’s (2007) advice regarding reflexivity:

When the researcher is part of the context s/he must be able to both get close enough to the population and site that s/he wishes to research, yet keep enough of a distance in order to be able to see needed, different, and nuanced perspectives on the topic of inquiry. (p. 211)

Definitions and Terms (Operationally Defined)

For the purposes of this study, definitions of critical terms are provided and defined here.

Minority – A group that is designated an inferior status in society and enjoys less than its proportionate share of scarce resources. Minority groups are frequently discriminated against, and in some cases are exploited by the majority group (Science Encyclopedia, 2009).

Multiculturalism – “The process or means of thinking that will enable us to communicate the socio-cultural facts of our past and present experiences in such a way as to expand knowledge and in doing so, modify experiential conditions” (Martinez Aleman, 2001, p. 496).

Religiously affiliated – A faith-based college/university that adheres to a particular religious tradition; including member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (Kuh & Gonyea, 2006).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A literature review is written for many reasons. This review was written to provide an understanding of the existing knowledge of the problem and rationale for this study. Also, the review was intended to lay a foundation from which the rationale for the study could emerge. The problem addressed in this phenomenological study will be to explore the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduate students on a private, religiously-affiliated university. In reviewing the literature regarding this problem, the topic of diversity was explored from many different angles. First, the review revealed the struggles that diversity faces regarding a backlash against Affirmative Action and how court and state's decisions have further influenced diversity's presence on higher education campuses. Second, the literature noted the benefits of diversity on a college/university campus in various areas. Third, as the demographics of our society changes, the literature addressed the potential need for educating students within pedagogical practices that better enable students to function in a multicultural world. Fourth, the research noted issues like accessibility, affordability, and student success regarding their importance in hindering or helping a continued diversity presence being found on college campuses. Fifth, the research reviewed how student development theories and issues are related to diversity experiences. Finally, multiple dissertations

were reviewed that addressed related topics to my study and provided additional resources to investigate.

Affirmative Action, Court, and State Decisions

As this review is begun, it is important to recognize the notion of Affirmative Action and the legal controversies that have been raised since its inception in 1965 (Tierney, 2007). Proponents and critics alike have argued over Affirmative Action's usefulness in enabling previously disenfranchised groups to enter into higher education's settings over the years (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003). This aspect of the literature is important to the problem addressed in this study due to the fact that the controversy over Affirmative Action initiated new research in the area of higher education (Tierney, 2007). Because of the extended legal controversy regarding race-conscious admissions practices, research has emerged that has contributed to defining the potential benefits of racial-ethnic diversity at colleges/universities (Denson & Chang, 2009). In addition to the benefits of diversity, aspects such as access, affordability, and student success also came to the forefront of higher education's research agenda (Anderson, 2005; Astin, 1978; Horn, Marin, & Orfield, 2005).

As far back as 1996, Sacks and Thiel wrote that Stanford's Affirmative Action claim that racial preferences helped the disadvantaged was a false claim from the beginning. They affirmed that preferences had primarily benefitted minority applicants from middle and upper-class backgrounds. At the same time, because admissions were a zero-sum game, preferences hurt poor Caucasians and even many Asians. If Affirmative Action preferences were truly created to remedy disadvantage, they would be disbursed on the basis of disadvantage, not on the basis of race. Ford (2008) asserted that many of

the high-profile racial controversies have divided America in recent decades. Ford's conclusion, himself an African American, was that many allegations of racism, as well as other forms of discrimination, were not just false but counterproductive.

The literature also represented the concerns of those who support affirmative action. A critical concern was that if groups opposed to Affirmative Action were successful then options available to institutions to promote diversity on campus would be even more limited (Antonaros, Barnhardt, Holsapple, Moronoski, & Vergoth, 2008). Affirmative action programs helped achieve that larger goal of a diversified presence on university campuses. However, by the late 1970's eroding support in the courts and states for affirmative action already had a negative effect in many states (Barkan, 2008). In California, Michigan, Washington, and Texas, referenda banning affirmative action had an immediate effect on the enrollment of African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans in the freshman classes of the most selective state schools. For example, Barkan discovered that African American presence fell by 66 percent and Latino presence fell 53 percent at University of Berkeley in California.

Michigan's vote in November, 2006, to ban affirmative action programs that give preferential treatment to groups or individuals based on their race, gender, color, ethnicity or national origin for public employment, education or contracting purposes was more significant for this fact (Crosby et al., 2003). On Election Day, November 7, Michiganders reelected their Democratic governor and senator—both strong opponents of the ban—but they voted to outlaw affirmative action by a majority of 58 to 42 percent. According to most analysts, the vote reflected the growing divided attitude that Americans have had on affirmative action (Barkan, 2008).

The literature addressed the relevant decisions handed down by the U. S. Supreme Court regarding Affirmative Action (Tierney, 2007). In the famous 1978 Supreme Court case, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, the Court cut the legal justifications for voluntary racial preferences in admission down to one: “student body diversity for the purpose of enriching the academic environment” (Barkan, 2008, p. 49). The Bakke decision clarified Affirmative Action by outlawing the use of quotas and automatic point-based admission formulas (Crosby et al., 2003). In another important ruling, the Supreme Court’s 2003 decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* involving the University of Michigan Law School reaffirmed that “colleges and universities have a compelling interest in a diverse student body and that diversity requires not token representation but a ‘critical mass’ of minorities” (Barkan, p. 50). This ruling affirmed Affirmative Action by determining that race may play a more limited role in college admissions to promote the educational benefits of diversity.

However, in 2007 the Supreme Court also handed down a ruling that struck a serious blow against Affirmative Action and race sensitive admissions for higher education in the landmark case, *Parents Involved v. Seattle School District* (Washington) and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* (Kentucky) (O’Neil, 2008). The Court argued that race was just one of many factors in a holistic evaluation of each individual student. The majority suggested using class instead of race. Overall, the literature asserted that the Supreme Court had never sustained the preferential use of race as an admissions criterion at the undergraduate level.

As court decisions began to change the policy of Affirmative Action, more universities began to take individual steps to increase a diversified presence on campuses

(Jaschik, 2009). The University of California had been debating plans to drop the SAT Subject Tests and discover alternative ways to increase the number of minority candidates. This was a fine line for the university to walk and not violate the state's ban on affirmative action. Due to this process, this new issue was brought to the forefront:

concerns that the admission policy changes that are expected to be approved by the Board of Regents today could lead to a significant drop in the numbers of Asian American applicants who are admitted – with the major gains going to White applicants. (p. 1)

According to previous data, 36 percent of students admitted utilizing the current admission process were Asian Americans. By applying the new admissions standards, the percentage of Asian Americans would drop by 29-32 percent; while Caucasian students would see a potential ten percent increase from 34 to 44 percent. Jaschik (2009) asserted, “The bottom line is that Asian Americans would shift from being the largest group gaining admission to the University of California to the second” (p. 1). This insight is not new. In 2008, a study done at UCLA determined that “it is Asian Americans, rather than Whites, who are most disadvantaged by elite universities’ consideration of ethnicity and race” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 1).

Pike, Kuh, and Gonyea (2007) investigated whether “affirmative action in college admissions is justified by examining the direct and indirect relationships between student body diversity, the amount and quality of interactions among diverse groups of students, and students’ gains in understanding diversity” (p. 168). The findings of the study suggested that greater diversity in a campus’ overall student population was associated with higher levels of interaction among peers from different backgrounds which, in turn,

resulted in greater gains in understanding people from different races and cultures. The researchers noted that:

Ultimately, what really matters is that students encounter in their studies and through their interactions with diverse peers, faculty, and staff members perspectives that represent a range of human experiences that impel them to think and respond in novel, more complex ways. (p. 180)

Overall, the study's results supported the use of affirmative action in college admissions, affirming that structural diversity was directly related to greater interaction among diverse groups on campus.

The many court decisions depict the tension that is caused across higher education regarding the pros and cons related to affirmative action. The success of Asian American students in gaining admission to the University of California has made it one of the most diverse campuses in higher education. However, the state of California's ban on affirmative action in public university admissions has decreased the admission of African American and Latino students (Jaschik, 2009, p. 2). In many ways, court and state decisions have created a yo-yo effect regarding diversity. Certain decisions have helped certain racial groups while creating barriers for other groups at the same time. The literature made clear that working toward diversity on college and university campuses is not a simple or uncomplicated task.

Benefits of Diversity

Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the inception of Affirmative Action in 1965, colleges and universities have worked to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of their students and faculty members (Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund,

& Parente, 2001). As noted previously, these policies are subject to intense national debate (Denson & Chang, 2009; Tierney, 2007). In response to this debate, educators have advanced educational research “claiming that a diverse student body is more educationally effective than a more homogeneous one” (Terenzini et al., p. 510).

Along the way, the meaning of diversity has expanded from an emphasis on racial integration since Affirmative Action policies were brought into being (Tavares, 2007). Its definition has expanded to include gender, sexuality, ethnicity, income, socioeconomic class, body type, and other areas. Within higher education, different institutions function under different understandings of diversity since universities are complicated places serving multiple constituencies that have distinct and differing agendas (Arthur, 2008).

A fairly recent body of research has emerged that has contributed to understanding the potential benefits of racial/ethnic diversity on college and university campuses (Denson & Chang, 2009). The majority of that research has focused on three distinct forms of racial/ethnic diversity. The first form is structural diversity which focuses on an institution’s student body composition. The greater number of students from diverse backgrounds, the greater the opportunity it is that students will interact with someone different than themselves (Umbach & Kuh, 2006). The second form is curricular/co-curricular diversity which studies an institution’s programmatic efforts that expose students to content about diversity issues. This form sometimes includes the requirement of multicultural and diversity courses. The third aspect is diversity interaction which focuses on student’s exchanges with racially and ethnically diverse people as well as exposure to different ideas and experiences.

Bowen and Bok's (1998) study, *The Shape of the River*, found that both Caucasian and African-American alumni reported having benefitted from structural diversity. A particular benefit noted was that diversity had enabled them to get along better with members of other races and develop more positive attitudes toward affirmative action programs. Another study by Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin, & Milem, (2004) concluded that structural diversity can create richer and more complex social and learning environments.

These diverse environments increase the opportunity for individuals of diverse backgrounds, who have strikingly different perceptions, values and beliefs, to interact with one another (Chang, Astin, & Kim (2004). Therefore, a strong diversified presence increased the possibility that students will encounter someone who does not share his or her experiences, views or values. These experiences provided opportunities for enhanced critical thinking into how one has formerly viewed a person, a group or differing cultures (Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

Other empirical studies concluded that in and of itself structural diversity is an insufficient condition for maximizing educational benefits (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Denson & Chang, 2009; Pike and Kuh, 2006). These studies noted that the value of structural diversity depends on whether or not it leads to greater levels of engagement and diversity experiences. As students engaged in diversity interactions, the experiences had a positive impact on the development of students by enabling greater cognitive development, a more positive academic and social self-concept, growth in leadership skills and cultural awareness, and more overall college satisfaction (Astin, 2004; Chang, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Diversity interactions were also indispensable in training future leaders on how to lead a growing multicultural world (Bollinger, 2007). For universities to remain competitive, their most important obligation was to determine what future graduates will need to know about their world and how to gain that knowledge. Bollinger stated:

The experience of arriving on a campus to live and study with classmates from a diverse range of backgrounds is essential to students' training for this new world, nurturing in them an instinct to reach out instead of clinging to the comforts of what seems natural or familiar. (p. 2)

In a larger sense, these benefits increased the opportunity for higher education to fulfill its commitment to the common good and develop globally aware and responsible citizens (Antonaros et al., 2008; Thorton & Yeager, 2008).

Engberg's (2007) work extends the research demonstrating the educational benefits of diversity experiences in preparing students with the skills and dispositions necessary for today's multicultural workforce and society. By utilizing a longitudinal survey of 4697 students, Engberg's study examined how undergraduates capture the skills and disposition that underlie a pluralistic orientation. A pluralistic orientation was defined by the student's "ability to see multiple perspectives; the ability to work cooperatively with diverse people; the ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues; openness to having one's views challenged, and tolerance of others with different beliefs" (p. 285).

The study's findings revealed that universities with higher levels of structural diversity promoted positive diversity interactions, which produced positive effects on students' intergroup learning and second year pluralistic orientation (Engberg, 2007).

Also, the study noted that students' participation in co-curricular diversity programs was linked to higher levels of intergroup learning across all academic majors. This discovery demonstrates the varying ways that students in different majors acquire pluralistic skills; particularly students in the engineering and life sciences. In general, the study emphasized that college diversity interactions motivate students to explore their own and other's social identity memberships and indirectly enhance their pluralistic orientation.

In another study, Umbach and Kuh (2006) demonstrated benefits for four institutional measures of diversity. They found multiple positive benefits of the (a) diversity density index (the probability that a student will interact with a student from another race), (b) the institutional climate for diversity (students' perceptions of the emphasis their institution places on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds), (c) diversity in coursework (the extent to which students reported their classes included readings or discussions related to diversity), and (d) diversity press (a scale made of the three other diversity measures: structural, curricular, and interaction). All four institutional measures were associated with positive outcomes; the strongest outcomes were noted for engagement in diversity experiences. Umbach and Kuh noted the importance of these kinds of diversity experiences with these words:

These diversity experiences shape the way students think about themselves in relation to others, about the nature of activities in which they engage, and about the value they place on attitudes toward others and their skills and competencies in working with different types of people during and after college. That is, as a result of experiencing diversity in college, students learn how to work effectively with others and how to participate actively and contribute to a democratic society.

Moreover, through engaging with people from different backgrounds and with different life experiences, students are adding to the foundation of skills and dispositions that is essential for living a productive, satisfying life after college in an increasingly multicultural world. (p. 170)

Chang, Denson, Saenz, and Misa's (2006) study applied a multilevel approach to examine the student and institution level effect regarding the frequency of cross-racial interaction. Two main research questions guided the study:

(a) Do students who have higher levels of cross-racial interaction (CRI) tend to report higher levels of openness to diversity, cognitive development, and self-confidence than their peers who have lower levels of CRI report? (b) Do students who attend institutions with higher average peer levels or CRI tend to report higher levels on those same outcomes than their peers who attend institutions with lower levels of CRI report? (p. 434)

The findings of the study confirmed previous results (Astin, 2004; Chang, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) that frequent diversity experiences during college added educational benefits for students (Chang et al., 2006). The overall effects of students' frequency of diversity interactions regarding openness to diversity, cognitive development, and self-confidence were significant and uniformly positive. The above findings affirm that the peer average level of CRI affected students' self-comparison of gains positively since entering college; particularly in their ability to accept different races/cultures. Overall, the study concluded:

Whatever the specific conditions might be, students who attend campuses with higher peer average CRI levels were not only benefitting from simply observing

more students interacting across racial differences, but are in all likelihood also benefitting from the overall institutional quality that sustains positive race relations. (p. 451)

Also in response to the importance of diversity experiences, Saenz, Ngai, and Hurtado's (2007) work explored the various factors that promoted positive interactions across race for African American, Asian American, Latino, and Caucasian college students. Through this longitudinal study, the scholars focused particularly "on the influence of individual attitudes, curricular and co-curricular contexts, and various peer environments" (p. 5). The intent was not simply to determine the conditions that increased the frequency of diverse peer group interactions, but rather to improve the quality of those experiences.

The findings noted that students' pre-college backgrounds had a strong, predictive relationship with positive diversity interactions; indicating that students carry pre-college values and conceptions into early college intergroup interactions (Saenz et al., 2007). The findings also suggested that racially diverse institutional environments affected Caucasian students more than other diverse students; which suggested that a more racial/ethnic diverse college campus provided more opportunities for Caucasian students to interact with diverse others. Other significant predictors of positive diversity experiences were participation in leadership training workshops, opportunities for intensive dialogue in classes, the involvement of academic support services, and participation in co-curricular activities (namely diversity and service learning courses). Saenz et al. asserted that fostering positive intergroup relations on college and university

campuses is key to enhancing students' democratic skills and preparing them to negotiate differences in a diverse society" (p. 36).

The importance of diversity experiences was well documented in the research. Yet, Umbach and Kuh (2006) wrote, "we are only beginning to understand the relationship between diversity and student experiences while in college" (p. 169). These experiences are important to study because students who experience diversity during the college years develop habits that will influence decisions of the mind and heart after their college experiences end (Kuh, 2003). The literature solidified the importance of investigating the essence of undergraduate students' diversity experiences.

Curricular Issues

As reported previously in Chapter One the demographics of American higher education are changing (Ryu, 2009). In part, that is why changes have been called for in the curricular/co-curricular aspect of diversity to meet the educational needs of an increasingly diverse society (Wallace, 2000). Multiple researchers (Anderson, 2005; Bruch, Jehangir, Jacobs & Ghere, 2004) suggested that curriculum must be diversified to meet the growing diversity in classrooms across the country. Lanier (2001) stated that pedagogies like multiculturalism and critical theory are needed to overcome this great divide.

The concept of multiculturalism seeks to understand the emotional and intellectual aspects of diverse cultures in academic and campus life (Martinez Aleman, 2001). In some ways, multiculturalism adhered to the notion that people organized their learning around the social communities to which they belong. Laksov, Mann, and Dahlgreen (2008) asserted that it is through cultures of practice and interactions with

other human beings that we learn and become who we are. These communities can be a part of emancipation or hindrances to emancipation (Sleeter, 1991). If students have grown up occupying social positions of privilege, then change is a difficult process. However, if students have grown up experiencing the oppression of the dominant group, emancipation would provide a positive alternative. At its core, multiculturalism is a radical, transformational pedagogy which seeks to eliminate the oppression of one group of people over another (Sleeter, 2007). In doing so, students can be enabled to understand the shifting relations of power and how power can affect relationships.

These are important concepts for institutions of higher education in today's world to embrace. The literature has noted that no longer are campuses places of homogeneous student and faculty populations. The notion of changing student and faculty populations relates to Anderson's (2005) assertion that curriculum must be diversified to meet the growing diversity in classrooms across the country. If not, the system will continue to benefit the cultural capital of White consumers only. Bruch et al. (2004) asserted that "new demographics of race, social class, ethnicity, family culture, gender, and disability have reached a critical mass throughout higher education" (p. 12). This growing diversity makes for growing tensions on university campuses and angst among faculty and administrators who are challenged to pursue a multicultural agenda (Martinez Aleman, & Salkever, 2004; Rich & Cargile, 2004).

In response to the struggles associated with multicultural pedagogy, there were research strands that addressed its positive outcomes. Minkler, Vasquez, Tajik, and Peterson (2008) asserted that when communities of diverse backgrounds were involved and committed to the education process, then the empowerment of individuals and

communities could result. As a whole, the literature suggested that institutions of higher education are powerful learning environments where multicultural social communities can coincide and collide.

bell hook's concept of engaged pedagogy finds its home in multiculturalism. For hooks, the process of education was about learning "to develop the tools and frameworks to interrogate all forms of domination and colonization, of freeing the student from the classrooms and systems of thought which have taught the student to obey and be passive" (Lanier, 2001, p. 2). hooks (1994) argued that university classrooms should be safe places that engage the individual needs and interests of students. Part of that engagement is a dialogical engagement which leads to apprehending and valuing other's realities (Gunzenhauser & Gerstl-Pepin, 2006; hooks). In this engagement, difference and conflict are part of the natural order.

In fact, engaged pedagogy "requires instructors to face their deep-seated fears about loss of the classroom" (Lanier, 2001, p. 7). Many teachers are ill-equipped to teach in these types of class settings. Tomalin (2007) noted that as teachers find themselves working with an increasingly diverse student population, they do so with very little support, training, and resources. The literature revealed that one of the key components in utilizing multicultural pedagogy as an emancipatory agent was tied to the training of teachers with the skills needed to partner with students and understand different cultural ways of knowing (Baldwin, Buchanon & Rudisill, 2007; Lanier). These skills enabled teachers to understand the synergy that takes place when there is dialogue and cooperation among all parties. The result can lead to emancipation from the racial barriers that have held a community of people hostage (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

As schools across the United States continue to serve a diverse population, multicultural education courses and in-service programs have multiplied across the country (Rao, 2005). DePalma, Rego, and Moledo (2006) noted that providing a teaching practicum where student teachers can interact with students from different cultures was widely praised as a means of improving teachers' cross-cultural sensitivity and effectiveness. However, it was also noted that "some research suggests that direct experience with minority students may in fact serve to confirm racist or stereotypical perceptions" (p. 327). This paper presented one approach that provided an intercultural practicum for pre-service teachers that attempted to create new methods for cross-cultural interactions between minority children and pre-service teachers.

Perry, Moore, Edwards, Acosta, and Frey's (2009) study was part of a larger investigation into the professional, emotional, and physical demands of teaching diversity-education courses. It was also noted that, across the nation, a disproportionate number of instructors of color were engaged in teaching diversity courses in higher education. This study investigated "key themes from in-depth interviews with 20 instructors of color who teach required diversity courses at a predominantly White college or university (PWCU) in the Midwest" (pp. 81-82). The overall purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how instructors of color struggle and strategize in order to keep their credibility and authority while teaching multicultural courses.

Three primary themes resulted from the interviews which characterized the struggles faced by these instructors (Perry et al., 2009). First, student resistance resulted in the way students challenged an instructor's credibility and authority by inappropriately opposing or contesting the instructor's presence in the classroom. Second, the direct and

indirect acts of non-rational challenges by students targeted the motives and agendas of instructors and the credibility of the subject matter taught. Third, the instructors were devalued by student acts that challenged instructors and their subject matter by undermining or dismissing their value and legitimacy through disrespectful actions. The instructors developed strategies to overcome these challenges by taking specific countermeasures. These countermeasures were: (a) anticipatory teaching (anticipating challenges ahead of time), (b) depoliticizing (controlling the politicized or contentious nature of the subject matter), and (c) disarming (navigate the discussion to focus on the student's point of view and not the instructor's). In conclusion, the study suggested that the skills necessary for the diversity-education classroom may go beyond typical instructional training and require additional training.

Huerta and Flemmer (2005) asserted that pre-service teachers benefit from self-examination regarding identity, attitudes, and assumptions concerning issues like religion, gender, language, privilege, and group membership. This study sought to introduce these issues to pre-service teachers in hopes of enabling them to grow in self-awareness and understanding culturally relevant and responsive teaching methods. To address this study a qualitative case study approach was chosen and six pre-service female teachers formed the sample group. The data revealed that the "pre-service teachers were challenged as they sought to coexist within diverse communities whose students may not hold similar views concerning values, race, language, gender and privilege" (p. 9). The study concluded that these teachers were generally uncomfortable with educational issues regarding diversity and equal opportunity.

Dickinson College is a small, highly selective liberal arts college located in Central Pennsylvania (Rose & Bylander, 2007). In 2001, a small, collaborative group from Dickinson designed an innovative model for diversity education entitled The Crossing Borders program. The program encouraged “diverse students to live, work and study together in multiple contexts both within the United States and abroad—and to contribute to the communities of which they are a part” (p. 253). Students from Dickinson, a predominantly White college, joined students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to study in Cameroon, West Africa. Upon returning, the students would spend one semester at Dickinson and then one semester at one of the HBCUs.

The program sought to develop a curricular model that would provide transformative diversity experiences for the students involved. In essence, it was hoped the program would provide college students the opportunity to live, learn and work together in three different settings that would increase critical thinking and produce higher levels of intellectual engagement. In all three locations, students became more conscious of the interplay between race, class, and culture. In their awareness, the students realized how much they had been influenced by their own personal backgrounds and the international politics of race, class, and gender. The initial challenge for the Caucasian students was to recognize the ways “in which Whiteness is interwoven with privilege and not having to question whether they were fully accepted citizens” (Rose & Bylander, p. 259). Although, the conversations were not easy, the students affirmed that they were challenged in positive ways and concluded that such personal growth and discovery does not happen on its own, but requires thoughtful and deliberate planning.

The research also reinforces the notion that transformative teaching involved teachers infusing themselves in student's lives. hooks (1994) believed that when persons of influence take interest in students and their context, then transformation on the student's part begins to take place. This type of involvement required more than simply knowing students' names; it involved true engagement on the instructor's part to acquire individualized and particular knowledge of students (hooks; Lanier, 2001). It is this type of engagement and classroom setting that hooks and hooks and Mesa-Bains (2006) believed encouraged critical thinking. As a student engages in the process of critical thinking and develops openness to reevaluate and reassess cultural ways of knowing then the emancipation and transformation process begins to take place.

The principle of emancipation brought the literature to Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy and his understanding that learning can be liberatory. Freire's critical pedagogy finds its home in critical theory. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) asserted that critical theory was difficult to define because there were many critical theories and the critical tradition was always changing and evolving. Despite this, Kincheloe and McLaren defined critical theory as the following:

A criticalist is a researcher or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalists production and

consumption, that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); that certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others and, although the reasons for privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable. (p. 304)

Freire's (1970) work began and evolved from a focus on literacy training in South America. He asserted that educators could enable critical political consciousness to take place by engaging students in an open dialogue about specific issues and problems in their everyday lives (Martin, 2008). Freire's notion of engaging students in open dialogue was about respecting the student's fundamental right and need to name their worlds, become more complete, and be agents of their own praxis (Freire; Gunzenhauser & Gerstl-Pepin, 2006). As the student or community works towards this type of education, committed action takes place to change the circumstances which hinder understanding and, in turn, break the bonds of oppression (Hasbrook, 2002). Both Freire and hooks (1994) suggested this type of dialogical engagement was necessary to produce the praxis that critical thinking (reflection) and action could bring about.

As this type of open dialogue is initiated in the classroom, there will be times when Freire's (1970) notion of "teacher-student with students-teachers" (p. 67) will coincide with hooks' (1994) "learning from those who bring this great gift" (p. 89). Students in both pedagogies are not perceived as "owned" (Freire, p. 67) by the teacher. Instead, "the teacher is no longer the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches" (p. 67). This type

of Freirian pedagogy requires being “fully human” (p. 79) on the part of teacher and student within the classroom; which in turn requires an engaged pedagogy as hooks would define it (Reynolds, 2007; Robertson & Graves, 1995).

The literature drew together the two themes of critical theory and multiculturalism. Blackmore (2001) asserted it linked them as parts of the crisis of transition surrounding higher education today. That crisis of transition was defined in Ryu’s (2009) report that the demographics of American higher education are changing. During the time between 1995 and 2005, he reported that minority enrollment in our nation’s colleges and universities rose by nearly 50 percent from 3.4 million students to 5 million students. Part of the crisis of transition facing higher education today is that business as usual will not suffice in a rapidly changing world. There is the need for higher education to assist the cultural transformation taking place within our country (Blackmore).

In Freire’s quest to make and remake a better world (Darder, 1998), tension and unrest is caused in the making and remaking. hooks (1994) would refer to this as a part of transgressing towards liberation. Martinez Aleman (2001) suggested this tension was caused when the historical colonialistic understanding of the ideal collegiate community was challenged. It should be noted again that the literature asserted that faculty in the U.S. felt strongly that divisiveness and difficulty arose when multicultural and transformational pedagogies were addressed at institutional levels (Martinez Aleman & Salkever, 2004; Rich & Cargile, 2004). In regards to this potential for divisiveness, the research (Martin, 2008) made clear that context should determine how Freirian pedagogy was utilized, experienced and responded to. This notion of context causes us to realize

that one size does not fit all. Therefore, emancipatory pedagogies, such as Freire and hooks, require a willingness to reassess prior knowledge and beliefs (Swartz, 2003; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2002).

In truth, it does little good for institutions of higher education to be committed and involved in the transformational education process if their students only espouse multicultural values but do not know how to function in a multicultural world. If the student who speaks of transformation continues to live within the confines of his/her own prejudices and biases, then the student has not been liberated at all (Freire, 1970). For emancipation to take place, Freire and hooks (1994) stated there must be more than simple reflection. There must be action steps taken that enable students to act (experience) on new perceptions and knowledge as they replace prejudices and biases. As Freire implored, there must be a restless and continuing hopeful inquiry, which leads to an action framework that pursues social justice and liberation (Hasbrook, 2003). The literature noted that service projects that lead to multicultural experiences could be utilized to cement personal relationships and commitments to the new understanding and awareness that have been gained. Sleeter (2007) asserted that when students worked together they educated each other in ways that could not be replicated by other means.

Accessibility, Affordability, and Student Success

Along with calls for changes in the curricular/co-curricular aspect of diversity, transitioning demographics within higher education have also pressured institutions to make policy changes regarding accessibility, affordability and student success (Anderson, 2005; Astin, 1997; Horn et al., 2005). The University of California's decision in 2009 to reevaluate admission standards was not new to higher education (Jaschik, 2009). In 1978,

Astin noted the problems associated with the criteria within the admissions process. He stated that students from affluent families in which both parents have graduate degrees had greater opportunity to develop intellectual skills. Students from poor families in which neither parent finished high school had less opportunity for intellectual development. However, Astin's (1997) research affirmed that the greatest underrepresentation took place in the admissions process when only test scores are used. His finding confirmed that African Americans were at their greatest disadvantage when competing with Caucasians on standardized tests. Anderson (2005) asserted that unless selective colleges and universities significantly enhanced quality educational opportunities for students of color, even the most sincere expressions of support for multiculturalism and diversity would likely affirm, rather than challenge, racial inequality in the future.

Astin (1978) also suggested that socioeconomic measures could be used to create a disadvantage index that could help deter this underrepresentation. The index was scored so that the most disadvantaged students received the highest scores when simulating alternative admissions procedures. The use of disadvantage criteria enabled researchers to replace racial criteria as the dominant factor in the admission process. This transition in criteria with traditional admissions criteria led to greater representation of disadvantaged groups being achieved.

Affordability was also an issue that the literature addressed. As tuition increased and outside funding decreased, the factor of money became a central roadblock to perspective students from modest to low income backgrounds attending college (Horn et al., 2005). The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2008) reported

family income remained a key predictor of who would go to college and what college they would attend. Declining affordability was a critical factor in these choices. Statistics showed those students from the bottom 25 percent of family income would incur total costs at four-year universities equal to 70 percent of their family income in 2003 (Zusman, 2005). In response, low-income minority families would decline, for good reason, to incur that much indebtedness.

Affirmative action opponents also cited this as an issue that led to another form of injustice. Schmidt (2008) noted that one of the burdensome consequences of preferences was one-fifth of all students from low-income families who borrow money to attend eventually dropped out, leaving college as failures and in debt. The very system that was designed to help low-income families only served to place a high percentage of them in overwhelming debt.

Even though positive steps have been taken in the area of affordability, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2008) affirmed that our nation continued to experience disparities in educational performance by race, ethnicity and family income. The issue of declining affordability discouraged many low-income students from enrolling in high school preparation courses and even from graduating from high school. The National Center reported that students who believed that higher education were outside their financial means had little reason to prepare for it.

Another important area addressed by the literature was academic success. Accessibility and affordability alone will not guarantee diversity success on any college/university campus. Anderson (2005) noted there is a growing awareness and increased understanding on the connection between the rigors of the high school

experience and college preparedness that factors into minority student success. Enhanced understanding and higher visibility on the connection between the rigors of the high school experience and college preparedness had caused states to beef-up measures and accountability in the area of preparation. In adequately preparing the general high school student for the college experience and the common work world, an increasingly new and complex skill set was needed in order to succeed (O'Neil, 2008).

The research revealed that the preparation many African-American and Latino students receive is unequal to the preparation received by a majority of Caucasian students (Horn et al, 2005). Most students of unequal preparation are likely to attend racially and economically segregated, low performing schools with weaker resources, less rigorous curriculum, and worse facilities. The research was clear in affirming the notion that an increasing complex and new skill set were needed in order to succeed and new steps must be taken to assure student success (California Tomorrow, 2002).

For this reason, new standards of support programs are needed for student success at higher education institutions (O'Neil, 2008). Some programs that need exploring are financial aid packages that take into account the realities of balancing work, school, and family obligations. Another suggestion was to establish student support centers that address the need for greater counseling and busy schedules. Community colleges, in particular, worked to establish covenants with local high schools to improve developmental opportunities for underprepared students (Kazis, 2002).

Student Development

In studies of college students, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) asserted that the evidence is consistently clear that diversity experiences have significant and positive

effects on student's attitudes and values. Students in diverse friendship groups were two to five times more likely to interact with students of diverse backgrounds than students whose friends were most or all of the same race-ethnicity (Antonio, 2000). Pascarella and Terenzini defined some of the attitudes and values that diverse interactions affect:

Well controlled studies using different national samples of students show, for example, that discussing racial issues and socializing with members of a racial-ethnic group different from one's own have positive net effects on such outcomes as increases in student's knowledge and acceptance of persons of other races and cultures, the importance students give to promoting racial understanding, and their acceptance of busing as a means of achieving racial balance in the schools as well as on declines in students' beliefs that racial discrimination is no longer a social problem. (p. 311)

Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) explored the relationship between students' diversity experiences in the university setting and the educational outcomes. Building on the theories of cognitive development and social psychology that trace back to Piaget (1971) and Erikson (1956), the scholars presented a framework for "understanding how diversity introduces the relational discontinuities critical to identity construction and its subsequent role in fostering cognitive growth" (p. 330). Their framework focused on the notion that students encounter three different kinds of diversity (Laird, 2005). Structural diversity refers to the amount of diversity within the student body. Informal interaction diversity captures both the quantity and quality of students' informal diversity interactions while in college. Classroom diversity refers to the in-class

interactions that position students to experience different types of knowledge and different perspectives from the students that surround them.

In their work, Gurin et al. (2002) posited that diversity experiences provide the challenge that is needed for the development of healthy sense of self and more complex cognitive structures. Their results also suggested that diversity interactions were important influences on the “development of student learning and democratic outcomes, including students’ intellectual engagement and motivation as well as citizenship engagement” (Laird, 2005, p. 366). In conclusion, Gurin et al. noted that the results of their research not only supported the notion that more curricular efforts should introduce more diversity interactions into college courses, but that more attention should be focused on the types of diversity experiences students have inside and outside the classroom. In doing so, both the theory and findings affirmed that students benefit when they are engaged with diverse peers. However, such interaction should not be taken for granted on a college campus.

Building on the work of Gurin et al. (2002), Laird (2005) investigated the relationship between diversity experiences and the ways students view themselves; particularly regarding academic self-confidence, social agency, and critical thinking disposition. Academic self-confidence refers to a confidence in one’s academic and intellectual abilities. Social agency is defined as one’s belief that it is important to take action to improve society. Critical thinking self-confidence references the trust placed in one’s own reasoning abilities. The results of Laird’s study indicated that students with diversity experiences are more likely to score higher on academic self-confidence, social

agency, and critical thinking disposition. The study also provided some evidence that diversity interactions work together to enable development of certain aspects of self.

Individual diversity development is uncomfortable for most due to the fact that it causes individuals to confront otherness and move outside their comfort zones (Chavez, Guido-DiBrito, & Mallory, 2003). Chavez et al. propose a framework for individual diversity development that enables faculty, staff, and students to consciously value complex and integrated differences in ourselves and others. The framework offers five dimensions that individuals process through in experiencing otherness: unawareness/lack of exposure to other, dualistic awareness, questioning/self-exploration, risk taking/exploration of otherness, and integration/validation. It is important for campuses to understand the framework process and to offer a wide variety of opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to interact with those different from themselves.

Antonio (2004) noted that research on how college impacts student development has focused on the peer group as a dominant change agent during undergraduate years. Given the importance of understanding racial diversity within the context of interpersonal peer environments Antonio's study focused on the college friendship group; particularly a student's best friends on campus and how that group affects a student over time. This longitudinal, quantitative study surveyed a sample of 2,222 third year students who were previously surveyed as freshmen with an instrument specifically designed for the study.

Antonio (2004) noted that the findings in this study were convincing evidence that the micro-level interpersonal environments (friendship groups) of a college campus were important components of influencing socialization and student development. The study revealed that diversity was an important peer characteristic to consider along with

traditional measures of peer ability and self-concept. The findings affirmed that racial diversity is important when examining academically related cognitive outcomes.

However, the positive effect of friendship-group diversity on intellectual self-confidence and educational aspirations was found for students of color only. Antonio noted that the differing results for Caucasian students raise multiple questions and suggest directions for future study.

Liang and Prince (2008) noted that although the research has outlined the benefits of a diverse student population of college campuses, a model for understanding and predicting the development of cross racial self-efficacy (CRSE) among undergraduate students had not yet been offered. The purpose of Liang and Prince's study was to test the utility of the social-cognitive theory in the development of CRSE; particularly as it related to the cross-racial mastery experiences of a culturally and racially diverse group of undergraduate students. The model reflected "a central tenet of social-cognitive theory—that mastery experiences will contribute to the development of self-efficacy" (p. 170).

The results of the study noted that students living on campus had a higher number of cross-racial mastery experiences during their first two years of college and that students who entered college with higher levels of CRSE had more racial interactions prior to enrollment (Liang & Prince, 2008). The findings also "indicated that multicultural experiences were positively related to new or different multi-culturally oriented, interactional, relationship building skills" (p. 176). In sum, the results of the study affirmed the importance of providing multiple opportunities for cross-racial mastery experiences for students' development of CRSE.

In response to institutions across the country implementing diversity-related initiatives, Denson (2009) presented the first quantitative synthesis examining the impact of curricular and co-curricular diversity activities utilizing a meta-analysis approach. She chose to limit the meta-analysis to curricular and co-curricular diversity activities whose purpose was to reduce racial bias. In addition, the study was limited to studies based on students from four-year institutions of higher education within the United States.

The main results of this meta-analytic review revealed that curricular and co-curricular diversity activities were effective at reducing racial bias for all students; though it appeared that certain types of activities were more effective than others (Denson, 2009). The study also noted that current research has begun to “reveal that the benefits of intergroup contact may be even more robust than previously believed and can have positive effects on the institution as a whole as well” (p. 826). However, Denson asserted that the effectiveness of these activities depends on the level of institutional support, the comprehensiveness of the approach, a diverse racial composition, and most important, whether or not intergroup contact is a major component of the activity.

Fowler’s (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006) theory of faith development is widely considered to be a critical component of the psychology of religion and student development. His writings were influenced by his friendship and colleagueship with Lawrence Kohlberg (1975) and his theory of moral development. Fowler (1981) noted that faith “is an innate capacity present in humans from the time of birth” (p. 38). Yet, these capacities are dependent on what kinds of environment we are exposed to and the interactions one experiences within that environment. Fowler denotes the importance that the social element plays in faith development:

Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual, and nurture. Faith is also shaped in initiatives from beyond us and other people, initiatives of spirit or grace. How these latter initiatives are recognized and imaged, or unperceived and ignored, powerfully affects the shape of faith in our lives. (1981, p. xiii)

Fowler's theory of faith development consists of six stages and they form an invariant sequence as each new stage integrates the functions of the previous stage (Chickering et al., 2006). Fowler (1996) offers the following stages of faith development:

- Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early Childhood)
- Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith (Middle Childhood and Beyond)
- Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescence and Beyond)
- Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young Adulthood and Beyond)
- Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith (Early Midlife and Beyond)
- Stage 6: Universalizing Faith (Midlife and Beyond)

As it pertains to student development, stages 4 and 5 are significant to undergraduates at religiously-affiliated colleges (Chickering et al., 2006). It is during these stages that students begin to assess firmly held faith beliefs established during earlier stages. Wulff (1993) asserted that it was the fourth stage, "when dawning critical reflection compels a person to take the reality of other, conflicting views seriously, he or she comes to realize the relativity for the authority and content of inherited tradition" (p. 183). Students, at this point, begin to assume responsibility for commitments, lifestyles, beliefs, and attitudes. Diversity experiences increase the opportunity for individuals of diverse religious backgrounds, who have strikingly different perceptions, values and

beliefs, to interact with one another and reassess their previous held values and attitudes (Chang et al., 2004).

Parks (2000) extended Fowler's (1981) work by proposing another stage of faith development between adolescent and adult. The stage, labeled young adult, includes traditional undergraduates. In Parks work, faith is a process of meaning making and discovering connections among experiences and events (Love, 2001). Parks offered four interacting levels that compose faith: self, other, world and God. Love defines those four levels:

Self is the individual meaning maker, other includes the immediate interactions and relationships with those beyond the self, world is the recognition of existence and influence of others beyond one's immediate relationships and interactions, and "God" is the center of power and value for the individual. (p. 8)

This process of interacting levels results in Parks' (2000) four stage model of development: adolescent or conventional, young adult, tested adult, and mature adult. She argues that it is time to consider the addition of the young adult phase in between the adolescent and full adulthood (Love, 2001). It is in the young adult phase that a student "transitions from seeing the world as ultimately knowable and certain to seeing the world as complex, ambiguous, and not completely knowable" (p. 12). During this time, the student's own role as authority emerges.

Durka (2004) noted that these interactions and conversations regarding faith issues are essential exercises in "reaching relatively adequate knowledge . . . and creating an openness to mutual transformation" (p. 425). However, while agreeing with the importance of these experiences, Pearce (2006) stated that students need assistance in

learning how to best interact with people from different backgrounds and to discuss issues related to faith and belief. If sensitively and knowledgeably handled these encounters can be powerful opportunities for learning and development.

According to a six-year national study performed in 2003, it was also noted that two-thirds of college students expressed a strong interest in spiritual matters (Astin, Astin, Chopp, Delbanco & Speers, 2007). Astin (2002; 2004) defined spirituality as considerations of the subjective life, or human consciousness. These considerations include matters of values, meaning, and general purpose. He also identified spirituality in regards to affective experiences rather than reasoning or logic. These affective experiences include beliefs about why we are here, sense of connectedness to others, and general intuition and inspiration. Astin asserted that within this definition of spirituality, “virtually everyone qualifies as a spiritual being” (2004, p. 34).

In addition to defining spirituality, Astin identified it as a subject which should be of major concern in education (2002; 2004). First, Astin (2004) identified the charge to “know thyself” (p. 34) as the philosophical base for most practices in higher education. He also identified the ability of human consciousness not only to experience thoughts and feelings, but also to observe these thoughts and their effects as they arise. Honing this ability to observe feelings is simply a step in becoming increasingly more self-aware, which should be a goal of any educational institution. These statements were also supported by research conducted by Feenstra and Brouwer (2008) in regards to vocational development. In a study of over 200 college students, “greater spiritual vitality and commitment and secure spiritual attachment were related to greater understanding of vocation” (p. 83). Conversely, an insecure sense of spirituality was negatively correlated

to vocational development. Finally, Astin (2004) noted an imbalance between exterior and interior aspects of students' lives. While society has made recent advancements in areas such as technology, business, medicine, and science, internal concerns such as values, emotional maturity, and self-understanding have been left behind.

Astin's major concern is that the field of higher education has reflected the overall society in this imbalance of internal and external (2002, 2004). Success seems to be measured in terms such as: funding, rankings, test scores, and publication, while shared values and institutional culture seem to be left out of the discussion. In the six-year study mentioned above, over half of the students reported that professors never engaged in discussions of spiritual concern (Astin et al., 2007). However, in the same study, four out of five faculty members labeled themselves as spiritual persons. Astin concluded that this imbalance is a troubling concern for higher education in America. However, there are positive signs such as service learning and "Freshman 101" (Astin, 2004, p. 40) courses that seem to suggest a growing trend of spiritual education within higher education. He stated that if these trends continue to develop, students will feel less fragmented, and holistic education will occur.

Related Dissertations

A review of the literature also noted multiple dissertations related to the topic of diversity experiences. Fisher's (2007) research dealt with the aspect of structural diversity. Structural diversity relates to the breakdown of racial and ethnic diversity in regards to the student population on a given university campus. Fisher noted that structural diversity is only one of multiple conditions that must exist on a campus setting in order for the educational benefits of diversity to be realized. Her research isolated

some of the conditions and interventions that serve to stifle or facilitate inter-cultural interaction in a large public research university.

Hockman's (2009) study asserted that as our nation's demographics continue to change, our preparation of teachers to work with diverse students becomes an important challenge to address. Several policy recommendations resulted from his study. First, institutions need to reevaluate their vision, mission, and core values. Second, divisions of education within the institution need to facilitate program and curricular evaluation. Third, institutions should implement faculty development programs similar to Boston College's Faculty Institute on English Language Learners. Hockman's research related to Lanier's (2001) assertion that one of the key components in utilizing multicultural pedagogy as an emancipatory agent was tied to the training of teachers with the skills needed to partner with students and understand different cultural ways of knowing.

Loes' (2009) dissertation focused on exploring how first-year college students' growth in critical thinking was related to residential status, exposure to classroom diversity, and involvement in diversity experiences. His research noted that interactional diversity positively influenced critical thinking for Caucasian students and for students who were ill prepared academically for college. Yet, living on campus exerted a negative influence on critical thinking for students of color and for students who were academically prepared for college. Loes' research related to Chang, Astin, & Kim's (2004) discovery that diversity experiences provided opportunities for enhanced critical thinking regarding how one had formerly viewed a person, a racial group or differing cultures.

In regards to context, Saenz's (2005) research examined students' pre-college racial environments and their diversity experiences in college. The study had two main conclusions. First, the pre-college racial environments and experiences do have substantial perpetuation effects on college diversity outcomes regarding cross-racial interactions and students' attitudes about racial discrimination. Second, racially and ethnically diverse university settings and students' diversity experiences significantly interrupt these perpetuation effects. The findings suggested that public universities that are more diverse and foster diversity experiences can positively affect students' attitudes regarding racial discrimination in our society. In many ways, Saenz's findings are related to multiple studies (Chang et al, 2004; Umbach & Kuh, 2006) which discovered that diversity experiences created the opportunity for students to recognize, understand and confront personal biases and prejudices from previous contexts.

Brown's (2008) dissertation addressed how college students acquire the knowledge, skills and awareness to behave in interculturally effective ways. Brown asserted that this knowledge had direct implications for the future quality of the students' citizenship in an increasingly diverse American society and interconnected world. Findings from the study demonstrated that many college students enter college with little diversity experiences. Yet, the participants in the study reported how levels of diversity experiences (courses, service learning, and education abroad) enhanced their overall intercultural development. Brown's findings are related to Bollinger's (2007) assertion that for universities to remain competitive, their most important obligation was to determine what future graduates will need to know about their world and how to gain that knowledge.

Beverly's (2004) phenomenological study regarding the recruitment and retention of African American faculty in predominantly Caucasian, faith-based colleges uncovered five themes: (1) God's Plan and Purpose, (2) God's Blessings, (3) God's Grace, (4) God's Challenge, and (5) God's Connections. Each theme was directly related to the faith relationship that each faculty member adhered to and to the unique mission that the faith-based institution they were affiliated with adhered to. These themes affirm Milem, Chang, & Antonio's (2005) claim that not all universities invoked diversity for the same reasons. Bernasconi's (2006) assertion was that private, religiously affiliated universities "possess distinct mission statements and declaration of principles, consistent with the orientations of their sponsoring organizations" (p. 303). Beverly's findings affirm that even faculty's recruitment and retention is associated with the notion of a unique calling and mission related to faith.

In an effort to specifically seek to understand the effect of being involved in a formal leadership program, Sherman's (2008) study investigated how students view and interact with diverse others. The study found that involvement in the formal leadership program influenced the way participants viewed and understood their beliefs and experiences with diverse others. The students overcame their previous upbringings, became aware of differences, found commonalities with others, learned to value diversity and differences, took ownership of their biases, and became more open-minded. Once again, the findings of Sherman's study are related to other studies (Chang et al, 2004; Umbach & Kuh, 2006) which discovered that diversity experiences created the opportunity for students to recognize, understand and confront personal biases and prejudices from previous context.

Summary

The topics covered in a literature review should be interconnected with the research question that drives the investigation of any dissertation. This literature review is no different. The research question for this study is: How is diversity experienced by some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university campus? Each section reviewed has interconnected parts associated with the research question at hand.

First, the review revealed the struggles that diversity faces regarding a backlash against Affirmative Action and how court and state's decisions have further influenced research regarding diversity within higher education. Antonaros et al, (2008) noted that many articles reviewed reflected the following concern that if opposition groups to Affirmative Action are successful then options available to institutions to promote diversity on campus will be even more limited. If diversity becomes more limited on university campuses, then diversity experiences will decrease as well. Therefore, it is important to connect this historical and relevant area of research to this study.

Second, the literature noted the benefits of diversity on a college/university campus in various areas. It is difficult to overestimate the interconnectedness of this section to the research question. Multiple studies (Astin, 2004; Denson & Chang, 2009; Umbach & Khu, 2006) noted the many benefits of diversity experiences in achieving greater cognitive development, a more positive academic and social self-concept, growth in leadership skills and cultural awareness, and more overall college satisfaction in a student's college experience. The literature solidified the importance of investigating the essence of undergraduate students' diversity experiences.

Third, as the demographics of our society changes, the literature addressed the potential need for educating students within pedagogical practices that better enable students to function in a multicultural world. Blackmore (2001) asserted that critical theory and multiculturalism could be utilized in addressing the crisis of transition surrounding higher education today. Part of the crisis of transition facing higher education today is that business as usual in the classroom will not suffice in a rapidly changing world. Critical theory and multiculturalism could create diversity exercises within the classroom that could enhance the overall diversity experiences of students involved.

Fourth, the research of accessibility, affordability, and student success were reviewed regarding changes needed to enable a continued diversity presence to be found on college campuses. Ryu (2009) reported that minority enrollment in our nation's colleges and universities rose by 50 percent, from 3.4 million students to 5 million students. The enrollment of Caucasian students increased from 9.9 million to 10.7 million, a gain of 8 percent; while students of color made up 29 percent of the nearly 17.5 million students on America's campuses. The increase in Hispanic enrollment led all racial/ethnic groups, up by 66 percent to more than 1.7 million students; while Asian-American enrollment increased to more than 1 million over the 10-year period between 1995 and 2005, up 37 percent. With these drastic demographic changes taking place, it is important that this study realize that diversity experiences need to be geared toward a changing student population. Without this knowledge, universities could create diversity experiences that only address and benefit the cultural capital of the dominant consumers (Anderson, 2005).

Fifth, this literature review explored research that investigated student development theories and issues related to diversity and faith. Gurin et al. (2002) posited that diversity experiences provide the challenge that is needed for the development of healthy sense of self and more complex cognitive structures. The research also noted how diversity introduces the relational discontinuities critical to identity construction and its subsequent role in fostering cognitive growth. Parks (2000) and Fowler's (1981) work in faith development intertwined student development and diversity as faith is a process of meaning making and discovering connections among relational experiences and events. Finally, Astin (2004) noted an imbalance between exterior and interior aspects of students' lives. While society has made recent advancements in areas such as technology, business, medicine, and science; internal concerns such as values, emotional maturity, and self-understanding have been left behind. Given the insights that research has brought forth regarding how diversity experiences enhance student's overall educational experiences, it is also important that this study explore how and why diversity experiences enhance student and faith development.

Sixth, multiple dissertations were also reviewed that addressed related topics to my study because it is always important for a researcher to be aware of studies connected to her/his topic of interest. Every related study grants the benefit of new reference lists that can be mined for new knowledge. The dissertations reviewed have already provided that benefit.

Finally, it should be noted that this is not an all-encompassing literature review, nor was it intended to be. The literature regarding diversity was far too vast to be investigated within the scope of this study. As noted in the beginning of this proposal,

Macedo (2000) claimed that diversity is a defining issue of our time, but is not always valued; and that term itself has invoked many efforts to understand how and why the social constructions of diversity impact all aspects of society, including higher education. The research reviewed in this study only affirmed Macedo's assertion that diversity affects multiple aspects of higher education and our society as a whole.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Design Framework

The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university by utilizing a qualitative study. For the purpose of this study the following research question was pursued and provided focus to the research protocol: How is diversity experienced by some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university campus?

The purpose of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural environmental state (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In qualitative methodology, the researcher intentionally takes into account the relevant context and tries to understand the phenomenological reality of particular groups and the culture in which they find themselves (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1993). On the opposite side of quantitative research, qualitative research ascribes positive feelings with the methodology of subjectivism. For the qualitative researcher, subjectivism is the epistemological understanding that nothing exists independently of consciousness and experience. The researcher involved in a qualitative study enters the environment with the understanding that absolute truth is not possible to discover since truth is subjective and always under construction (Crotty, 1998).

Two different definitions of qualitative research are worth noting at this point.

Denzin & Lincoln (2005) offered the following definition:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Merriam and Simpson (2000) offered this more concise definition:

The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense of their lives, to delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning making, and to describe how people interpret what they experience. (p. 98)

Golafshani (2003) asserted that qualitative research results in a different type of knowledge than does quantitative inquiry. Quantitative researchers work to disassociate themselves from the research process as much as possible while “qualitative researchers have come to embrace their involvement and role within the research” (p. 600). In this pursuit of knowledge, quantitative research depends on the construction of the research instrument, while in qualitative research “the researcher is the instrument” (Patton, 2002, p. 14).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) offered five features of qualitative research that define it. First, qualitative researchers are ultimately concerned with the naturalistic context; therefore the researcher enters the particular setting that is under study. The researcher wants the where, how, and under what circumstances the data came into being. Second, qualitative research is descriptive and takes the form of words or pictures instead of the numbers associated with quantitative research. Third, qualitative researchers focus on process rather than simply identifying outcomes and products. Merriam and Simpson (2000) noted that the qualitative researcher desires to determine how subjects process the following concerns: How do people make sense of their lives? What is the process of meaning making utilized by the participants studied? How do people interpret what they experience? Fourth, qualitative researchers analyze their data in an inductive manner. The researcher does not use data to prove or disprove hypotheses that were held before the study began. He/she develops theory from the bottom up in a way that takes the many disparate pieces of data collected and inductively defines how they are interconnected. Fifth, the notion of meaning is an essential concern within qualitative research. Qualitative researchers are “interested in how different people make sense of their lives” (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 7).

The nature of this study incorporated Merriam and Simpson’s (2000) insights that enabled me to determine how participants processed the following concerns. How do people make sense of their lives? What is the process of meaning making utilized by the participants studied? How do people interpret what they experience? Bogdan and Biklen (2007) pointed out that qualitative research seeks to define how those processes are translated “into daily activities, procedures, and interactions” (p. 6).

The particular qualitative research approach that was used to guide this study was phenomenology. Wolf (1999) offered the following definition of phenomenology:

Phenomenology focuses on lived experiences. It looks at people's everyday experiences of phenomena and how these experiences are structured, focusing the analysis on the perspective of the individual experiencing the phenomenon.

Phenomenology thus attends to how people experience phenomena existentially.

The aim is to describe and interpret how the situated body makes sense of a phenomenon. (p. 220)

Phenomenologists are ultimately concerned with learning about the nature, or essence, of particular, everyday experiences in people's lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). Phenomenology believes the essence of an experience makes the experience what it is (van Manen, 1990). The use of phenomenology allowed me to examine the everyday diversity experiences of subjects in close, detailed ways (deMarrais, 2004). In doing so, I tried to create contexts in which participants were encouraged to reflect retrospectively on an experience they had already lived through regarding diversity (van Manen, 1990).

As already noted, Golafshani (2003) asserted that "qualitative researchers have come to embrace their involvement and role within the research" (p. 600) and in qualitative research "the researcher is the instrument" (Patton, 2002, p. 14). In an effort to effectively balance my own personal biases and passions regarding the participants being researched, I enlisted the strategy of reflexivity as "a mediator of the research process" (Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 3). Reflexivity was the process of self-examination and required me to reflect on my beliefs and understandings as I moved toward self-consciousness (Watt, 2007). Kacen and Chaitin (2006) noted:

It is this “self-exposure” and this “moment to moment” confrontation that leads investigators to an in-depth exploration of the ways in which their personal histories saturate their inquiry. In sum, then, reflexivity is conceptualized as a conscious act, one that demands that the researcher situate him/herself clearly within the social and cultural context, and be willing to openly confront the self as the field work proceeds. (p. 214)

As the study addressed the research question of how is diversity experienced by some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university campus, phenomenology allowed me to determine how participants made sense of their lived experiences. It was not a process that called me to remove myself from the context being studied. Instead, as a phenomenologist I was situated within the social and cultural context; which better enabled me to ultimately learn about the nature, or essence, of the diversity experiences in some undergraduate’s lives.

Site of Research

The site of the research project was Cranston University (pseudonym CU) a private, religiously-affiliated university set in the Midwest. CU was founded in 1917 and supported by the religious denomination that helped found it. The university has grown to comprise an undergraduate liberal arts program, organized into two colleges and three schools, a graduate School of Theology, and a center for adult education (the School of Adult Learning). The two colleges are made up of a College of the Arts and a College of Science and Humanities. The three schools are represented by the School of Business, the School of Nursing, and the School of Education. The university offers several graduate degree programs, including the Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A.), Master of

Business Administration (M.B.A.), Master of Education (M.Ed.), and Master of Music Education (M.M.E.) degrees, and a dual Master of Science in Nursing – Master of Business Administration (M.S.N. – M.B.A.) degree. More than 2,800 students and nearly 300 instructional and professional staff comprise the community. Among those 2,800 students, the university has a minority representation of 8 percent. This diversity is an important part of CU's heritage and mission. CU seeks to reach beyond the status quo by becoming a community unlike any other; one that fully embraces persons of all races and cultures. The university's student body is made up of American students of many different ethnic backgrounds and over 80 international students representing approximately 40 different countries. With this diversity, Cranston recognizes the opportunity to journey together toward understanding and personal growth (All information retrieved November 28, 2009 from <http://www.cranston.edu/>).

Population and Sample

Undergraduates who were currently enrolled at Cranston University comprised the population. The only criterion was that participants be undergraduates currently enrolled in a private, religiously-affiliated university.

Purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) and snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) techniques were employed. I emailed students from names provided by two administrators at the selected university, in order to establish the first part of the purposive sample, and then asked each person interviewed to recommend other undergraduates who were currently enrolled at Cranston University (using the snowball sampling technique) who might be interested in participating, in order to establish the remaining part of the sample. I contacted the participants for this study by way of

personal email communication. The first 16 subjects who agreed to participate in the study comprised the sample. The participants included eight women and eight men from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. I contacted each participant via phone or email to set up the interview dates, times, and locations utilizing the phone and email scripts already provided to IRB (See Appendix A).

Ethical Considerations

Interviews started after the research protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Ball State University and the Human Research Participant's Committee at Cranston University and were conducted over a period of six months. Prior to beginning each interview, I reviewed the Introductory Letter/Informed Consent Form (See Appendix A) and secured the appropriate agreements/signatures. It was emphasized that participants were free to discontinue participation at any time, for any reason, without prejudice from me. A copy of the agreement was retained by both the participant and me. Prior to the scheduled interview, participants received, via email, the Introductory Letter/Informed Consent Form. I reviewed the same material in-person with each individual participant and obtained agreement before the interview was conducted.

It is important to note that I was acquainted with some of the participants prior to interviewing them. Because of this prior knowledge/relationship, I was reminded of Watt's (2007) advice regarding reflexivity during the interview process and data analysis process. Watt asserted that, in being part of the context, the qualitative researcher must be able "to both get close enough to the population and site that she/he wishes to research, yet keep enough of a distance in order to be able to see needed, different, and nuanced perspectives on the topic of inquiry" (p. 211). Through intentional reflexivity, I was able

to balance both the closeness and distance of the prior relationships throughout the research process.

Data Collection

I met with each individual participant at a mutually convenient site for the interviews. The School of Adult Learning at Cranston University provided a conference room where all the interviews were conducted. The room was furnished with a large conference table and eight comfortable chairs. The room was windowed on two sides which provided privacy, yet also provided a sense of comfort and security for both the participants and the researcher. The room was provided by the Dean of the School of Adult Learning who is a former graduate of the Doctoral program in Adult, Higher, and Community Education at Ball State University. I have known the Dean for several years and she was gracious enough to make the room available for the interviewing process. Before each interview, I clarified to each participant that I was a doctorate student at Ball State and made no reference to any relationship with Cranston University. I am not certain that the participants knew or assumed anything regarding my relationship with the institution used.

A semi-structured (Patton, 2002) interview protocol was employed. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted that the semi-structured interview is an open-ended interview type and encourages the participant to talk in the area of interest and then probes more deeply into the topics and issues the respondent initiates. Flick (2002) asserted that it is characteristic that these open ended questions be brought to the interview situation in the form of an interview guide. The semi-structured interview guide used for this study was constructed utilizing the following steps. First, I constructed a series of questions that

would allow participants to describe in rich detail the diversity experiences they had lived (deMarrais, 2004). The questions were then reviewed by two experts (professors at an accredited higher education institution) and by peer groups from two different research courses. The questions were revised after each review and the final interview guide was established for this study.

The duration of the interviews was between 45 to 60 minutes. During the interviews, participants were asked a variety of questions regarding their diversity experiences at a private, religiously-affiliated university (See Appendix A). Even though the interview guide was employed, a considerable range of topics were pursued to offer the subjects a chance to describe their experiences in a rich manner (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). deMarrais (2004) stated, “An essential element in the interview process is that of active listening and probing where appropriate for more elaboration” (p. 64).

At the conclusion of each interview, I made documentation to detail personal fieldnotes on my computer. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that this is where the researcher “renders a description of people, objects, places, events, activities, and conversations” (p. 118). These fieldnotes were the written account of what I had heard, saw, experienced, and thought during the course of each interview. This was a time that allowed me to collect my thoughts and reflect upon what had just taken place during the interview. I wrote about the demeanor of the participant, if she/he seemed engaged, the passion with which she/he spoke, and other unspoken items perceived during the interview process. It was also a time that I enlisted the strategy of reflexivity as “a mediator of the research process” (Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 3). The constant discipline

of updating and reviewing the fieldnotes was a constructive method of keeping focused during the data collection and data analysis process.

After sixteen interviews the data collection was halted when a point of data saturation had been reached. Flick (2002) wrote, “Saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category” (p. 65). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted that “qualitative researchers gauge when they are finished by what they term data saturation, the point the data collection of information you get becomes redundant” (p. 69). Bowen (2005) noted that the goal is quality not quantity and the objective was not to reach maximum numbers but to reach a saturation point regarding information on the topic.

The interviews were tape-recorded using an audio recorder. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by me and member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used whereby the participants had an opportunity to review their own transcript for accuracy. Within one week to two weeks after completing each interview I emailed the participant a copy of the transcript and invited the participant to indicate any inaccuracies detected within a two-three day period of time. Each participant responded with the affirmation that the transcription was accurate.

Confidentiality of Data

All paper representation of the data was stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home and all the electronic data files were password protected on my personal computer and stored indefinitely. Confidentiality was secured in the transcription process and in any subsequent submission of the findings by using pseudonyms in place of the participants’ real names, their university and the names of any other persons mentioned in

the interview, transcripts, reports or publications. Only the Faculty Supervisor and I had access to the raw data. Upon receiving the transcript for member-checking the participant was also asked to determine the pseudonym that would be used for him/her (Helvie-Mason, 2007). After member-checks and final correspondence had been completed, personal identifying information (real name, email address, etc.) was removed and all data was corresponded only to the pseudonyms. These coding documents matching real name to selected pseudonym will be destroyed by shredding at the conclusion of the study.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was done by using Merleau-Ponty's methodological schema of description-reduction-interpretation (Lanigan, 1988) as utilized in Wolff's (1999) study. Lanigan noted that the phenomenological methodology of description, reduction, and interpretation were a "rigorous attempt to locate meaning in the human situation" (p. 45). The methodology concerns itself with the essences of participants' perceptions and expressions of their diversity experiences. The process of analysis included the "initial procedure consisted in the description (interviews), followed by reduction (thematizations) and interpretations (hermeneutic reflection)" (p. 97). Wolff defined description as defining the emergent themes from the transcribed interviews with the participants. Reduction was defined as finding further thematizations, which bring together initial themes into more all-encompassing ones. Interpretations involved a discovery of how one or two phrases are so revelatory that they elucidate the essence of the phenomenon and capture the experience in a revealing manner.

My analysis of the data followed Lanigan's (1988) process in the following manner. In the initial procedure of in-depth interviewing, I attempted to gain access to the subject's lived experiences as they related to their experiences of diversity through rich description. Second, after transcription of the interviews, I worked to find emergent themes in the description of the phenomenon. This process included reviewing each transcript three times and listening to the interview recordings a second time. While doing so, the transcripts were examined for similarities and dissimilarities (description) among the perceptions shared by the students. I began this process of coding by reviewing relevant phrases and expressions in the margin of the transcripts. After repeating this process three times, I gathered each element of significant meaning and sorted the codes alphabetically. This resulted in a list of 132 codes (See Appendix A). As I reviewed the results of the alphabetical grouping and searched for commonalities across the participants' insights, this allowed me to group together synonymous codes, such as outside my comfort zone or outside my bubble, and eliminate less dominant themes, such as soccer team or football team. Themes such as these were deemed less dominant due to their unrelated nature to the emerging dominant themes. This process resulted in a reduced list of 97 codes (See Appendix A).

At this point, I reviewed the codes and began defining cluster themes that coalesced around an emergent theme that began to define the essence of the students' diversity experiences. Cluster themes are those themes that gather around an emergent theme with such consistency they cannot be ignored (Crotty, 1998). By their dominant existence, "They are," as Crotty wrote, "means of transmitting meaning—experience, beliefs, values—from one person or community to another . . . an understanding of the

text that is deeper or goes further than the author's own understanding" (p. 91). By utilizing this last step I analyzed the data to examine the complexity of the experience described until the essence of the experience was identified by the emergent themes.

Time Line

On October 14, 2009, I received IRB approval of my protocol from Ball State University. The time line designated for data collection is: November 2009 – April 2010. My data analysis was ongoing and iterative. The defense of my dissertation is targeted for September, 2010.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. This chapter provides demographic descriptions of the study participants, a summary of the interview with each participant, and a general description of the categories that emerged from the data. A demographic breakdown of the participants was included to provide an understanding of the undergraduates utilized for the study before defining and describing the findings. The chapter concludes with the presentation and description of the five categories:

1. Types of diversity experiences.
2. Forms of diversity experiences.
3. Influence of previous context.
4. Benefits of diversity experiences.
5. Faith issues regarding diversity experiences.

As stated in Chapter 3, undergraduates who were currently enrolled at a private, religiously-affiliated university comprised the population. The only criterion was that participants be undergraduates currently enrolled in a private, religiously-affiliated university. Purposive and snowball sampling elicited a total of sixteen participants in this study. Data and demographic information was collected throughout the semi-structured interviews. The participants included eight women and eight men from a variety of

racial/ethnic backgrounds. Also, the participants were comprised of five seniors, seven juniors, three sophomores, and one freshman. Each participant was contacted via phone or email to set up the interview date, time, and location.

Table 1: Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Year	Gender	Race/Ethnic
Linda	Junior	Female	Caucasian
Jacob	Senior	Male	African American
Tina	Sophomore	Female	Caucasian
Daniel	Junior	Male	African American
Charles	Senior	Male	Caucasian
Steve	Senior	Male	Caucasian
Cindy	Junior	Female	Bi-racial
Everett	Senior	Male	Caucasian
Mary	Sophomore	Female	Cayman Islands
Jordan	Junior	Male	Caucasian
Michael	Senior	Male	Caucasian
Estelle	Sophomore	Female	Hispanic
Mia	Freshman	Female	Hispanic
Matthew	Junior	Male	Zambia
Amy	Junior	Female	Caucasian
Elizabeth	Junior	Female	Caucasian

Note. The participants are listed in chronological order of when interviews took place and all the demographic data was self-reported.

Interview Summaries

This section sets forth the interview summaries of each participant.

Linda

Linda is a junior Caucasian at Cranston. As the interview began, Linda appeared nervous but seemed to reach a comfort level as the interview progressed. In truth, with it being my first interview, there was probably some nerves on my part also. In a short time, however, the interview found a comfortable rhythm and all nervousness left.

When asked initially about diversity, Linda immediately reflected on her previous context before attending college and noted, “In my neighborhood, it was predominantly White, but in my school, we were really diverse.” The high school was diverse, but “really split up by race.” Some in her high school had the sense that “I’m better than you, and sometimes there is this color that is better than you.”

Her conceptualization of diversity experiences also focused on religious differences, “I just think it is interesting to see what other people believe and then say it wasn't what I believe; then kinda like compare them.” In relation to her faith, experiencing different forms of worship during chapel was a transforming process for her:

I would say religions, but different forms of worship. Um, chapel there is always a different person leading. And, when I first got here freshman year, I was like, I can't stand it when that person worships, like that is not how I worship. And then as time has kind of gone on, I realize that every church and every person has their own unique way of worshipping.

She then began to reflect on race, lifestyle, and even the different clothing habits of different people, “And how people show up to class in their jeans, or sweats or t-shirts. And other people get all dressed up for class and stuff like that. There's a big difference.” For Linda, diversity experiences were a new thing in almost every area of her life. As the interview progressed, she began to verbalize specific diversity experiences that had impacted her.

A critical experience was tied to an education course that utilized some multicultural activities which called for students to role play with each other. Some of the

roles that were played included a homeless person, a Caucasian, and an African American. Those activities really brought the differences that different groups face to the forefront and benefitted Linda. She stated, “I think when you take yourself out of your own comfort zone and put yourself in someone else's, and then it is more eye-opening to you. And you learn a lot more from it.”

Another experience was a service project or mission trip that took Linda to another country. This trip forced her to experience a different culture and work with people who were very diverse. The experience enabled her to realize that her preconceived ideas regarding groups of people were many times wrong, “They're really not all that different from us just because they look different, and speak a different language, they still like the same things we do.”

In regards to her faith, these experiences had not only challenged her, but also caused her to own and personalize her faith in a deep way. She affirmed, “My faith in general has grown since I've been here because I am making it my faith and not my family's faith.” As her years at CU have progressed, so has her openness to different people, beliefs, and worship, “I am more open to the more different forms of worship I think now. And accepting people, like their ways, and you know.” She acknowledged that attending Cranston had instilled in her a belief that “everyone is equal, and see everyone as equal to us.”

As I reflect on my interview with Linda, she is a person who still somewhat struggles with openness towards new things. This is probably related to her deep attachment to home as she still returns every weekend to attend worship in her home church. It is also related to her faith background being fundamental and traditional. She

noted, "Like we do communion first; I can't do it, communion has to be last . . . I am very set in my ways." Yet, her diversity experiences have caused her to "be more accepting towards people that look different than me." She noted that this change is related to her belief "that God created us all and we're all unique, and we are all made in God's image." This concept has helped her process the dissonance that diversity experiences have presented her. As for most of us, this is not an easy process; especially when we are challenged to get out of our comfort zone.

Jacob

Jacob is a fifth year senior and an African American. I did not know until the interview that his parents are ministers. He is bright, articulate, very mature, and carries himself with confidence. He did not seem intimidated by the interview process at all; perhaps that was because we had a casual relationship over the past year or possibly he was just that confident.

As Jacob spoke of diversity, he continually used the term cultures and did not focus on race as Linda did. He stated that diversity was more than just race. It was about people coming from different cultures and learning about those differences. When asked about diversity experiences he spoke immediately about his sophomore year when his roommate was Caucasian. Both young men had their differences, but Jacob noted that the experience allowed him to understand that "you come to an understanding of living together; there are things that we do different. It doesn't make one right, it doesn't make one wrong, but we can all get along." The roommate experience allowed Jacob to grow in his understanding of how to approach differences among people.

Another experience was a course that enhanced his knowledge of diversity. The class, titled Race and Ethnicity, enabled students to speak openly about their thoughts regarding diversity; specifically why different groups do or say different things. He acknowledged that there was tension in the room on many occasions, but Jacob believed the classroom is an opportunity for bringing up these types of topics in class “because people don't get offended in a classroom setting, as long as it is not intentional because people should have the freedom to express themselves.” He noted that classes like these are to gain understanding, to hear questions regarding differences, and to learn from hearing both sides to an issue.

Regarding the Race and Ethnicity course, Jacob noted that the professor was very skilled in helping the class work through tense moments, “The professor did a really good job with leading the students and communicating how they felt and their opinions.” He spoke of the excellence of the professor multiple times and her comfort level in dealing with sensitive topics. The professor had a way of “just making it free to open up and talk.” Jacob noted that the professor’s comfort and humor enabled the class to view the topics as non-offensive, “because it is a part of history, it is part of a learning experience, part of your education.”

Jacob also referred back to his growing up years and the context he came from before entering college. His previous context was a “completely Black town.” Jacob noted that he had grown in his openness towards others who were different than him. He believed that this was a very different experience than the people he had grown up with, “I think I've grown more as a person and I even talk to some of the guys that I was friends with back in Gary and I could see their perception of the world has not changed, I

don't see any growth or maturity.” Jacob believed the reason for this was because his previous friends had not been exposed to the diversity he had in coming to Cranston. This insight was really important to him and was an example of the critical thinking he had done regarding his conceptualization of diversity prior to coming to college, and now as he approached graduation.

Jacob seemed convinced that this campus had enabled him to grow in his understanding of diversity. Whether one considers living with a Caucasian roommate or the courses he took, in his mind, this diverse campus enabled him to grow. In particular, he noted that the diversity experiences better prepared him to work in the real world and “gain a greater perspective of a worldwide view.” He was also certain that his faith influenced his concept of diversity and the campus enlarged that view with its focus on faith, “I would say that it (faith) definitely has influenced it quite a bit. Honestly, because I do consider what I just said. Being Christ-like, willing to help others, willing to give and sacrifice.”

Many of those faith related experiences were informal ones; like bible studies on the dorm floor where guys from different backgrounds, color, and beliefs came into a room and shared. Barriers, in Jacob’s eyes, fell to the wayside and a common bond in their faith linked them, “No one person's background is the same . . . It didn't matter what you looked like, or where you came from, it was what you were there for.”

Jacob was exceptional at articulating his beliefs regarding diversity experiences and how those experiences influenced his openness and challenged him to grow as a human being and a person of faith. His interview passed so quickly I wondered where the time had gone.

Tina

Tina is Caucasian and a sophomore in college. She was late for our interview because she was held up after her class and was unable to make it across campus on time. Tina is very mature for her age. She seems relatively calm and collected. When she first entered the room she was flustered from being late, but she calmed down quickly. Tina began the interview by telling me she had no intent of coming to a religiously-affiliated college, but her mother went to Cranston for one year and really liked it. She stated, "My mom actually went here and she told me about it. And it just felt more homey here with the religious atmosphere. So, I just felt like this was a better place for me."

Tina asserted that diversity for her meant things that were different, "I just think it, depending on how you use it and what context, it could be like just differences, like not the same thing or carbon copies, it is more diverse." She specifically noted that it didn't always mean race or a different color of skin. It dealt more with differences; specifically different views, mindsets, and opinions that different people hold, "I think it's that we don't all have the similar mindset. We all have different opinions, different views." She added, "I don't necessarily look at the color of someone's skin and think, oh, we are diverse because we have some African American people here. We have so many different kinds of people here."

Tina felt the dominant type of diversity on CU's campus was religious diversity, "I think like our faith, if anything, because all the time we have discussions and debates on how we view it." She noted that those diverse interactions regarding faith took place most times "in classrooms because we are kind of like required to put out our opinions and tell the teacher or our fellow students how we feel about certain situations." In her

mind, these experiences allowed students to get to know other students at a deeper level instead of “just kind of like on the surface.”

Tina commented that “my roommate is from the Cayman Islands;” therefore diversity is something Tina has lived with since coming to college. She noted that this is the most meaningful diversity experience she has had in coming to college. Both young women realize there are great differences between them, “We learn from each other definitely every single day because sometimes we have like our cultural differences get in the way sometimes because she will think I'm saying one thing, but I'm saying something else.” Amazing, at the beginning of their time together, they made “an agreement that we ask each other” questions and to always be honest when something is said or done that they do not understand. This has worked well for them and both have grown in their understanding of the other’s cultures and ways. This relationship has also enabled Tina to build relationships with other international students because her roommate “is friends with all the international students.” Therefore, this relationship has multiplied her diversity experiences on campus.

Tina also discussed diversity experiences within the classroom; particularly a Bible class where differences of opinions had arisen and things got very tense, “They got in a heated argument in our Bible class the other day because it's the one place that we always have discussions and there was a big heated argument over a passage in the Bible.” For Tina, religious diversity causes the most tension on campus because of person’s dogmatic stances, “People aren't very open-minded to the fact that people could read scripture in a different way.” Tina’s interview made it clear that religion/faith can be a positive and negative factor regarding diversity experiences.

In regards to the Bible class, she expressed disappointment at the professor's lack of action in handling the tense situation. In her view, the teacher seemed to want to move past the situation without addressing it; almost as if he was too uncomfortable to address it. She stated, "I think he kinda got uncomfortable. And then he kinda did his best to kind of avoid it all." Because of this, what Tina thought could have been a learning situation was "just kinda pushed by."

The tension in this class was an illustration of what Tina sees as a bigger issue regarding religious diversity on Cranston's campus. That issue was the lack of respect for other's opinions and beliefs, "I think it's because we have it in our mindset that we think we are perfect because we are living by God's word and that our way is the correct way." In Tina's view, she believes "that you have to just give other people their opinions and respect . . . It is not respectful to shoot down someone else's opinion just because you don't think its right."

In many ways, Tina works well with diversity because she sees herself as different from the norm and is proud of that, "I was really weird, as a child, I prayed that I would be different from other people. So, I kinda have a different way of thinking on things." It seems that this sense of self has caused her to be more open to new and different things. In many ways, her mother has fostered this type of attitude, "That's how my mom brought me up. To not just look at someone and say, 'Oh well, they're different.'" Tina also shared that her differences have caused her to not feel a part on the campus; even though she said she thought it was a diverse place with diverse people, "Like, I have my friends, but it's just that I don't feel that I'm linked in a way yet." Her

differences have caused her to not fit in with any one crowd and I sensed she was hurting from this feeling of isolation.

At the core of who Tina is, her faith was the cause of her respect for people who are different than her. It is her response to “just kind of building my relationship with God.” For Tina, a person of faith is “told to love God's people and not focus on what makes them different, or not focus on what they might be doing wrong . . . It's our job to love people because God made them.”

Daniel

Daniel was on time and seemed enthusiastic to get started with the interview. He is an African American and a junior at Cranston. He is bright and articulate. I found it humorous that I knew his grandfather many years ago and they share so many common features and traits.

At first, Daniel's answers seemed vague. However, the good thing about interviewing is that it is like riding a bike; the more you do it the better you get at it. I continued to ask descriptive questions and then a light seemed to come on. It did not take long and Daniel seemed to be comfortable with the process. In fact, after one question he responded with “Oh” and then began to share about his diversity experiences with eloquence and candor.

Daniel defined diversity as “a good blend of different cultures and different people. Um, could be sex, could be race, could be basically anything that makes certain people different.” His definition of diversity was centered on a structural understanding of diversity at CU and he believed Cranston was a very diverse campus. “I would say that it would be easier to think of a place where it (diversity) wasn't. To me, it seems like the

campus in general is pretty diversified as far as race and things like that.” This was different than “when my parents went here, it seems from what they've told me it was a lot different. It seems it was a lot more not, a lot more by choice, undiversified.”

In a very enthusiastic manner, Daniel described his diversity experiences within his social club. It was during rush week that he said he had experiences that changed his understanding of diversity. “So, there's just a mix of everybody and you get to meet a lot of people that you would not have met, I know I wouldn't have met before.” There were people in particular that he engaged during that week that he “might not have cared for before.” Yet, when they went through the struggles of rush week together, “that in itself is just a big, big changer. Just in the way you think about things and your perspective on things and on people.” Daniel’s experiences within the social club validated his willingness to take a chance and get to know people different than himself.

He then mentioned an informal worship experience that takes place on Tuesday nights. Its called 10:07, because it always begins at 10:07 p.m. sharp. It is student led in every facet. For Daniel, in regards to a positive diversity experience, 10:07 was “in a big way, it's a big thing.” He mentioned how neat it was to not worry about the color of your skin or where you were from, just to be together worshipping the same God. 10:07 speaks to Daniel in such a strong way because it’s not “any group, or any race, or any sex, it's just a mix of everyone and everywhere. And it's very diverse and it just goes to show you that Christianity in general is very diverse and it pertains to everyone.”

Next, he mentioned his dorm hall and how diverse it was:

There's a lot of diversity on my floor in Smith. There's a guy from Nepal and he's of the Hindu faith. And he hangs out with us, he's a great guy. And also, another

guy from Italy. He speaks Italian . . . There's African Americans on my floor, there's of course Caucasians. It's a good mix, it really is diverse.

Daniel enjoyed the dialogue with these young men regarding the differences between their faiths and cultures, “Just growing closer and I guess learning about their different culture and things like that. That has been a good learning experience. I've learned a lot about Italy and about Nepal as well; so, it's been a good experience.”

Daniel stated he is now more open to have those kinds of discussions and not focus on the differences between people. Daniel shared a funny story regarding the young man from Nepal:

When he applied, he applied to Cranston University, but it was the wrong one! It was the one down south in Indiana, I guess. There's another one, I guess. So, he came to the wrong Cranston University, I guess. And he liked it, so he stayed!

Daniel also described his diversity experiences regarding the classroom; particularly the Liberal Arts classes. In those classes, “you get a real mix of all different types of people . . . international students who get kind of thrown in there in the mix with all the races and it makes everything just real diversified and things.” These types of classes “really kind of broaden your horizons and make you think a lot.”

In a different way, Daniel spoke about the Multicultural Association and their efforts to reach out to him. In some ways, he did not understand it and felt confused. For Daniel, he did not see himself “as having a different culture.” In essence, this designation would typecast Daniel in a way he did not see himself and in his words, “it kind of upset me a little bit.” Daniel has a strong sense of belonging on the campus of CU and did not want to be perceived differently.

Daniel also spoke regarding his previous context before coming to college, “My high school, it was a lot different than Cranston I would say.” Each participant has reflected on their previous context. It almost appears that the process of critical thinking is happening before their very eyes and they are realizing that who they are becoming is not what or who they were. These experiences are changing them and they recognize that. Daniel noted that his diversity experiences have “just broadened my horizons and made me think about things in a different way and made me realize just I guess that, just to think about things more.”

As Daniel continued reflecting, he mentioned other informal diversity experiences such as “just hanging out, playing ping-pong sometimes, hanging out, watching movies, just normal stuff.” It was during these experiences when he learned that different people are “really just like everyone else. I mean, everyone's different. They're just normal guys, like to have fun, like to hang out, you know. Everyone has their differences, but we're all the same because we're all different.”

Charles

The moment Charles walked into the room; you could sense he was a leader. He is Caucasian, a senior at Cranston, and a person of deep faith. He was not bashful about speaking his mind or making certain he was clearly communicating his thoughts. I found it interesting that in some ways his context before attending college was similar to mine. He came from a predominantly Caucasian background and until college had not had many diverse interactions, “I never interacted with a person of a different race until I came here.” In reviewing his interview it became clear that his life has been transformed because of these experiences; and I related to that.

Many of the previous perceptions and stereotypes of people that Charles held had been changed due to diversity interactions at CU. Those diversity experiences at CU began on a football field, “I went to high school with predominantly White people. And, came here and there were several Black people on the team. And I had never been intimately involved with anything that I cared about before with Black people.” From that background, Charles brought with him stereotypes of people who were different from him. “We would play a team that would have an African American on the team, in several cases they would say, ‘Hey, if you can get inside their head early, we will have a good chance of winning the game.’” He came to realize that in many ways the media had defined his perceptions of other diverse people, “I never had interaction with them before and because of the way society is you think about, um, what you see on TV and what you hear on the radio as defining that group of people.” As Charles began to have diversity experiences and built friendships with those different than himself, he came to understand that diversity “makes you a much better person” and that “a lot of stuff that society tells you is a stereotype, you just disregard them.”

From these experiences, Charles has built deep friendships. Out of all the interviews thus far, Charles was the most deeply moved and influenced by his relationships with diverse friends. I am not certain if that was the result of sharing so many challenges through football or that these friendships were some of his first with persons different than himself. Whatever the reason, these relationships touched him deeply and he felt passionately about them.

His experiences of diversity were not only on campus, but Charles began to spend some weekends at his diverse friend’s home. These experiences only heightened his

awareness of seeing things differently than before, “I have seen things through D’s eyes and it changed me . . . Talking and saying, ‘Why is this like this for you and not me?’ Just going through life together with a friend.”

During his undergraduate years, Charles also went on a work/mission trip to Nicaragua and it “totally rocked my world.” This trip took on both a global and personal notion for him. It was interesting in the way the overseas experience caused him to act differently towards his own family and others as he returned home, “I can be less worried about money. I can be more worried about my relationship with my friends and my parents.” The trip struck such a deep chord within Charles that he got emotional speaking about it, “When it’s on a global thing, you want to tell your brothers, you want to tell your parents, you want to tell your girlfriend, you want to tell everybody about what you experienced.”

The transformation that Charles experienced due to his diversity interactions (on and off campus) came back to a central question for him centered around his faith, “How am I going to care for this person who is a different than me?” The answer for Charles was centered around the person of Jesus, “Well, how would Jesus be treating them? . . . I think it makes a world of difference in how you treat them.”

I found it interesting that at the close of our interview, he shared his perceptions that the university’s emphasis on diversity during too many chapels was overkill. He felt that the administration was creating problems, not solving them by emphasizing how Cranston was failing in regards to diversity, “When you have it jammed down your throat and they say, hey, this is an issue, you start to think, ‘Is this an issue?’ And you ask is this so bad that we talk about it bi-weekly.” It is not easy for an institution of higher education

to balance this. Some people see it as overkill and others as very needed. His analogy of a coach always focusing on what you need to improve instead of building some confidence in what you are doing well was insightful, “I guess you could consider it like a coach who tells you every game, ‘Not good enough, got to get better next week.’ And no confidence is ever built.” Perhaps, in reflecting on Charles’ insights, Cranston might benefit from trying a spoon full of sugar along with its challenges regarding diversity.

Steve

Today’s interview with Steve found me with a true conversationalist! He is Caucasian and a senior at Cranston. Steve was very forthright in his opinions and had multiple diversity experiences to share about. It was evident that Steve was not uncomfortable with the interview process. In fact, I had the feeling he had been looking forward to our time together.

Steve’s first recollection of a diversity experience at Cranston was a diversity workshop following a chapel service. The chapel service featured a gentleman who spoke on diversity issues and then asked students to come to the workshop immediately following chapel. He volunteered that “you got an extra chapel if you went to this discussion;” so he attended. Steve said the workshop influenced him in different ways, “I noticed that people do hold grudges, and Black people take offense to all the White people, and think every White person thinks the same. And, same thing for people who have their stereotypes, and stuff like that.”

Steve related his experiences to his previous context before coming to Cranston. In many ways, his exposure to diversity was limited and most of his diversity experiences had left him with negative connotations towards people different than himself, “When I

was in Georgia, which is a predominantly Black state, . . . like I had all my friends, but they kept just stealing from me, and like, I felt like, now that I look back, I feel like they kind of used me.” The workshop challenged Steve to move past his stereotypes and see people not for the color of their skin but for being people, “It doesn’t matter what color they are. It’s the person that’s in them. It challenged me to, just like, think of people for people, not people for color or anything like that.”

He also noted that diversity was not only in a race/ethnic manner, but also in a lifestyle manner. For Steve, the notion of dissonance between lifestyles on a Christian campus was troubling, “I mean, you have your partiers, or whatever. I mean, I know it’s not supposed to be allowed here, but um, you have your partiers, and then you have your true Christians, and whatever.” When he first arrived at Cranston, he was confused by the diverse lifestyles he saw being lived out. These went against his previous context of a Christian soccer team and strict church affiliation, “I was like in culture shock. Where like a lot of partiers, instead of where I grew up in the church and my soccer team mostly was church-affiliated, and in high school I didn’t see it as much.”

Steve also noted that the small class size at CU presented him with opportunities to be with diverse people and build relationships with them; particularly the liberal arts classes, “That throws everyone into one class . . . there can be a Black person in there, or a White person in there, an Asian person in there, a person that drinks, a person that doesn’t drink.” These kinds of diverse situations presented him with the opportunity to listen with an open-mind to different beliefs, “Everyone’s going to have their different beliefs, and if you go in there with an open mind . . . then it opens your eyes up to, like I said, the broad spectrum of life.”

At Cranston, Steve was exposed to many diverse issues and experiences that brought with them more questions than answers; particularly regarding homosexuality.

I've kind of been, like that door has kind of been opened to me to see like, to accept them or not. Not necessarily to accept them, I don't know how to word it, but just like is homosexuality right or wrong, basically, to a Christian. And like, it's kind of like, I've heard it said in the Bible, it's wrong, but at the same time, there are people that are homosexuals that claim they are Christians, which to me, if the Bible says its wrong, how are they Christians?

Steve was conflicted in what to believe regarding people who live different lifestyles than him, but were nice people. The exposure to differences caused him to wrestle inwardly regarding new beliefs and values. He talked a great deal about these issues and those he used to judge harshly for what he saw was their lack of faith. However, through diversity experiences he has grown to see them as individuals that he likes and have become his friends; even with some reservations:

If you have an open eye, open mind to all the different diverse things you come in contact with in life, you will live life so much better, and get the bad and good out of life . . . I mean, just because you don't agree with them doesn't necessarily mean they can't be your friend. I mean, I feel like just because they're a lesbian or gay, it doesn't necessarily mean I can't be their friend, as long as, I feel like as long as they don't hit on me, I'm fine!

Steve was the first and only student to comment on gay and lesbian issues. His interaction with gay and lesbians had caused him great strife but took him to a place where he saw them as people also:

I'm just trying to debate. I see my beliefs, and I see . . . I kind of see both things, and I just, it goes back to that judging thing. That just because they're gay doesn't mean they're a bad person. And like, it just goes back on that, and just like, figuring out what is right and what is wrong according to me.

He was still undecided about how he viewed this from a faith perspective, but he was in the wrestling process of critical thinking along the way.

He also noted how he had grown and matured as a part of these experiences. He was emphatic regarding this and was passionate about the difference attending Cranston had made in his life, "It's just challenged me and helped me grow with, like open my eyes to different things instead of living in my little bubble, and helped me think outside my bubble." For him, Cranston being a liberal arts school gave him multiple opportunities to meet many diverse people and, in the end, made him a better person, "So it's just like, opened my networking and broadened my view, and my eyes to live with an open mind instead of a closed mind. And um, just kind of made me a better person."

Cindy

Cindy's interview was really excellent. Energetic would not suffice as a word to describe her. As she entered the room a new energy also entered with her. She is a junior and is bi-racial. Her mother is Caucasian and her dad is African American. Very quickly she let me know that diversity has always been a part of her life, "Well I, I come from a diverse background actually. My mom is White and my dad is Black." Some of the students have come from not so diverse backgrounds, but her background was completely different. Diversity is something she is accustomed to and cherishes:

I've grown up knowing that there are other things than Black and White. There are religions, and there are, um, there are people of different races and ethnicities, and the ideal goal is to embrace them. And so, they might be different than me, but that's definitely something that, um, that I've been taught. It's been awesome to get to learn about them, and where they come from and, and the different things that they have learned, and um, and also getting to know what we have in common.

Cindy first noted that her dorm is almost 50 % diversified with international students and that has caused her to think and act differently than many students might. She is very intentional to be inclusive and broader in her thinking, "That influenced a lot during that year of thinking what we can do and things like that, and um, trying to bring everybody's culture and their ideas into everything, just to reach everyone." Diversity for Cindy is fun and exciting. She embraces the concept and experiences in every way, "I found out that there are so many people in my dorm that are just awesome and diverse, and so I think that's like, one of the cool things I found out coming to campus."

Cindy saw diversity as almost a part of her calling in life. She desires to work in missions and sees diversity experiences as a part of her training and preparation for her life's work, "I was like, I knew I wanted to be a missionary; I knew there was more than just what happened in the States and different things."

Within her dorm life there are many informal diversity interactions taking place; whether that be "listening to African music," cooking meals, or preparing "a big church service in our dorm." Those experiences cause Cindy to be mindful and open to the differences that all people bring to each situation, "Just to understand that, um, the

decisions that you make, because, yeah the majority of us speak English, doesn't mean that you can't effect somebody else that doesn't speak English."

In one of the courses Cindy took, there was a great emphasis on a program titled: Crantson University East Africa Aids Coalition (CUEA) which helps "to raise awareness for AIDS victims and things like that going on in East Africa, mainly Uganda." This program takes students abroad each year and provides fund-raising efforts back here in the States. The class she participated in was facilitated by a professor who really opened her mind and heart to view diversity from a global perspective; particularly the aids epidemic in East Africa. The professor did a positive job of translating his diverse experiences into the classroom and enabling students to catch a global perspective of diversity experiences:

I think he was very intentional about helping us learn and understand that we're not all the same. We're all diverse and you're going to be diverse from the person you're sitting next to, whether they're the same color as you or from a different country, and so I think it's something that he teaches very well. It's something that he's very conscious about helping others understand too.

Cindy also spoke about why a liberal arts school allows for more diverse experiences. She raved about Cranston and its efforts to make diversity a part of the campus, "I think that CU does an amazing job of teaching us diversity and of helping us understand there are things bigger than us." Cindy also noted that her faith played a key role in her deep appreciation and embrace of diversity experiences:

We're taught as Christians that Jesus loved everyone, and that we're to love everyone, and I think that's a big thing. Whether they have the same ideas as I do

or not, whether they have the same religion as I do or not, we're to love them as Jesus would love them.

The interview revealed that Cindy's diversity experiences ranged from the classroom, to the dorm, to extracurricular programs, and to simply building relationships with those she encountered. Since her family is diverse, her previous context helped create openness within her to not fear differences. In fact, I get the sense that Cindy would be bored without it. I just really enjoyed and admired Cindy's attitude and desire to be involved in diverse interactions. She truly desired to make this a better campus for all the students on it. She was an impressive young woman to interview.

Everett

I interviewed Everett who was a really great young man. In many ways, he was more reserved and thoughtful than many of the students I have interviewed. This may be due to the fact that he was older than any other student I had interviewed and seemed very settled and comfortable with himself. It seemed that Everett had not had as many diversity experiences as other students had; possibly because he was on the golf team, which was not diverse. Perhaps he had simply not taken advantage of diverse experiences. Everett is Caucasian and a senior majoring in history. He informed me that in the future he would like to teach and coach at the college level.

Everett's first notion of diversity was chapel worship and the differing worship styles that were presented to him. It challenged him to get outside his box and not judge people who viewed worship differently than he did, "I mean I already knew that my way wasn't the only way, but it was, just uh, I guess let me know that within the same religion, there could be many different ways of doing it." Even with his newfound openness, the

experiences pushed him outside his comfort zone and made him uncomfortable, “Well, depending on how it is, certain ways would still make me uncomfortable if it was a lot different from my own, what I’ve been used to.” Everett recognized these diversity experiences were opportunities for him to learn, “It just was kind of, just a learning experience I guess to let me know that my way wasn’t the only way, and that there were other ways to worship and to express yourself.”

As Everett experienced these diverse interactions, the component of prayer also became a learning experience brought on by diversity, “But, in other ways, the way that people have prayed, the way they’ve worshipped; that has influenced me and allowed me to see that that can be a good experience too.” The prayer focus took on different meaning for him as he watched a young man pray at an informal worship experience, “Um, one guy is a guy that I just met at a, they just kind of had a, I can’t think of the word, impromptu, uh worship service and prayer service out by Helios.” The young man was praying by “jumping up and down during all the songs, and during the prayer he was moving around and almost yelling some stuff, and that’s just not what I’ve grown up around so it was just kind of weird.” For Everett, these actions pushed him past his comfort zone. But, instead of being judgmental, he was open to new perspectives:

Well it just let me know that diversity is not necessarily a negative thing at all.

Especially in a religion, because that’s usually, something you don’t really think of diversity being a great subject in. It’s usually, there’s one, one certain path and I’ve learned that’s not always the case, so.

The classroom also presented Everett with curricular diversity experiences that in some ways made him uncomfortable:

There have been a few classes where we've been, like talking about American History and stuff, and there have been a few kind of awkward moments because there have been maybe one or two Black students in the class and when you're talking about slavery or lynching, and there's one or two people there that their families can really relate to that, then that's, I don't know, kind of an uneasy feeling, really.

These experiences, even with their discomfort, offered Everett opportunities to grow in his perspectives regarding other people's thoughts and ideas, "So, you just really have to make sure you're thoughtful of other peoples' perspectives when you're thinking about any subject really."

Everett stated that in regards to racial/ethnic diversity his context had not changed that much since coming to Cranston because his family raised him to treat all people fairly regardless of the color of their skin, "I think I was fortunate coming into it in the first place in the fact that I had been raised in a way to respect diversity, and all that came with that." However, because of the structural diversity on the Cranston campus, it afforded him more opportunities for diversity experiences to take place in his life, "Being here with different cultures and even, not necessarily just Black and White, but with the international students as well, you, I get to experience that more so than I would at home or in high school."

Everett also mentioned his frustration that Cranston did nothing for Veterans Day and, yet, did a great deal on Martin Luther King Jr. day, "There was a Veterans Day that we had chapel on, and didn't do anything for it. And then Martin Luther King Day was, well pretty soon after that and we had a week-long celebration in both chapels for that."

He stated that a number of students were upset with this. When questioned further, he admitted they were all Caucasian students. He didn't "mean to say that Martin Luther King Day should not have been celebrated, it definitely should have. But, I just felt like the Veterans Day as well should have had even the same notoriety I guess."

Another concern that Everett mentioned was his observation that "a lot of times later at night down in the gathering place, there are typically a lot of African American students that congregate down there." This segregated gathering of African American students made Everett wonder "whether they had made an attempt for, to invite other groups of other races down there, or whether other groups of other races had attempted to go down there and associate?" He also questioned, "If there was any effort from either side to really intermingle?"

Everett's diversity experiences were also influenced by his faith. He noted that the teaching to "love you neighbor as yourself . . . doesn't put any limit on who your neighbor is." These diversity experiences also enabled him to develop and mature in his faith, "Whether it be your faith or something else, I think that has to grow, regardless because you're experiencing a new aspect of it; something you didn't know was there, or didn't know was possible before." The process of maturing enabled Everett to own his faith, "When I came here, I believed what Mom and Dad had told me to believe. And, coming out as a senior, that hasn't changed a whole lot, but now it's what I believe."

Mary

Mary is from the Cayman Islands, a junior, and an accounting major. She is bright, articulate, and strong in her faith. I could sense at the beginning of the interview she was reserved and hesitant. However, after a short while she really came out of her

shell and was even animated during parts of the interview. It took a moment to build some trust with Mary and for her to gain a sense of who I was. Her interview was a delightful experience.

It was interesting to note that her definition of or focus on diversity centered on faith and religion. The place that she had experienced diversity the most was in her shock at the shallowness of other student's faith in the States. She could not believe that some students on a Christian campus had very little regard for faith or God for that matter, "In coming here, I see that it's different because a lot of students here they like don't believe in God or they are just here because they were told to come here and they didn't have another choice." In her previous context, those who professed faith in Christ would be held to more accountability in professing and sharing their faith, "The way people like just sitting in the Haven, or having a casual conversation. And just the way they refer to God, is almost like there is not as much reverence as we have back home."

As the interview continued, more of Mary's personal story came out. It had not been an easy life for this young woman. In many ways, this is why her faith is so meaningful for her. That faith has carried her through many trials and difficult situations:

Well, back home, first of all, we grew up really poor . . . And in my childhood, when I was younger, I got abused. And the thought that I was so many times I was involved in all kinds of like drinking alcohol. And at one point, I even tried to do drugs. But, for some reason, God protected me from that. It happened, and He always, even when I wasn't thinking anything about God, He was thinking about me.

When you listen to Mary's story, it is easy to understand how her faith, even a dogmatic one, would early on influence her diversity perceptions of religion. That concept also helps to explain the dogged determination she brings to her undergraduate experience:

So, when I think about all that God has brought me through, I know that I'm going to fall and I'm going to make mistakes. But, I know one thing, when I fall, I'm going to get back up. And I'm going to go forward.

However, her diversity experiences over time tendered her judgments and biases against others. She began to understand that people came from different backgrounds and they view things differently, "People view things differently . . . I know some people and they are Christians, but they go about their faith different from mine . . . It just makes me appreciate the fact that we have people who are different." Diversity experiences have caused her to reflect on the different context she was raised in as compared to the context other students came from. In doing so, Mary has come to appreciate and bemoan the differences at the same time:

Like I hear some people talk about their relationship with their father and their mother. And sometimes I hear it and I say ok fine, see you've been through this and you still survived. Yeah, I feel fortunate. But sometimes I feel like I got left out of something good.

For Mary, her informal diversity interactions within dorm life really impacted her. The floor Bible study offered her an opportunity to not only encounter different people but to truly get to know them. "We have a small group that is supposed to be a spiritual time and also a group where we can just share what's happening in our week. And just a

time of growing together and getting to know each other.” In doing so, she gained a deeper appreciation and openness towards people who were different from her:

It was another way for me to see that people are different and that we're different, but we have similar goals. But, again people are different and I just have to appreciate people for who they are, not for what I want them to be or who I think they should be. Regardless of the fact, I just need to learn to love people for who they are.

In some ways, these deeper relationships enabled trust and vulnerability to coincide within Mary. Because of her background, trust and vulnerability were not easy for her to build. These deeper diversity experiences enabled her to develop openness to new perspectives and a personal growth in accepting others to take place:

I guess being in that small group I realize that people, that even though I might sometimes have been closed minded, and just being with people from different backgrounds that can affect me for who I am. And it makes it easier for me to like I guess accept people.

In reflecting, Mary has concluded, “I think I've had a good influence on that group, and they've also had a good influence on me because I look forward to going to small group every other Wednesday.”

Mary also discussed how “international students stick together.” But, her observations were in some way more all encompassing, “I've seen where people of color are together, but majority of the time, you look in one corner, it is people of color. They just click together, no matter what. And I don't know; it kind of offends.” In many ways, this is the same perception that Everett had regarding the segregation of certain groups.

Mary struggled with the issue and stated, “I feel like you're kind of closed minded if you're like that.”

As Mary focused on classroom experiences, she dialogued more about professors than anything else. Two teachers had made a great impact on her. The first was a female and “she was one of the first teachers that I've ever met in my life that” reflected her faith in how she taught. The second one was male and “in my Bible class he would like tell different perspectives. He would tell some of the truths of the Bible and that helped me I guess to see God again in a deeper way.” As we concluded her interview, she reflected again on those two teachers and noted that “being in a classroom with them, has been really good. Like I would not trade being in a classroom with them. Their different teaching styles, different approaches, has been good for me.”

Mary’s insights into how diversity experiences had changed her were really insightful. This is a young woman for whom personal reflection is not new. A difficult life has caused her to mature at an early age and the depth of her comments reflected that. I must admit, this was one of the most enjoyable interviews I have done. In some ways, it was very emotional and moving for me. I am very thankful that I was able to share these few minutes with such an exceptional young woman.

Jordan

Jordan is Caucasian, a junior, and an athlete. He was very insightful and thoughtful regarding his opinions on diversity. He was very confident in the way he presented himself and in the way he communicated his thoughts. He had an easy smile and just seemed comfortable with the interview format.

As Jordan began relating his experiences with diversity his initial focus was chapel, “Last year we had a lot of chapels that were diversity oriented. Especially with, like, race and things like Black and White.” Like some other participants, he believed there was too much emphasis on “what we were doing wrong” regarding diversity. Jordan admitted, “To be completely honest, I kind of got annoyed with the chapels by the end of it because I felt like we were all being preached to about something that wasn't necessarily with everybody.” However, as he reflected more, Jordan realized “the chapel itself just made me realize that, yeah there are; there is that that goes on on campus, so I noticed that a little bit more.”

Jordan quickly referred to his previous context before attending college. He first stated that Cranston was “less diverse than high school.” His exposure to diverse people and situations enabled him to “be around people that weren't the same as me, and I don't know, I've kind of learned from that and kept coming.” He also shared that his family's openness to diverse people had influenced him because “who you grow up with and who teaches you is how you're going to form your opinions and beliefs, and that's pretty much where I've come from.”

Diversity, for Jordan, was not just race/ethnic related, “But when you're aware that there are a lot of differences in people, there's different cultures, different backgrounds, not just Black and White or Hispanic and White or any of that, but lots of different people come in diversity.” Jordan further explained that “Cranston's really diverse, but like musically, and athletes and people like that.” He suggested that this structural diversity allowed for students to be “open with other people, and you can have

experiences with people; friendships, etc.” From these experiences, Jordan’s friendships, opinions and perceptions changed over time:

You might have an opinion based on someone just on who they hang out with, how they look like, or how they talk, or whatever. Then once you get to know them, you realize I was totally off base there, like, this person's like a great person, like, I’m glad I got to know them that way.

He also noted a diversity experience that was in the classroom, “Last semester when I was in a lab class for a science class and I had not one person in the class did I know.” During the course, “I was kind of late my first day, so I jumped in with this other group with three people, and didn’t know them at all.” These were music and arts students that Jordan “probably wouldn’t talk to normally, just because we ran in different circles and what not. And uh, they ended up being great people and we had a great time every lab session.” The experience reminded Jordan about “not judging, and not doing that, and being open to meeting new people. Just because they're different; it isn’t bad, or wrong, or weird, or whatever those differences mean.”

One of the interesting perceptions that Jordan offered regarding the lab experience was that his new openness was in response to the other students’ openness, “They were more open to me in the beginning, I think, than I was to them, just because I was a little apprehensive about the class, and who all was in it.” These students “were like, completely open. Like, hey, come and join our group, we need a fourth!” He appreciated their openness and friendliness, but it also reminded him of his responsibility “to be able to be open to accept them and we ended up having a good friendship.” This experience caused Jordan to not judge people because they had different interests than him, “It really

just brought me back to being open and not judging people just because you don't know them, or they might be into music and you're into sports, whatever . . . they ended up being great people.”

Jordan had also grown in his openness towards different people through his affiliation with the baseball team. Before this current season “the team was completely White.” Jordan had been a leader in welcoming diverse people onto the team, “I hope I did a good job of meeting them, and hoping that they knew they were accepted, and they have become friends.” He was quick to understand that a new African American player needed someone to help him feel a part of the team, “Well that was not just because he was new to the team, which you try to do with all the freshmen, but also because I knew he was diverse from everybody else.” Jordan took on that role and worked “to make him feel comfortable.”

Faith was a major factor in Jordan’s personal responses to diversity experiences, “The beliefs that were instilled in me then, that was because of faith, and like, a faith oriented way of thinking.” Jordan explained that his “faith way of thinking was that God loved everybody” and because of that “I didn't have a reason to judge somebody based upon their skin.” This faith way of thinking was instilled by his family and friends and “kind of allowed me to be more open with meeting people.”

As we concluded the interview, Jordan made an insightful comment and analogy, “When people think about diversity on campus, they often just think about students, they don’t think about staff. And I've never had, let me think, I don’t think I've ever had any professor besides a professor that's Caucasian at Cranston.” In light of that, he wondered several things. First, he wondered how that limited learning on the campus, “The

professors. You're learning from not just their book knowledge, but their opinions and their views, and all of that; you don't get as broad of a range." Second, he wondered what diverse students felt like when "every professor that they have and that they see every day would be White, and I don't know, you kind of also think that those people are people of authority and power." Finally, he wondered since Cranston does "a really good job of being diverse, you would think maybe that the staff and faculty would be a little bit more diverse as well."

I thought this was an incredible insight for Jordan to articulate for the following reasons. First, he was the only student to mention this aspect on his own. Second, it illustrated critical thinking skills at a high level. Third, it illustrated sensitivity to diversity on Cranston's campus that not many undergraduate Caucasians probably would.

Michael

Today I interviewed Michael, who is Caucasian and a senior majoring in Broadcasting and Communication. He is on the AU Baseball team and was the first participant to mention diversity as it relates to athletes and the rest of the student population, "The first time I really noticed it on this campus was, um, not really racial diversity, but kind of diversity between the two sides of campus." For Michael, students have preconceived biases and prejudices regarding athletes just as they do in racial or gender diversity, "People just look at athletes and they're like, oh, they're not religious, they're not spiritual, they don't, like they don't have anything to do with Cranston University, like they're just here to play sports." In the past, the baseball team had a reputation of being partiers on campus. Michael felt if people knew you were a baseball

player then you were stereotyped into that reputation. It is interesting to note that stereotypes come into play in so many areas of our lives.

Michael noted that this personal sense that some people held biases and prejudices against him for being a baseball player caused him to be more open to different types of people. He realized that he judged people before he really knew them and set about to change that in his own life. “I mean, you realize that the stuff that keeps people apart is really just in your head.” By taking the initiative and engaging different groups of people, Michael discovered the potential of diversity:

It’s really cool once you open your eyes and you figure out like, hey there’s a huge world out there with tons of different people, and if I just keep a closed mind the whole time, then I’m just going to have these thoughts and I’m never going to enjoy that person or that group.

Another aspect of diversity experiences that had really influenced Michael was the social club (Cranston does not have Greek organizations) he rushed this year. This experience was really transforming for him, “The diversity I think is what makes it so great, because it’s not just athletes, it’s not just one type of people, it’s all kinds of different people coming together and wanting to accomplish the same goal.” He commented on how this group had changed his perspective regarding people that were different from him and how this created more openness within him to “different people and experiences. It opened me up . . . to like, a different world.”

Another positive diversity experience was when he played baseball in New York after his sophomore year through Athletes in Action. This experience threw Michael into the mix of many different diverse players “from all over the country, different colors,

different ethnic backgrounds and stuff like that all come together.” This experience challenged him to be open to engaging different types of people and building new relationships, “It was the first time I realized that like, good people don't care who people are.”

From this experience Michael developed a very close relationship with a young man from the West Coast, “Two summers ago he came to visit me and this past summer I went to Seattle to visit him. Not only is he from a completely different part of the country, but he's also Indian/Hawaiian/Hispanic/a bunch of different things.” The experience with this team opened Michael to share his care and concern for others in an outward manner, “That softened me up a lot, knowing that I could love on people and it didn't matter if it was a guy or a girl. I mean, just love people, who cares, who cares who they are?”

Michael also commented that his willingness to “branch out” caused him to grow as a person; particularly in a spiritual manner. He noted, “I mean, the biggest thing is, um, spiritually, and religious stuff . . . yeah, I guess spiritually is where I've grown the most.” Diversity experiences caused him to refocus spiritually and challenged him to see people in a different way, “I got myself back on the right track and opened my eyes, like, God just introduced me to all these different types of people and like, they were incredible.”

The experiences also gave him the confidence to not worry so much about what other people thought and just to be himself, “I knew who I was and I really didn't care what they thought, because I knew me on the inside. But now, I want me on the inside to be the same as me on the outside.” Michael noted that the experiences of being around

different people challenged him to not stay the same but to risk and grow as a human being:

The more diverse people I'm around, the more easy it is for me to grow as a person. And when that gets shut down, or when I'm just around one specific group all the time, like, the fire kind of goes away . . . But when you're experiencing different things with different people, it's so easy to grow and mature in your faith and as a person.

Estelle

Estelle is Hispanic, a sophomore and one energetic young woman. She was quick to smile and had a twinkle of mischief in her eyes. She laughed as she entered the room and left the room the same way. Estelle loves diversity. I believe this is because of her background and family heritage. However, I must add that her desire to experience diversity was beyond any student I had interviewed. She asserted, "I like different. I like difference, I don't like comfortable stuff. Like, I like being surrounded by a whole bunch of different, I like having different friends." For her, diversity interactions have opened up a whole new world to be explored and investigated. Because of these outcomes she is energized by diversity opportunities and pursues them passionately.

Her diversity experiences began with Gospel Choir. The choir is diverse racially and ethnically, "It's like a lot like, you know, just being thrown into a diverse group of people and it was awesome." The choir has afforded her the opportunity to worship in many diverse congregations with differing worship styles. It is also the place that she finds constant strength and encouragement, "I mean, through just the gospel choir, that

strengthens me weekly, it's an encouragement every week on Wednesday night, you know."

Estelle's passion for diversity doesn't hide the fact that her immersion into it has not been without difficulty. She even faces prejudices from her own family. She dates an African American even though her father forbids it:

There's still more ground to go, and like, for instance, my dad doesn't approve of my relationship with my boyfriend . . . And, so he like, took my car away and stuff. And, but he's . . . he is Hispanic, he's Puerto Rican, and he married my mom, who is White.

Diversity experiences also created struggles within friendships. She noted that "I hang out" with diverse people more than she does with Caucasians, which causes some problems with her Caucasian friends:

Like, my best friends now are all from different cultures and different races, and I mean, my White friends, they have to accept that, but they also embrace it at the same time, you know what I mean? But like, it's just some of my White friends, that are like, "Why do they have to talk like that," or, "Why do they say that," or "Why do you guys do that," or, "Why are you so loud," or....you know what I mean?

For Estelle, her faith was that which enabled her to deal with the problems that diversity experiences created in her life.

Other than what the, like, naturally hanging out with such a different group of people, what problems that creates, and how I have to challenge myself to not freak out, and draw my patience from, you know ultimately I can only go to

Christ to help me deal with these situations that are naturally creating themselves within the group that I hang out with, and it's been rough, but I mean, I love them, but sometimes it creates problems and the only thing I can do is to, you know, I just kind of have that wash over me, you know, because I'll just go crazy. I'm sometimes just like a crazy person, so other than trying to challenge myself in that aspect of just asking God to have those fruits of the spirit, and you know, be encouraging and a good friend even though they're tearing me down over here.

Estelle also mentioned a speech class with a professor who was African American that had a deep impact on her life. There was a point during her preparation for a speech where she realized that something changed inside her, "I don't really know how it changed me, but it changed something. I know that I actually cared more just about life." She "realized I wanted my life to have purpose. I wanted my life to matter." As she continued to describe this experience, it was clear that her faith coincided with this deep sense of purpose, "I want to have a purpose, you know? I want to find what my purpose is. And I know God has a path for me, I just want to find it! I just really want to."

As I listened to her my heart was deeply moved by her desire to make her life count. The many relationships she has experienced through her diverse interactions have contributed to her faith development and who she has become as a person, "I think that it has opened my heart to see what life should, you know, like what you do in your life and the things that you achieve, what it should be about." Again, her faith has influenced and been influenced by these experiences, "I think that it's shown me how important love is, and to love your brother, and love your neighbor as yourself and all that stuff."

In the end, I was amazed at the maturity level she displayed and communicated. I must admit, after doing several of these interviews, you recognize when interviews are exceptional and when they are not. This interview was exceptional. The way this young woman conveyed her experiences and passions was impressive in every way.

Mia

Mia is a freshman and marketing major. Her family is Puerto Rican and she is very proud of her heritage. For her age, she was very mature and confident. She walked into the room and seemed quite at ease. It appeared that being around new people was not a difficult task for her.

Mia's first diversity experience was "at the very beginning of school, because they had sent out an email before we came to school that they were going to have like a specific thing for all the diverse students on the campus." The students were then gathered together for "a breakfast that they had for all the diverse students, so you met all the other diverse students at the very beginning of the year." Mia stated that this time really made her feel welcomed and connected on campus. She stated that this experience expressed to her that she belonged at Cranston, "It just makes me feel a part of the campus, I'd say; just a part of the community and a part of the campus. I don't know, like . . . being taken in I guess by others."

In regards to being taken in, Mia also made an interesting comment regarding her own personal diversity, "Um, it made me feel accepted. Like, I mean, I never have not felt accepted because of my race or diversity." No other diverse participant made this comment regarding their own diversity throughout the interviews. She elaborated more on this issue, "I've never been to Puerto Rico. Um, both of my parents are 100%, so I'm

100%. I don't really look it, but I am, and I don't speak Spanish, so I don't really feel diverse, but I am.” It was interesting that she didn't perceive herself as diverse. Perhaps, because she could be perceived as part of the dominant culture, she had never felt the discomfort of prejudice as some have. It could be that she was just that comfortable with who she was. In some ways, this was similar to Daniel being upset that the Multicultural Association on campus kept contacting him. He did not see himself in that light and was disturbed that someone else would.

However, Mia was not disturbed by this association with other multicultural students. In fact, she embraced it. Mia attended different functions within the multicultural arena. She particularly noted a dinner for international students, “They had all the different diverse groups or whatever, make a dish from their home town or, say for like, Puerto Rico, we would make like, arroz con pollo.” This was a significant event for expanding her knowledge and perceptions of others. She affirmed that she learned about “different cultures of people. I never realized, I never really thought to look outside my box of, you know, where I live.” This interaction gave Mia a global perspective of diversity and made her genuinely care for different parts of the world:

Meeting them has changed the way I view their countries I would say. Just because, to them, like I always viewed their countries as really poor, which they are more poor and less fortunate, but I just, I have learned so much, and they . . . like, to them, that's home. And it's just so different, but it's so interesting.

Because of these experiences, she now desires to visit other parts of the world to learn from their cultures, “It just made me want to learn more about those cultures, and go visit or travel there, or learn more about them just because it sounded so interesting.”

A second diversity experience that Mia described was the Gospel Choir. She loves this group as it has enabled her to get to know so many diverse people and move past stereotypes, “Gospel choir has influenced me with diversity and stereotypes because, well there are so many people in gospel choir that are diverse and most of the people in there are from a different culture, from a different background.”

This experience has also opened her to new views of worship and how it is lived out:

We've done performances at different churches, like we did performances at an African American church, and that was a different experience. I grew through that by just going through those different experiences that I wouldn't have gone through if I wouldn't have been in gospel choir.

During the interview, Mia also made reference to a speech class where diversity was particularly evident:

There was a lot of diversity in my speech class. There was like, three kids from Kenya, like one from South Africa, the Cayman Islands, um, I was in there, um, my friend J is in there, and I think he's Mexican, I'm not quite sure. There were African Americans, and there were just like, all different types of people in that class.

The diversity found within the course enabled Mia to not only engage diverse people, but to learn the benefit of accepting people for who they are:

So far I've learned to accept them for who they are and I don't know, I just am so interested in finding out more about them, and I just love to listen to what they have to say, and let them listen to what I have to say, because then if we don't,

then we're never going to know what other diverse people are about if we don't give them a chance and talk to them.

Throughout the interview, Mia referred back to her previous context before attending CU. Her high school was not nearly as diverse as Cranston, "I went to a public high school, and there was diversity there, but there wasn't a lot." Like Estelle, Mia struggles with some prejudice from back home, "For instance, my dad, he doesn't want me to date a Black guy, but if I did, he's still going to love me for it, but he doesn't look, like, high upon it I guess." Her new context at Cranston had broadened her perspectives, changed her preconceived stereotypes, and made her open to different people and experiences. She remarked, "I just learned a lot more about different cultures and different races, and that not everyone's the same, but we should all accept them how they are."

Mia's faith has been a big part of her journey. She believes God loves all and is working to not prejudge persons based on what she has seen or heard previously:

My faith has played into it, I'd say because I think it was wrong that I judged people before I knew them, and so I think I've grown in my faith because of that, because I've realized that it was bad, and I'm trying to change it, and then just the fact that God is showing me that people aren't always what we think they are, and things like that.

The influence of her faith is based on the belief that "it doesn't matter what color your skin is, God loves us all equally so I just don't put anything against them just because they're a different color."

I must admit, with Mia being a freshman, I was impressed with her responses during the interview. In some areas, her thoughts were not as critically developed as the older students, but she noted that she has so many diversity experiences to look forward to over the next three years, “It’s my freshman year and I’ve already had so much experience with it, like I still have so much more to experience with it.” Amazing that in only her second semester of college she has already had multiple diversity interactions. It would be interesting to interview her in two to three years and see if her perceptions and understandings had changed in an even greater degree.

Matthew

Matthew is a junior international student from Zambia and majoring in business. He was gregarious and quite articulate. The moment he entered the room, his face flashed this incredible smile and his eyes beamed with energy and confidence. Immediately, I was excited to hear what this young man had to say.

As we entered into the conversation regarding diversity experiences, Matthew noted that his first acknowledgement of diversity at Cranston took place before he made his way from Africa, “Actually being aware of that was even before I came when I was looking at it like what kind of school it was, and what the population would be.” As he began to research CU, he “was just astounded that it was just like 97% White population, and a really small percentage of the minority.” The culture shock was made easier during orientation when the International Student Association provided special gatherings for international students during orientation week:

I came in like a week early before normal classes started and that was because the international student association here where we have orientation for international

students a week earlier than normal orientation. And so just coming in and having to meet people from different backgrounds and different cultures, different countries too. That was my first big moment of like, actually experiencing cultural diversity.

For Matthew, these gatherings “challenged me to think a little bit more and actually opened my eyes to a whole new perspective. I think growing up in Zambia, where the majority is all Black people, and you only see a few White people.” This new found openness enabled Matthew to develop relationships with students different than him that are strong to this day. The gathering also enabled Matthew to learn that “we were different as in our skin color is different, but when we started talking, just looking at our experiences, noting the similarities and also the differences, but just knowing that there weren't that many differences.” Matthew asserted that learning that differences did not necessarily translate into barriers “helped me, has helped me open my eyes to a whole new spectrum of looking at life.” These experiences translated into personal introspection and expression, “It has influenced me in that now I'm better able to like, express myself, and also just accept myself for who I am.”

It was interesting that when Matthew arrived in the states he had preconceived ideas regarding how the media portrayed race relations in the states, “As a Black male coming into a school that was predominantly White, I had some fears. Largely because of the media, what I had read in the media, you know like the White hatred between White and Black people.” Like several students, he believed the media helped develop within him some biases and prejudices regarding African Americans and Caucasians. He stated

that his biases from the media proved to be false after engaging in diversity experiences with people different from himself:

But when I actually got to know people personally, we looked past our skin color. And so that has helped me to think of like, when I look at people I don't really care whether they're White or Black, or whatever color they are as long as we have a personal connection with that. I am able to better relate to people, I guess that was a big influence.

Matthew's fears were not just about race relations but also about African Americans in general. Once again, what Matthew was "exposed to mostly through media was that Black people, you know, it's all about violence in their lifestyle, and so I came in with that preconception; like, if I talk to a Black person, this is what might happen." However, when he "actually took the time to actually get to know that person, we just talked and shared experiences, and they shared their background and I shared mine." These experiences enabled Matthew to "get to know them better, and get rid of the stereotypes I had about that person."

In dialoguing about diversity experiences related to stereotypes and race relations, Matthew asked if I minded if he "shared one (experience) of not being really that positive?" I responded, "Please go ahead" and with deep emotion, Matthew explained:

And so, walking down in the valley there was this couple coming towards me, and they were, um, you could tell they were ok, just walking together, and when they saw me, then um, the man put his arms around his girlfriend or wife, whoever he was with, they both leaned into each other. And it took me a while to like, process what had just taken place, but when I really thought about it, I started asking

myself like, what? Just questions kept running through my mind, like what was the significance of that? And for me, knowing the history that is there between Black and White people, and just, I know that's kind of like drawing conclusions, like, putting a whole big issue on the table, but just having known that history is in there, and just knowing that in some situations, things like that still happen, and so I took it that way, like they were walking together, and I think the issue that they were White and I was Black really played a huge role into that. Um, that they were walking freely together, and then they see me and they feel the need to be protected, or like, just in a way they showed that they were afraid of me, and so I really took that hard. That was really one of the things of like, I don't know. I really didn't know how to deal with that, and so that has been on the radar page, like with my experiences on the other side of diversity.

This was a very difficult experience for Matthew to take in and comprehend. A central reason was that “coming here being a minority was the first time in my life that I had been a minority.”

In one swift moment, Matthew saw himself differently and was filled with deep confusion. He began to filter through the experience and “in a way start finding myself again, start building um, an identity for myself, finding myself. Who am I, really? Am I going to be influenced by the circumstances I find myself in?” To process the experience and his feelings, Matthew began to dialogue with friends and family. These conversations enabled him to:

Not just to deal with it from the way I interpreted it, because I might have been wrong in my interpretation of it, but to hear other peoples' views on it, what they thought of it, what they took out of that, that was really helpful.

The friendships built on previous diversity experiences enabled Matthew to overcome his hurt and move toward even greater personal growth and deeper friendships with diverse people, “That experience has helped me though, just knowing that whenever you're dealing with diversity, it's not always going to be a smooth road, you will have setbacks and you will have people who still may not accept diversity.”

Throughout his interview, Matthew noted the importance of sharing stories within diversity experiences. He was the first participant to mention this concept:

A story is not just any experience you go through, it's really what you're about and what sort of defines you as a person. It tells who you are and not really what you are. And so, um, I believe for me a story is important, because you learn not to look just at the outward appearance, you learn to look at what the person is really passionate about, what they're really like deep down, and that's been my experience when I've shared my story or when people have shared their story. They really get down to things they would not go about sharing with just anybody, but they feel a sense of trust, that they can trust you. And so, just getting down to that point where you share your story, where you share your deepest, um, feelings or experiences. Just the way that it's . . . the way that the experiences in life have shaped you, I think. That's just been an awesome experience to hear people share that, and that's something that I feel when I share, or when people share their story, I'm able to connect better with them because

then we get past all the trivial things, but we get down to the really really deep things.

Matthew was convinced that when individuals come to a place of trust that will enable them to share from personal stories and others will listen sincerely; then deep relationships can be built that will enable differences to be overcome.

Matthew noted how he had matured and grown up a lot in his openness and perceptions of other people. The diversity experiences on the campus had caused him to rethink how he perceived and prejudged other people; particularly within the tribal system within his home country of Zambia:

I can't really say specifically in what areas I've changed, but my whole life has sort of been turned upside down and it's just a whole different outlook on life.

And just having a multi-faceted outlook on life, and not just this is the way, and this is what I believe in, but what do other people believe in? How does that help me? How do we build each other based on our differences, and also based on our similarities? How do we help each other out?

This was a wonderful interview with an exceptional young man. During it, I came to some understanding of the personal transformation that students process through due to diversity experiences. For many international students it is their first experience as a minority and this is a life-changing event. These experiences cause them to reassess even who they are as individuals. Matthew's journey took him to this place of introspection. He was able to process through it in a positive manner because of those who journeyed with him. Perhaps, it is more important than one realizes to have significant others in your life to help process these critical moments.

Amy

Amy is a junior Caucasian nursing student at CU. She was nervous as she came in the door but soon relaxed and, I believed, enjoyed the interview process. She first spoke about the immense stress she was under and how much work the nursing program required. Before we began she also stated that the nursing program kept most students around the same group of students and limited their exposure to diversity. However, as we talked about her experiences regarding diversity, the interview confirmed that her experiences were not that limited. In fact, her insights were numerous, quite mature, and expressed in a very insightful manner.

Amy's first diversity experiences were centered on religion and faith in her "Bible 2000 class" and her "Hebrew Roots of Christian Faith" class. As she entered these courses, the professors challenged some of her long held beliefs:

All the things that I thought I was so sure about, and even doctrinal things that were sort of grounding my faith were shaken up a little bit, and that was the first time that I remember here that I really saw there was diversity.

This process caused her great angst and doubt, "I was like, whoa, you know? I don't know if I'm okay with that!"

The angst and doubt was probably related to her context before coming to Cranston and how limited her diversity experiences had been. She came from "growing up in a Christian school and growing up in the church." That context in her mind laid a very strong faith foundation for her but also she "hadn't heard a lot of different opinions. I think in that sense, um, sort of made me closed-minded." She now understands that her coming to Cranston has "broadened my mindset" and created more openness; particularly

regarding religious diversity. She learned that “benefits come when you just sort of explore it, and when you listen to peoples’ ideas instead of just saying, oh that person can’t serve the same God I do if they believe that.”

For Amy, diversity experiences also expanded her concept of learning. As diverse experiences challenged her spiritually and intellectually, she came to realize that learning is an ongoing process:

It’s showed me that learning can never stop, you know? You’re always going to be meeting new people with new ideas, and everyone has a reason too for why they believe what they believe, and it’s important to like, seek out why they believe that and try to understand instead of trying to make . . . like instead of trying to say if something is right or wrong necessarily, just trying to understand more, and then sort of trying to slow down that process of making a judgment about it.

This level of critical thinking was a place of growth for Amy since her previous context was more narrow and limited. However, she noted the previous context “did give me a very solid background in scripture, and just how to think, and how to decide my faith.” In the long run, she acknowledged that this turned out to be a healthy process for her, “I think it’s made me take a different perspective on my faith, and like, know better why I believe what I believe or for what reason, I guess.”

An important component of the critical thinking process was a mentor she engaged while at Cranston. This person gave her someone to bounce new ideas off of and process critical issues she was inwardly wrestling with. Issues like, “How do I reconcile that with my own personal faith, or with who I think God is in my life?” This step of

securing a mentor was a significant event for her during her college career so far. In some ways, her concept of a mentor was a beneficial step that other undergraduates might pursue to help work through the dissonance that diverse experiences can create.

Another significant event happened when someone wrote racist comments regarding one of the students in her nursing class, “I remember somebody wrote some sort of racial derogatory slur in the bathroom right by the nursing department, and it was directed toward one of the girls in our class, an adult ed. nursing student.” In response to the slur, “the dean of students came and talked to us about it . . . not necessarily accusing any of us, but just making sure that we knew that it was a big deal, and they were going to handle it.” Amy stated that she felt really sorry for the student; but also was a little angry because she felt those in authority were being accusatory towards her and others, “I felt almost victimized, thinking like, how could they ever think that I would do something like that? I wouldn’t even give it a thought, you know? And almost like, how dare they accuse us?”

However, after pondering the situation, she realized that she had never been a minority or knew what prejudice or racism felt like, “I think that even the whole process of how the administration dealt with that sort of helped me to maybe understand a little bit of what she was feeling . . . to put myself in her shoes.” Now, Amy had developed a deep empathy for the young woman who had been victimized and was quite reflective over the young woman’s situation.

Amy noted that her diversity experiences had caused her to understand how important it was to push outside her comfort zone and experience new and different situations:

My first instinct is to just shy away from it. Because I'm definitely a creature of habit, I like things to be the same, and familiar is always good, and I don't like change, and um, but I've definitely, when I push myself out of my comfort zone, I see that there's growth that happens, and I see that I always find something new.

Amy also noted how important her faith had been in processing all these diversity experiences; particularly the notion of equality. She affirmed:

I believe that everyone is equal, I believe that everyone is made in the image of God, so I mean, it was my faith, well because of my faith I know that although we are all diverse, we are all equal, and that we are all created in God's image, and that looks different on everyone. And maybe some of us get along and some of us don't, but that doesn't mean that any person is less valuable or less worthy.

This notion of equality in the eyes of God caused Amy to “not to let my preconceived ideas dictate how I treat someone, or even how I react to someone. Sort of like giving everyone an equal opportunity, and um, that's what I try to do every time I meet someone.” For her, this call to equality means to not “worry about what I've heard about someone before, or even just the way that they look, making judgments based on that.”

In the long run, Amy's diversity experiences had enabled her to learn that “it's comforting to be with people who are like us, but we learn a lot more, and we learn different things when we spend time with people who are different than us and learn different things.”

Elizabeth

Elizabeth was a delightful young woman. She was Caucasian and a junior nursing student. When she entered the conference room, I sensed no hesitation on her part in

participating in the interview. Some of the participants seemed somewhat nervous as the interview began, while Elizabeth had a sense of confidence the moment she entered the room. The interview took on that sense of comfort throughout.

Elizabeth began by describing diversity in regards to religion and faith. Her “Bible classes” freshman year were her first encounters regarding “religious diversity.” She noted, “I was in my Bible class, there were actually students that were either atheists or agnostics, or just didn't claim religion at all, and so I was not expecting that, and for me that was very much a shocker.” In the same way that Amy had been, Elizabeth was frustrated by how her faith was challenged when she first entered CU. In some ways, her experiences challenged her more than others interviewed. The experiences caused her not only to wrestle with faith but to doubt her faith in a deep way:

That class was at the time in my life whenever I was struggling with my faith, and so um, I felt like it was ok for me to be like, this is what I have grown up to believe, but right now I don't know what to believe.

As a result of this, Elizabeth went through a very difficult time emotionally and became bewildered and somewhat depressed. At one point, the interview became very emotional for her and we had to stop and allow her to take a moment to gather her emotions.

At this point, I became more aware regarding the depth of life change that these diversity experiences can have on an undergraduate's life. Whether it was Matthew experiencing prejudice in the valley or Elizabeth wondering what to believe, these moments are critical points in that young person's life. When one's foundational pieces are challenged in a deep way, it shakes the foundation of who they are as an individual

and as a person of faith. As I reflected back on Elizabeth's interview, it seemed to me that a large part of her struggles were a result of her previous context being so homogeneous:

Well, I would say that before, I had never really experienced diversity before, to tell you the truth. Before coming to college, I think it was just, these are the ways, and like, growing up with the same people, it was just always the same, if that makes sense. And I'm from a very small community, so there was pretty much no diversity. So coming here, and I guess like, learning that there are other people in the world, it helped me to grow as an individual because I . . . I don't know, it helped me to see different perspectives, and not just to see them, but to kind of put myself in those perspectives, and to see like, why I believe what I believe, and why I do what I do. At the same time, on the basis of religion, it helped me to see, I guess it kind of challenged my beliefs because I, you know, I kind of grew up in a church, and so it was always just kind of like, this is how it is, and this is what you should believe. And so, then coming here and learning there is diversity in religion, so why do I believe what I believe?

It is important to understand some aspects of Elizabeth's previous context. It was a community that was overwhelmingly Christian and Caucasian:

I'll just explain a little bit more about my community, because that might help a little. I live in a town of about 900 people, and um, my high school class was only like 97. There was one African American person in our whole entire school, and she actually ended up moving, so it was completely a White-dominated community . . . so I think I was very set in my ways. So coming here and being around students of different nationalities, or like, African Americans, it was the

first time that I'd like really ever experienced that . . . But since I came from a community that was predominantly White, um, people had very strict views of African Americans. And now, looking back I think that has a lot to do with the media, because whenever I watch the news at night and the news can be very negative. But whenever I see like, crime and murder, it tends to be African Americans in Indianapolis. Not all the time, but that was my only view of African Americans, and so I almost had a fear. And I think people in my community are very racist. Some of them are very racist.

When one considers that Elizabeth's diversity experiences were so strongly influenced by her previous context, it is little wonder why those experiences challenged the very core of who she was.

It was encouraging to sense that recent diversity experiences had enabled her to process through these struggles in a positive manner. In two courses, *Living the Christian Faith in a Post-Modern World* and *Race and Ethnicity in America*, the diverse views expressed regarding faith and race/ethnicity enabled her to better understand her own views and be open to other's perspectives, "It helped me to see different perspectives, and not just to see them, but to kind of put myself in those perspectives, and to see like, why I believe what I believe, and why I do what I do." These experiences also provided her with the understanding that she had grown in her openness towards others and their beliefs, "So seeing the different perspectives of the different religious perspectives of people really have opened; I don't feel like I'm as narrow-minded as I once was."

The classes also led her to a deeper understanding of her personal faith and also grew her as an individual person who was more open and comfortable with different

people and perspectives, “I have a lot more respect for people, and I don't necessarily just see them and say, mm, mm, nope, wrong. I actually want to listen to them and see why that is what they believe.” Her diversity experiences had caused her to value people in a new and different manner.

At the end of the interview, Elizabeth reflected on how much these diversity experiences and her time at CU had changed her life, “I could have very easily stayed back there and gone to another school . . . but I don't think that I really would have grown in a diverse way like I have here.” She noted, “Before I wouldn't have considered diversity to be a positive thing, but now I do consider it to be a positive thing.” In her eyes, she has “grown a lot more respect for other religions or other cultures and their practices” as a result of these experiences. In fact, she revealed that they had not only changed her in the present but would influence her future as well. She had come to the conclusion:

I could live in a predominantly White, upper middle class, middle class American community with a white picket fence, but that's all I would know for the rest of my life. Or I could live in a diverse community that's full of different perspectives and different religions, and I feel like that would be so much more impactful for me and for my one-day family.

In the end, she recognized that her life change meant that her actions in the future regarding diversity should coincide with her words. “It's easy to say all of these things and not act on them, and so I don't want to get stuck in that, but I think I'm challenged here not to get stuck in that.” Elizabeth's diversity experiences were not only influencing the present decisions, but her future decisions as well.

Categories

This section describes the participant's diversity experiences as it relates to the five categories drawn from the participant's perceptions of those experiences on a private, religiously-affiliated university: types of diversity experiences, forms of diversity experiences, influence of previous context, benefits of diversity experiences, and faith issues regarding diversity experiences.

Types of Diversity Experiences

The first category, types of diversity experiences, described the primary areas that diversity experiences covered within the participants' college experiences. The category, types of diversity experiences, described two primary sub-categories: religious diversity and racial/ethnic diversity.

The first sub-category, religious diversity, noted the experiences that took place in the participant's lives within the scope of faith and religion. Since Cranston is a Christian university, it was reasonable that over half the participants described this as a dominant theme. Amy, Mary, and Elizabeth asserted that this area of diversity experiences caused the most dissonance within their lives. Elizabeth stated, "I was in my Bible class, there were actually students that were either atheists or agnostics, or just didn't claim religion at all, and so I was not expecting that, and for me that was very much a shocker." Amy agreed, "All the things that I thought I was so sure about, and even doctrinal things that were sort of grounding my faith were shaken up a little bit."

The dissonance was caused by a sense of shock that such a variety of beliefs could be found on a Christian campus or that new ideas threatened old beliefs when offered in course settings. Mary offered, "Ok, this is a Christian University. So, this is a

Christian university, so why is there so much resentment towards God?" In regards to new ideas threatening old beliefs, Steve stated, "I've heard it said in the Bible, it's wrong, but at the same time, there are people that are homosexuals that claim they are Christians, which to me, if the Bible says its wrong, how are they Christians?" The participants' descriptions revealed that faith beliefs were held with deep conviction by these undergraduates. As new thoughts and ideas challenged long held foundational beliefs, the result was a questioning of how students perceived themselves and their faith. Elizabeth confessed, "Then coming here and learning there is diversity in religion, so why do I believe what I believe? Not just this is what I should believe, but why do I believe it?"

In regards to religious diversity, the exposure to different types of worship was a prominent area of diversity experiences. Again, Linda and Everett acknowledged that new ways of worship challenged long held traditions of how worship should be done. Linda noted, "When I first got here freshman year, I was like, I can't stand it when that person worships, like that is not how I worship." Everett concurred, "Well, depending on how it is, certain ways would still make me uncomfortable if it was a lot different from my own, what I've been used to."

For Cindy and Mia, different worship experiences were seen as new methods of exploration and discovery. Cindy's idea of creating a worship service for her dorm was never traditional. She remarked:

We were trying to make a decision on Church in the Hall; we were having a big church service in our dorm. And so we were trying to decide on whether or not we wanted to use just like, contemporary Christian music, just stuff from here, or if we wanted to, um, involve other languages, because we had so many people in

our dorms, or things like that. And so, um, we ended up, we sang like, a couple American, like contemporary, whatever Christian songs, and then we had, um, an African song, a Russian song.

Mia described how experiencing different worship experiences through Gospel Choir had enabled her to gain new insights. She affirmed:

I learned a lot more about other cultures through that, like by it changing the way I looked at people. And um, we've done performances at different churches, like we did performances at an African American church, and that was a different experience. I grew through that by just going through those different experiences that I wouldn't have gone through if I wouldn't have been in gospel choir.

The data revealed that worship, as it related to faith elements, also held a passionate place in the lives of the participants. Worship traditions that had been passed down were difficult to surrender. Only after time had passed and much soul-searching had taken place were new worship styles embraced or, perhaps a better word, tolerated by some of the participants. Linda begrudgingly acknowledged:

I don't really care. I don't like that, but I think that is one way where I've opened my eyes and realized that I've become more accepting of it. That is something that is hard for me because I get so used to doing it.

When one considers the inner struggles associated with the topic of religion and personal faith for these undergraduates, it is little wonder it causes great angst and division within multiple congregations and even different regions of our world.

The second sub-category, racial/ethnic diversity, noted the diversity experiences that took place in the participant's lives when engaged with persons of a different

racial/ethnic background. These experiences differed greatly among the participants.

Cindy and Mary embraced racial/ethnic experiences as an extension of their lifestyles before attending Cranston. Cindy noted, “There are religions, and there are, um, there are people of different races and ethnicities, and the ideal goal is to embrace them. And so, they might be different than me, but that’s definitely something that, um, that I’ve been taught.” Mary’s exposure to different nationalities in the Cayman Islands was evident when she remarked, “Back home, we have a melting pot of so many different nations. So even in a case like we have probably 12 different nations represented in the company that I work for.”

For Elizabeth and Charles, diversity experiences presented them with challenges that were new in a variety of ways compared to their previous contexts. Charles commented:

I went to high school with predominantly White people. And, came here and there were several Black people on the team. And I had never been intimately involved with anything that I cared about before with Black people.

For him, learning to establish trust in team relationships with people of a different race was significant since he had been taught “that their mental toughness isn’t as tough as our team.”

Elizabeth’s previous context was almost completely Caucasian. She explained, “There was one African American person in our whole entire school, and she actually ended up moving, so it was completely a White-dominated community.” From this background, there were stereotypes that diversity experiences confronted in Elizabeth’s

life; particularly of African Americans. She remarked, “I actually had a fear in talking to them, especially African American people.”

As participants described stereotypes and biases, several commented that the media had influenced their false perceptions in lieu of race/ethnic relationships. Regarding Elizabeth’s fear of African Americans, she acknowledged, “I think that has a lot to do with the media, because whenever I watch the news at night and the news can be very negative. But whenever I see like, crime and murder, it tends to be African Americans.” Matthew, even in his coming to Cranston from Zambia affirmed the same negative media influence when he stated:

I think coming in as a Black male coming into a school that was predominantly White, I had some fears. Largely because of the media, what I had read in the media, you know like the White hatred between White and Black people.

The data revealed that the media’s influence on the participants’ perceptions of race/ethnic relationships was not a stagnant issue. Preconceived notions of prejudice and bias were barriers to the harmony that diversity experiences can achieve; as it did in Matthew’s case when he asserted, “When I actually got to know people personally, we looked past our skin color.”

Another interesting sub-plot in race/ethnic diversity experiences were Daniel, Mary, and Linda’s perceptions that the international students on CU’s campus were more segregated in their relationships to one another than with the rest of the student population. Daniel noted, “The international students are all in Meyers and things like that, or off campus; so that sometimes is a little less diversified.” In regards to international students, Linda remarked that “people kind of stick with their own kind of

group. Like the birds of a feather, flock together” before she also related these statements regarding the international students:

I feel as if all the international students kind of go together; like I know a few of the international students, but not very many. Because they either always hang out at the International Office, or hang out with each other and you really don't really see them as much unless they are in your class or something.

It is important to note that all comments regarding the segregation of international students came from Caucasians; except for Mary's. Mary is an international student from the Cayman Islands and she noted the segregation of the international students but with a different perception when she stated:

International students stick together. And I've seen where people of color are together, but majority of the time, you look in one corner, it is people of color.

They just click together, no matter what. And I don't know, it kind of offends, I guess. I don't know if they feel safer there, or what? I don't know.

Perhaps, Mary's comment gives insight into why the international students segregate as a group. It may be difficult for Caucasian students, who made up the majority on the Cranston campus, to entertain the notion of segregation for safety and not for bias or prejudice.

A final area of race/ethnic diversity experiences was the overuse of chapel to convey the message of racial/ethnic diversity on Cranston's campus. Some participants felt that the use of chapel as a tool to correct student's race/ethnic behavior had reached a point of diminishing returns. Jordan remarked,

To be completely honest, I kind of got annoyed with the chapels by the end of it because I felt like we were all being preached to about something that wasn't necessarily with everybody. I understood where they were coming from, and that the university, students, faculty, staff, you know everybody could do a better job of it, but by doing it multiple times, they were just over-emphasizing the point. That kind of, like by the end of that chapel, that session, it was like, "Alright, we've heard the same thing four times."

In the same way, Charles confirmed Jordan's perception and was even more emphatic when he commented that "the over the top aspect, is definitely chapel related." He accentuated the negative aspect when he stated:

But, when you have it jammed down your throat and they say, hey, this is an issue, you start to think, "Is this an issue?" And you ask is this so bad that we talk about it bi-weekly? And that's difficult for me because you're more conscious of it and then you are like, is my reaction going to be authentic because every single day we are told that we're diverse and we need to address that? I mean, it's a delicate balance between addressing and not addressing it at all. But, I've experienced the latter of that which is very, very repetitive and maybe often times um, in a negative light.

Again, it is important to note that each participant that noted this abuse of chapel was Caucasian. Sometimes, these sort of issues dramatize the different perceptions of the majority as compared to the perceptions of those not in the majority. It seems that sometimes in diversity experiences one person's poison can be another person's pleasure. The outcome can be defined by the eye of the beholder.

Forms of Diversity Experiences

The second category, forms of diversity experiences, described the primary forms that diversity experiences took on within the participants' diversity experiences. The category, forms of diversity experiences, described three primary sub-categories: structural diversity, curricular/co-curricular diversity, and informal diversity interaction.

The first sub-category was structural diversity which focused on an institution's student body composition. Jacob, Tina, Cindy, Michael, and Jordan described experiences related to structural diversity but with different examples. Jacob and Tina described their diversity experiences as they related to structural diversity through student housing. The student body composition at Cranston was such that it enabled racial/ethnic diversity experiences to happen within multiple arenas; particularly in student housing. Jacob confirmed this notion by relating this experience:

And then, my sophomore year, I actually roomed with a White guy. And he had his differences, I had my differences. But, what was cool was that you come to an understanding of living together, there are things that we do different. It doesn't make one right, it doesn't make one wrong, but we can all get along. We can work it out. We can figure out how things can work. And actually, one of my really good friends, we still talk all the time; it's been a great experience.

Tina confirmed Jacob's experience when she remarked, "My roommate is from the Cayman Islands. And we have international student programs going on that they bring students in from all over the world. So, I think it's definitely diverse." She also commented on the benefit of working through differences that structural diversity brings:

I think it's been really cool. Like we learn from each other definitely every single day because sometimes we have like our cultural differences get in the way sometimes because she will think I'm saying one thing, but I'm saying something else. So then we kinda made a commitment to ask each other questions. We just sit down and talk.

Cindy noted the importance that international students bring to the structural diversity of Cranston's campus:

A huge part of this university, I think that this University wouldn't be what it is if it didn't have diversity. We have over a hundred different international students, from I think over 40 different countries, and I think that if a school wasn't willing to embrace diversity, we wouldn't be what we are today.

Michael and Jordan described structural diversity as it related to the different types of students that CU attracts through different majors and extracurricular activities. Michael expressed his reluctance to socialize with students who were different than him prior to attending Cranston, "When I came here, I was really closed-minded to um, to that kind of stuff, like drama and choir and all those kinds of people, because in high school, I mean, that's how it is." However, the structural diversity at Cranston enabled diversity experiences to take place in Michael's life and changed his previous perception. He noted:

When I came here, I mean, getting to know people from all different sides of campus and all different places and personalities and stuff, it really helps open your eyes to, um, like how great it is to just get to know someone. And it's . . . it's really cool once you open your eyes and you figure out like, hey there's a huge

world out there with tons of different people, and if I just keep a closed mind the whole time, then I'm just going to have these thoughts and I'm never going to enjoy that person or that group.

Jordan confirmed Michael's experience:

I think Cranston's really diverse, but like musically, and athletes, and people like that, so we're not . . . you just don't really think about it because you get used to being around the same people, and when that gets brought to your attention, you kind of think, ok, different's not wrong. Like, everyone can be open with other people, and you can have experiences with people, friendships, etc.

The second sub-category was curricular/co-curricular diversity which studied an institution's programmatic efforts that expose students to content about diversity issues. Multiple students described experiences that took this form. Linda described a workshop that she experienced as "professional development hours as an education major." The workshop utilized multicultural teaching activities to expose students to the differences some people experience:

You were given a card, and on the card it describes what your life was to be like, what your race was, what gender you were, what your job was going to be, what your income was, and all of that. And you kind of spent almost a day in the life of that person.

Jacob and Elizabeth described their experiences in the course titled: Race and Ethnicity. Jacob shared, "In that class, they bring up a lot of topics as far as race is concerned. Not just Black or White, but all the other races, Chinese, Asian, all that stuff." He noted the effective manner in which the classroom can address these sensitive issues,

“I feel it is more convenient just because people don't get offended in a classroom setting, as long as it is not intentional because people should have the freedom to express themselves.”

Elizabeth described the many diverse issues discussed in the class, “Yesterday in class, we were talking about religious amendments to the constitution, like separation of Church and State, and freedom of religion. So we were talking about different religious practices, like polygamy, and so like, the Native Americans.” She reflected on the class’s influence on her perceptions, “So I have grown a lot more respect for other religions or other cultures and their practices.”

Steven and Jordan revealed that CU utilized their chapel convocations as a form of curricular/co-curricular diversity. The chapel’s programmatic efforts exposed students to content about diversity issues. Steven noted a chapel that was “kind of the Black-White issue, they had a chapel speaker discuss about it.” There was a group discussion held after the chapel and he “just randomly decided to go.” Steven stated that the group discussion opened his eyes to the fact “there were so many diverse people besides White people that went to this college. So I mean, that's where I came into effect with diversity there.”

Even though Jordan felt that chapel was overused to heighten awareness to diversity issues, he affirmed its effectiveness in enlarging his personal awareness of racial/ethnic diversity:

It definitely opened your eyes, or at least opened my eyes in that, I never thought about somebody else's point of view, maybe on the other end of diversity. How they might not be treated fairly by everybody. Maybe if one person, like if I was

treating them ok, then that'd be . . . or treating everybody equally, that's one thing, but from their point of view, there might be ten other people that aren't treating them right, when I wouldn't have been aware of that without hearing it there.

Steven commented on the school newspaper's editorials and a future forum that would discuss the issue of homosexuality. These programmatic endeavors exposed and would expose Steven to current diversity issues. He remarked:

The newspaper, the Cranstonian, is starting to put out these, um, things about gays and homosexuality. There's going to be a forum on it sometime in February, but I kind of want to go to that to see, like, I've kind of been, like that door has kind of been opened to me to see like, to accept them or not.

The third sub-category was diversity interaction which focuses on student's exchanges with diverse people as well as exposure to different ideas and experiences. Participants described a variety of experiences that took on the interaction form. Estelle acknowledged that her experiences with Gospel Choir had exposed her to different ideas, "They're like, my best friends, it's been hard getting used to just because we have different cultural backgrounds and you know, we talk differently and some things that we do are different, but it's been awesome." She also stated that the experience had "definitely gotten my mind away from stereotypes, so it just showed me that, you know, we shouldn't stereotype people and stuff, because it's not what you think."

Daniel and Michael affirmed that their experiences with social clubs had increased their experiences with diverse people as well. Daniel remarked that in joining the social club he had met people he would not have otherwise:

I joined a social club and it's great because there's a mix of just every different type of person. And we are blessed right now to have a lot of members. So, there's just a mix of everybody and you get to meet a lot of people that you would not have met, I know I wouldn't have met before.

Michael confirmed Daniel's experience and explained his initial reservations regarding joining a club, "It's something I always kind of made fun of. I was like, oh you know, I have friends. I don't need to pay \$25 per semester just to have a few more friends." After rushing the club, he realized the additional relationships the club had afforded him to encounter:

It just brings everybody together under one common thing. And um, the diversity I think it makes it so great, because it's not just athletes, it's not just one type of people, it's all kinds of different people coming together and wanting to accomplish the same goal and wanting to do the same thing. And um, I've been thinking about it, and the more, as far as my experiences go, the more diverse a situation is, like people wise, place wise, stuff like that, the more beneficial it seems, and the more I get out of it and that's what happened here.

In addition to the more formal diversity interactions, Daniel, Jacob, Charles, Everett, and Mary all described informal diversity interactions that influenced them. Daniel noted a student led worship time referred to as 10:07. David explained, "10:07 it's a worship type of group thing . . . And it's just a time for students to come and worship." He further explained how 10:07 had influenced him regarding diversity:

I guess it just showed us that you shouldn't judge people because there's just a mix of everyone that attends 10:07. It's not any group, or any race, or any sex, it's just

a mix of everyone and everywhere. And it's very diverse and it just goes to show you that Christianity in general is very diverse and it pertains to everyone.

Mary and Jacob remarked how informal Bible studies on their dorm floors had increased their diversity interactions and exposed them to new ideas. Mary described her floor's bible study as "a small group that is supposed to be a spiritual time and also a group where we can just share what's happening in our week. And just a time of growing together and getting to know each other." Yet, this informal gathering has enabled Mary to recognize that "people are different and I just have to appreciate people for who they are, not for what I want them to be or who I think they should be."

Jacob described his experience much the same, "We had a Bible study where the R.A. would set up a Bible study at night and all the guys would pile in there." The Bible study also proved a time for Jacob to engage persons different from himself:

No one person's background is the same as another and still, we come together as common ground because we all believed in God. So that was good interaction for us all and built up our faith. It didn't matter what you looked like, or where you came from, it was what you were there for.

Everett's experience of an informal diversity interaction was an "impromptu, uh worship service and prayer service." There he encountered a young man who "was just really jumping up and down during all the songs, and during the prayer he was moving around and almost yelling some stuff." For Everett, those actions during worship were "just not what I've grown up around so it was just kind of weird." However, as he observed and reflected on what he had been exposed to, he later reflected:

It just let me know that diversity is not necessarily a negative thing at all.

Especially in a religion, because that's usually, something you don't really think of diversity being a great subject in. It's usually, there's one, one certain path and I've learned that's not always the case.

For Charles, his informal diversity interaction was traveling "to D's hometown one day and just saw the interaction of how his parents interact with him." He stated that the experience "was like nothing I've ever seen before." In traveling to his friend's home, Charles recognized that "all those stereotypes that you had are not true. They are not true in the sense that you've experienced them or lived with them, but you're seeing it."

All three forms of diversity experiences were prevalent in the interactions described by the participants. Each form presented the participants with experiences that enabled them to engage diverse people and hear ideas that challenged their ways of thinking.

Influence of Previous Context

The third category, influence of previous context, related to the pre-college backgrounds which influenced the undergraduates' values and conceptions in their college diversity interactions. It is important to note that every single participant referred back to his or her previous context before attending Cranston. Each undergraduate noted some area of the previous context that either hindered or helped positive diversity experiences to take place in their lives.

Tina, Charles, Cindy, Everett, Jordan, Estelle, and Mia described in different ways their family's influence within their current diversity experiences. Tina remarked that she "was brought up that way, just to respect people as a whole and that's how my

mom brought me up.” Charles stated, “I grew up with the understanding that I needed to be respectful and to treat different ethnic groups like I want to be treated.” Cindy acknowledged, “I definitely think that if I didn’t grow up in a Christian home, or that diversity wasn’t taught, then I don’t necessarily think that I would be here.” Everett stated that his “family has been the main thing” in influencing him “to be accepting of people and ideas that are different than my own.” Jordan affirmed that notion:

I've learned from watching family and friends, and the people I've been around have kind of . . . like who you grow up with and who teaches you is how you're going to form your opinions and beliefs, and that's pretty much where I've come from.

Estelle’s and Mia’s family influence was different from the others just mentioned. They both come from diverse families; however, both have fathers who do not want their daughters dating an African American. Mia acknowledged:

It's the way I was brought up, because there are people, for instance, my dad, he doesn't want me to date a Black guy, but if I did, he's still going to love me for it, but he doesn't look, like, high upon it I guess.

In a similar way, Estelle echoed Mia’s story:

There's still more ground to go, and like, for instance, my dad doesn't approve of my relationship with my boyfriend . . . And, so he like, took my car away and stuff.

Many participants referred to the communities and high schools they had previously been a part of and how those influenced their current experiences. Linda noted:

I grew up in a rather large school that was pretty diverse. But in my actual neighborhood, who I was closest with, were all like me. So, it wasn't until high school when I moved out of that neighborhood and into a new neighborhood, where I started really interacting with people.

She added that because of these surroundings she was “kinda sheltered.”

Elizabeth’s previous context was even more homogeneous, “I’m from a very small community, so there was pretty much no diversity.” She added, “There was one African American person in our whole entire school, and she actually ended up moving, so it was completely a White-dominated community.” Elizabeth commented on her previous context’s influence, “I think I was very set in my ways. So coming here and being around students of different nationalities, or like, African Americans, it was the first time that I’d like really ever experienced that.”

Jacob’s previous context was a blended experience:

I’m actually, where I was born was Gary, Indiana and that is actually completely Black town. Everybody there is Black. And growing up, they used to say Blacks are a minority and I was like, "Everybody I see is Black, I don't know about minority!" But, then I went to Valparaiso High School, and Valparaiso is pretty much a White town. So, my eyes were pretty much opened.

As international students, Mary and Matthew’s previous contexts were more diverse than many of the participants who grew up in the States. Mary noted that her country was a “melting pot” where “people of different color or races mixed together.” Matthew noted that he had many diversity experiences back in his country of Zambia,

“With my family serving in the church, being Church of God pastors, it taught me a lot to see people for who they are, not what they are.”

However, when Mary and Matthew arrived at Cranston, they both realized that their previous context, even though diverse, had not prepared them for the culture change that confronted them. Matthew’s struggle centered on the fact that “when I came, I was now the opposite, I was the minority.” This personal transition “forced me to look at like, my life when I was part of the majority, and look at the things I really appreciated while being the majority, and what I have to deal with being the minority.”

For Mary, that culture shock was centered on religious diversity. She stated that “people back home take it (faith) more seriously” and:

There is not as much reverence as we have back home. And at first, that really surprised me to the point where I was like, "Ok, this is a Christian University." So, this is a Christian university, so why is there so much resentment towards God?

Amy’s previous religious context was like Mary’s in that it was very conservative and narrow. She attended “a private, Christian, classical, very small school.” During her time “in high school I was surrounded by the same people all of the time.” In Amy’s religion classes at CU she was confronted with new ideas concerning her faith and her “first instinct is just to shut it off and say, I don't even want to like, study that because I just know it's wrong.” In time, she learned that “benefits come when you just sort of explore it, and when you listen to people’s ideas.”

The descriptions offered by all the participants accentuated the influence that previous context had over their diversity experiences at Cranston. Amy’s words make

this easier to understand, “I’m definitely a creature of habit, I like things to be the same, and familiar is always good, and I don’t like change.” In many ways, the previous context of each participant helped create who that student had become and how they would initially respond, either positively or negatively, toward diversity experiences.

Benefits of Diversity Experiences

The fourth category, benefits of diversity experiences, related to the benefits in students’ educational lives as a result of diversity experiences. The participants’ descriptions revealed that their experiences were varied and far reaching in the undergraduates’ lives. Linda and Jacob spoke of diversity experiences better preparing them to work in the real world. Linda believed diversity experiences “prepares you for the real world. Because if I went to school where everyone was the same, when I get out into the open and there’s people that aren’t like me, then I wouldn’t know how to react.” Jacob affirmed that notion:

I feel it is necessary to be cultured by being able to interact and be able to get along with other types of people who have different backgrounds from yourself. Um, learn to handle yourself well when it comes to real world situations, if you haven’t experienced them, then you wouldn’t necessarily know how to interact or how to perform how you should. So, I think it’s really been beneficial.

Cindy, Matthew and Mia stated that their diversity experiences had not only better prepared for the real world but also expanded their global perspectives. Cindy remarked that “it helps us to understand the global perspective, whether it’s faith or just our aspect of living.” Matthew offered that each student he met brought “their uniqueness, or what they bring with their culture on a global scale. Realizing that we are all different cultures

and different backgrounds. That has helped me view the world a little bit different.” Mia, too, echoed this sense of an expanded global perspective:

For me it’s more kind of global . . . Because the people from Kenya, and I’ve never met anyone from Kenya or South Africa, that have like grown up there and come here. So, meeting them has changed the way I view their countries.

Other participants discussed how the experiences had expanded their mindsets and given them new perceptions regarding people different than themselves. In essence, this is a part of the critical thinking process that universities desire undergraduates to engage. Tina, Daniel, Everett, Jordan, and Mary spoke of transformation that had taken place in their thinking. Daniel reported that diversity experiences “has just broadened my horizons and made me think about things in a different way and made me realize just I guess that, just to think about things more.”

Everett asserted that the process “makes you think of another person’s perspective really. When you’re learning about the class you don’t just think about it from the White, middle-class perspective, so, you definitely realize that there are other ones out there.” Regarding perceptions and beliefs, he realized, “Mine’s not the only one, and in any situation, I shouldn’t go about it thinking that it is. So, you just really have to make sure you’re thoughtful of other peoples’ perspectives when you’re thinking about any subject really.”

Jordan spoke of this mindset change being almost a two-fold process. First, it was about becoming more aware of diversity:

I guess when you’re around a lot of people that you’re comfortable with and that you hang out with, you get the mindset that like, everybody feels the same, and

everyone thinks the same. But when you're aware that there are a lot of differences in people, there's different cultures, different backgrounds, not just Black and White or Hispanic and White or any of that, but lots of different people.

Second, it was about moving past previous opinions and perceptions:

I know I can think of like, experiences where you might have an opinion based on someone just on who they hang out with, how they look like, or how they talk, or whatever. Then once you get to know them, you realize I was totally off base there, like, this person's like a great person, like, I'm glad I got to know them that way.

Mary's experiences within the small group on her dorm floor moved her from being close minded to become more accepting of different people. She confessed, "Even though I might sometimes have been closed minded and just being with people from different backgrounds that can affect me for who I am. And it makes it easier for me to like I guess accept people."

Tina described the process as evaluating different people in a more personal manner:

They definitely influenced me to believe more, instead of just looking at the person on the outside, more to go towards what they are actually thinking in their mind and in their heart, beyond "well, he looks a little questionable." Like once you talk to the person it changes. Once you get to know people it changes. You get to move past what you always thought.

The benefits of diversity experiences not only involved the process of causing the participants to think critically but, in doing so, the participants moved past old stereotypes and prejudices. Matthew, Estelle, Elizabeth, and Charles described how the process had taken affect in their lives. Mary acknowledged how a chapel convocation had increased her awareness of continued racial prejudice:

It changed the way I think, and it made me . . . not appreciate, but kind of like appreciate, you know, like other people, and you know, sometimes, like when there's like . . . say our Martin Luther King chapel, or when there's like, Black History Month, or whatever, in the past I would, well they would talk about, you know, some of us are still under prejudices, and you know, like racism. And I'm like, yeah, ok, whatever, I've heard this so many times. But like, it's true. Like, we've come so far, but you know what I mean?

Elizabeth noted that her previous context had been laden with racism and her diversity experiences at CU had changed her perspectives:

I think people in my community are very racist. Some of them are very racist. Some of them, well you know there's a difference between racism and prejudice. Some of them are just prejudiced; some of them are definitely racist. And um, I had never considered myself to be racist or prejudiced, but it was very interesting to me to come here freshman year, and actually like, have encounters with African American people and learn, you know what, like, you're not as bad as I expected it to be! Like, I don't want to sound narrow-minded, but it's really opened up my perspective.

Charles felt remorse regarding his past stereotypes of people, “This sounds bad, but you have these stereotypes that people say like, ‘These people are like that.’ But, then you meet these great people and all the previous is thrown out the window.” Matthew spoke openly regarding past stereotypes and taking the initiative to get to know persons whom he had previously stereotyped:

I think that when I came in or maybe when I look at somebody that may be even different from me, or even the same color as me, usually what would come to mind is stereotypes. I'd stereotype a person. Like if someone was White, I'd be like, oh maybe they don't even want to talk to me, like how is he going to look at me? If somebody's Black for example, like African Americans, there is that difference even though we're the same skin color, but we've had different backgrounds, we've grown up in different backgrounds, and so what I was exposed to mostly through media was that Black people, you know, it's all about violence in their lifestyle, and so I came in with that preconception; like, if I talk to a Black person, this is what might happen. But when I actually took the time to actually get to know that person, we just talked and shared experiences, and they shared their background and I shared mine. We just had so many parallel's in how our life was, and so I was better able to better connect at that point with the person, and so that helped me get to know the person better.

The openness and growth that participants described as a result of diversity experiences covered all types of diversity experiences (race/ethnic, religious, majors, worship, lifestyle, etc.). However, perhaps the most important benefit was the personal

growth many of the participants noted. Michael commented on diversity's ability to enable growth to take place in his faith:

The more diverse people I'm around, the more easy it is for me to grow as a person. And when that gets shut down, or when I'm just around one specific group all the time, like, the fire kind of goes away. So like, when you get into a routine, you start doing the same things with the same people, it kind of gets old and you kind of just die out a little bit. But when you're experiencing different things with different people, it's so easy to grow and mature in your faith and as a person.

Jacob spoke to his personal growth and maturity as a result of his experiences with diversity:

I've grown more as a person and I even talk to some of the guys that I was friends with back in Gary and I could see their perception of the world has not changed, I don't see any growth or maturity. I mean yeah, they've grown and matured, but I've outgrown and out-matured them. And there are a lot of falsehoods that you are told as far as, you stick with one group. You begin to believe things that are not necessarily true. There are a lot of misconceptions. Um , and as far as moving out beyond that, I've grown and I feel like I know a lot more and I'm better able to interact and cope with the world as it is today.

Amy acknowledged the personal growth that takes place when she moved outside her comfort zone and confronted the scary and different world of diversity experiences:

When I push myself out of my comfort zone, I see that there's growth that happens, and I see that I always find something new. Whether it's just like a new

relationship I've built, or just a really cool interaction that I've had with someone, or um, I don't know. I think it's hard to see the value of that when you're not in it, because it's scary or it's different, but I think I'm still learning how important that is, I mean, just in general, to put yourself out of your comfort zone. And just to be sort of proactive about it, not to let opportunities come to you, but to go out and find them.

The insights shared by the participants leave little doubt about the benefits that diversity experiences have garnered in their educational lives. However, to truly understand the personal depth and meaning these benefits had within the personal lives of the participants, one had to be in the interview room watching faces light up, tears being shed, smiles overtaking frowns, and countenance changing as deep reflection and description took place. There were moments when the contributors' words did not adequately define the depth of transformation that had taken place in these undergraduates' lives as a result of their diversity experiences.

Faith Issues regarding Diversity Experiences

The fifth category, faith issues regarding diversity experiences, related to the participants' personal faith and how that faith influenced the undergraduates' diversity interactions. The participant's descriptions revealed that personal faith influenced their perceptions and actions regarding diversity experiences. Also, their descriptions revealed that diversity experiences influenced the participants' personal faith and development along the way. It should be noted that these perceptions and actions were constructed around Christian teachings since Cranston is a Christian university.

Linda, Jacob, Everett, Daniel, Mia, and Charles noted that faith influenced their perceptions regarding diversity experiences. Linda acknowledged that she “always try to remember that you know, God created us all unique and we are all loved, and that you know, it is our job to love everyone else.” This perception of her faith causes her to “try to treat them with the respect that I want to be treated with in return.” In a way, this is the Golden Rule being lived out through Linda’s diversity experiences.

Everett’s influence of faith was related to Jesus’ notion of “love your neighbor as yourself.” In regards to diversity experiences, this principle challenged him to not “put any limit on who your neighbor is.” Mia acknowledged that for her “it doesn't matter what color your skin is, God loves us all equally so I just don’t put anything against them just because they're a different color.” For Daniel, diversity experiences also offered him the opportunity to find a tangible expression to his belief that equality is found in the Cross of Jesus.

In my Christian faith, Jesus came to save everyone, not just different sets of groups. He came to save everyone. And that's why He died for us, so that we could all be saved. So my Christian faith has influence in that I see everyone as equally.

Charles’ faith caused him to ask two important questions regarding his interactions with people different than him, “How am I going to care for this person who is a different than me? But, it's a totally different thing to say, well how would Jesus be treating them?” For Charles, the second question, “makes all the difference in the world in how you interact with them. And I think it makes a world of difference in how you treat them.”

Jacob's description regarding faith's influence over how he perceived diversity experiences very passionately expressed his belief that Christ's example was to go against the norm and pursue different:

It definitely has influenced it quite a bit. Honestly, because I do consider what I just said being Christ-like, willing to help others, willing to give and sacrifice. So, if I wanted to, I could stay stuck in my little box. But, if you consider Christ and what He did; He was always going against the current almost. So, when everyone is saying, "You don't talk to that group of people, they are down here, we are up here." Christ would say, "Why can't I interact with them?" And He would go and do it anyway. So, I feel like you shouldn't get stuck in like "I'm like this, all the people I hang out with are like this, let's just keep going on like this." I feel like you should want to reach out and touch more people. I mean that is really what it is all about, being connected with other people, outreach ministry, evangelism... you can't just minister to a particular group and say; everybody else is thrown out the window. You have to be open and you have to be willing to interact and connect with people that are not like you.

Tina, Mary, Amy, and Elizabeth found that other person's dogmatic stances and perceptions regarding faith brought barriers to diversity experiences. Tina found that "people get kinda stressed about that because they are like, 'Oh no, my way is right.' And the other person is like, 'Oh no, my way is right.'" Tina believes this type of stringent thinking is linked to a lack of respect towards people different than us:

People aren't very open-minded to the fact that people could read scripture in a different way. And I just think that you have to just give other people their

opinions and respect that. And I think respect is a big part of that too. It is not respectful to shoot down someone else's opinion just because you don't think it's right.

In response to person's dogmatic attitudes, she asserted that people need to get "used to the fact that they have to stop telling people, stop focusing in on what's wrong with people and start telling them that they are God's people and you love them because God made them."

Elizabeth and Amy experienced barriers in their own personal ways. Their previous contexts were narrow regarding religious diversity. Elizabeth stated that her previous context had "been positive and negative, because coming here, I think I had a very naive faith. I was told what to believe, and so I believed the things I believed because that's just all that I knew." Amy noted her own barriers, "I don't, wouldn't necessarily say that I did believe everything blindly; but just the fact that I hadn't heard a lot of different opinions. I think in that sense, um, sort of made me closed-minded."

Yet, as both women reflected on their experiences, they came to see the negative and the positive results of those experiences. Elizabeth confirmed, "That really challenged me because in some ways, it kind of made me doubt my faith, but in other ways it helped me to grow in my faith." Amy echoed, "I think it's made me take a different perspective on my faith, and like, know better why I believe what I believe...or for what reason."

Estelle and Mary spoke to the notion that their faith gave them the strength and perseverance to overcome the struggles that some diversity experiences presented for them. Estelle understands that sometimes diversity experiences create their own turmoil:

Naturally, hanging out with such a different group of people, what problems that creates, and how I have to challenge myself to not freak out, and draw my patience from, you know ultimately I can only go to Christ to help me deal with these situations that are naturally creating themselves within the group that I hang out with, and it's been rough, but I mean, I love them, but sometimes it creates problems.

It is during those times that she needed her faith to “wash over me, you know, because I'll just go crazy.”

As Mary described the struggles that diversity experiences had presented her, she referred back to her faith that assured her:

I know for a fact that God said He would never leave me or forsake me . . . And I feel like if God, if this is what God wants me to do, like, He put me here. Then God, then I, should be willing to work it out and see where it takes me, and not give up so easily.

Many participants described how diversity experiences and faith worked together to develop a healthy sense of self and more complex cognitive structures within them. Linda acknowledged how diversity interactions had caused faith development within her, “My faith in general has grown since I've been here because I am making it my faith and not my family's faith.” Everett was similar in how he had grown to think beyond the values and beliefs that were handed down to him:

It has kind of broadened my horizons on it a little bit. I'm not necessarily in the little box that I've been raised in, which yes, I've been raised to respect diversity, but at the same time, we still always worship in the same way, and always,

just . . . you have your own way of doing things. Your family's way of doing things, and coming here, I've been able to see and learn a lot of different ways of doing things that I've learned are not bad, it's just not the same way that I've always done it.

Estelle spoke passionately regarding how diversity experiences had made her faith real for her and given her life new purpose:

That experience led up to being able to have a REAL relationship with Christ, and now I'm daily working on that relationship. That experience made me realize that I was just, you know, living. You know, going to church on Sunday, the typical story. You go to church with your parents on Sunday morning, you know, blah blah blah, but you don't really care and you don't really have a heart for Christ, and you don't really pray and you don't really read your Bible, and stuff. And like, after that summer, it was just like, this is what I want, you know? This is what I want.

Tina described how her sense of self was in the process of being formed:

I'm kinda developing into who I am and kinda slowly, God is still molding me in a way. Like I'm still waiting it figure out exactly who I am, where I'm going to go and I haven't quite found my niche yet.

Michael also described how he was growing in confidence regarding his sense of self:

I was like hey, this is me, this is who I am, but around people I just kind of let me be inside me, and then let them see me as something else; knowing that I knew who I was and I really didn't care what they thought, because I knew me on the

inside. But now, I want me on the inside to be the same as me on the outside.

Matthew spoke about a time “during the summer, I got to go home, and people realized I was different. I don't really know how it was different, but I had developed a different outlook, I had changed without even realizing it.” He “had learned to tolerate other views, other people's positions.” As Matthew reflected more deeply regarding this personal growth and change regarding faith and diversity experiences, he commented about his growing concern for others:

I can't really say specifically in what areas I've changed, but my whole life has sort of been turned upside down and it's just a whole different outlook on life.

And just having a multi-faceted outlook on life, and not just this is the way, and this is what I believe in, but what do other people believe in? How does that help me? How do we build each other based on our differences, and also based on our similarities? How do we help each other out?

Summary

This chapter described demographic descriptions of the study participants, a summary of the interview with each participant, and a general description of the categories that emerged from the data. Five categories offered an understanding into the sixteen undergraduates' perceptions as they related to diversity experiences on a private, religiously-affiliated university: types of diversity experiences, forms of diversity experiences, influence of previous context, benefits of diversity experiences, and faith issues regarding diversity experiences. The next chapter examines the situation of these categories and the progression or flow of four emergent themes within the larger research and explores the meanings of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This phenomenological study explored the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. Sixteen undergraduates from a Midwestern private, religiously affiliated university were interviewed. Merleau-Ponty's methodological schema of description-reduction-interpretation (Lanigan, 1988) as utilized in Wolff's (1999) study resulted in five categories: types of diversity experiences, forms of diversity experiences, influence of previous context, benefits of diversity experiences, and faith issues regarding diversity experiences. Upon further reflection and analysis, the participants' descriptions revealed a progression or flow of four emergent themes: forms of diversity experiences, types of diversity experiences, critical reflection of past and present, and student and faith development. This chapter examines the situation of these themes within the larger literature base regarding diversity experiences and explores the themes as a natural progression or flow of the diversity experiences of those undergraduates on a private, religiously affiliated university. Lastly, the chapter offers an integrated discussion of the practical implications of these findings and makes recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Study

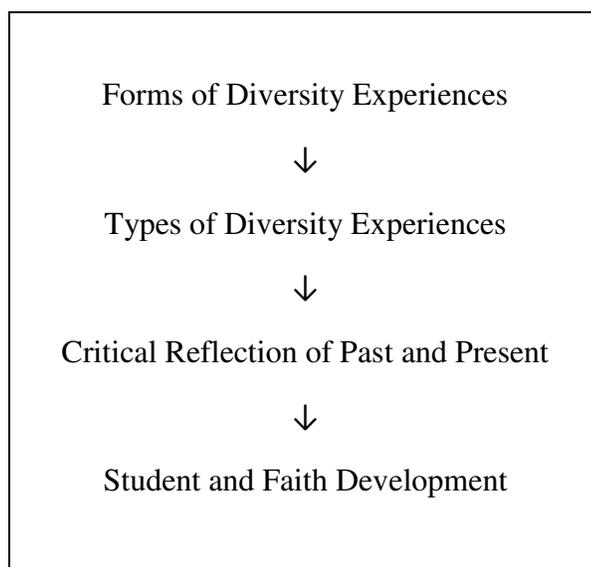
Because the demographics of American higher education are changing (Ryu, 2009), Macedo (2000) noted that diversity was a defining issue of our time. The research made clear the benefits of a diversified campus are far reaching in a student's educational life (Banks, 2009). Certain aspects of growth as a human being may not be realized unless students are around groups of people that differ from themselves (Chang et al., 2004). By phenomenologically studying the experiences of some undergraduates, their descriptions highlighted the many issues associated with diversity experiences. The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. In the pursuit of this purpose, the following research question provided focus and direction: How is diversity experienced by some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university campus?

Sixteen undergraduates from a Midwestern private, religiously affiliated university were interviewed. The data analyzed revealed five categories: types of diversity experiences, forms of diversity experiences, influence of previous context, benefits of diversity experiences, and faith issues regarding diversity experiences. Upon further reflection and analysis, the participants' descriptions revealed a progression or flow of four emergent themes: forms of diversity experiences, types of diversity experiences, critical reflection of past and present, and student and faith development. In this chapter, the themes are utilized to investigate van Manen's (1990) notion that "phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience" (p. 79). He asserted that in analyzing the themes in such a manner, the intent was to determine "the experiential structures that make up that experience" (p. 79). The examination of the

participants' descriptions received in this study resulted in an exploration of how a progression or flow of the themes worked as a plausible structure within a system of contextually related experiences.

The progression began when forms of diversity experiences enabled different types of diversity experiences to take place in the undergraduates' lives. In turn, the dynamics created within those types of diversity experiences instigated reflection of the participants' previous context and previously held beliefs and values. This process of reflection/critical thinking enabled personal reassessment/transformation to take place as the benefits of diversity experiences produced life change within the undergraduates' lives. In sum, the progression or theme flow enabled significant individual student and faith development to take place as a result of diversity experiences within the undergraduates' educational lives.

Figure 1: Progression or Theme Flow Chart



van Manen's Notion of Themes as a Structure

van Manen (1990) asserted:

The essence of a phenomenon can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon. In other words, phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experiences. (p. 10)

It should be noted that phenomenological research and writing does not offer a concretized understanding or structure of a phenomenon within these descriptions. At best, the task of phenomenology is “to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 41); while at the same time being aware that any lived experience is always more complex than any explication of meaning can discern.

With these thoughts in mind, this flow or progression of themes is not offered as an all encompassing four step process to understand the phenomenon of undergraduates' diversity experiences. That would be a foolish and faulty attempt within the realm of phenomenology. This flow or progression of themes is an attempt to be what van Manen (1990) defined as rationalistic. To be rationalistic is to believe “that we can make things understandable to each other and that experience can be made intelligible” (p. 16). Even as this progression of themes is offered for the reader, I concur with van Manen that “theme formulation is at best a simplification” (p. 88) and assert that this theme flow is simplistic in nature.

However, van Manen (1990) also pointed out that lived experiences have within them the “flow of life” (p. 36) and that experiences “becomes a part of a system of contextually related experiences” (p. 37) when they pass through a process of reflection upon their meaning. After extensive reflection and analysis this progression and flow of themes emerged through the contributors’ descriptions. As the progression or flow of contextually related themes emerged, a linguistic construction was set forth of the essence of undergraduates’ diversity experiences utilizing this flow or progression of themes as structure.

With further reflexivity I am dutifully aware that this linguistic construction of a progression or flow of contextually related themes is not *the* interpretation of the essence of undergraduates’ diversity experiences. In keeping with van Manen’s (1990) understandings of themes it is but a *possible* interpretation of the essence of undergraduate’s diversity experiences. However, its presentation fulfilled some crucial tasks of van Manen’s approach to phenomenological research and writing, which were to “construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience” (p. 41) while making it understandable and intelligible.

Progression or Flow of Diversity Experiences

Forms of Diversity Experiences

Denson & Chang (2009; Gurin et al., 2002) noted that the majority of research has focused on three distinct forms of diversity experiences on college/university campuses. The first form was structural diversity which focused on an institution’s student body composition. In regards to how a progression or flow of the themes worked within a system of contextually related experiences, structural diversity was key to enabling the

progression and flow to begin. In simple terms, the greater the number of students from diverse backgrounds on a campus, the greater the number of opportunities that students would interact with someone different than themselves (Umbach & Kuh, 2006). This was true on Cranston's campus as Cindy's comment makes evident:

A huge part of this university, I think that this University wouldn't be what it is if it didn't have diversity. We have over a hundred different international students, from I think over 40 different countries, and I think that if a school wasn't willing to embrace diversity, we wouldn't be what we are today.

Structural diversity was the starting point or launching pad for diversity experiences to take place on CU's campus. It was the catalytic point that began the progression and flow of themes. However, the research concluded that in and of itself structural diversity was an insufficient condition for maximizing educational benefits (Chang et al., 2004; Denson & Chang, 2009; Pike and Kuh, 2006). Ultimately, the value of structural diversity depended on whether or not it led to greater levels of engagement and diversity experiences. Participants' descriptions reflected that structural diversity created greater opportunities of diversity engagement in multiple arenas and, in doing so, enabled the flow to continue and increase. Jacob, Cindy, Tina, Michael, Daniel, and Jordan confirmed that structural diversity enabled diversity experiences to take place within arenas like student housing, athletics, and social clubs. Jacob described his student housing experience:

My sophomore year, I actually roomed with a White guy. And he had his differences, I had my differences. But, what was cool was that you come to an

understanding of living together, there are things that we do different. It doesn't make one right, it doesn't make one wrong, but we can all get along.

As the flow of themes continued, the second diversity form noted was curricular/co-curricular diversity which studied an institution's programmatic efforts that exposed students to content about diversity issues (Denson & Chang, 2009; Gurin et al. 2002). Linda, Jacob, Jordan, Daniel, Tina, Amy, Elizabeth, and Cindy, described the classroom as a place of diversity experiences. This form sometimes included the requirement of some courses which were diversity centered; particularly at a liberal arts university, such as Cranston. Astin (1999) noted that the diversity found on liberal arts college's campuses makes for great variation. Many people tend to think of liberal arts universities as a homogeneous group; when in fact, they are in certain respects more diverse than other types of higher education institutions. A central reason for this variety was that liberal arts colleges can vary widely in their offering and requirement of educational programs which attract a menagerie of different types of students. Daniel confirmed Astin's insights when he stated:

When you get into your Liberal Arts classes, you get a real mix of all different types of people. And CU has a lot of real good diversity. There's a lot of international students who get kind of thrown in there in the mix with all the races and it makes everything just real diversified and things.

The research (Anderson, 2005; Bruch et al., 2004) suggested that curriculum must continue to be diversified to meet the growing diversity in classrooms across the country. The classroom was seen as a potential place to learn and become who we are through cultures of practice and interactions with other human beings (Laksov et al., 2008). This

did not mean that the process of learning took place without tension and struggles.

Chavez et al. (2003) noted that individual diversity development is uncomfortable for most due to the fact that it causes individuals to confront otherness and move outside their comfort zones. Elizabeth, Amy, and Mary described this type of discomfort when first confronted with otherness in the classroom. Amy's first diversity experiences were centered in her "Hebrew Roots of Christian Faith" class. During the class, the professor challenged some of her long held beliefs and she responded with great angst and doubt, "I was like, whoa, you know? I don't know if I'm okay with that!"

Minkler et al. (2008) suggested that even with tension classrooms within institutions of higher education are powerful learning environments where multicultural social communities can coincide and collide. If these curricular communities of diverse backgrounds were involved and committed to the education process, then the empowerment of individuals and communities could result. Jacob affirmed that notion and perceived the classroom as the place for those types of discussions and dynamics to take place:

In the setting of a classroom, I feel it is more convenient just because people don't get offended in a classroom setting, as long as it is not intentional because people should have the freedom to express themselves. I definitely didn't take any offense to anything that was said in the class. I was always willing to give my input as to why I felt certain things were the way they were. I mean, if I can help someone understand, or gain what little bit of knowledge on a certain topic, then I don't see a problem with doing it, especially in a classroom setting.

Some undergraduates did not perceive all of Cranston's efforts regarding curricular/co-curricular diversity in a positive manner. Jordan, Everett, and Charles felt that CU's programmatic efforts regarding chapel exposed students to content about diversity issues in an overkill manner. Jordan "got annoyed with the chapels" and Charles felt diversity was "jammed down your throat" through repeated chapel convocations that focused on the issue of diversity. This is an example of the tension that Minkler et al. (2008) defined as a part of the process when different cultures are cross pollinated within learning environments. Being confronted with otherness (Chavez et al., 2003) sometimes creates personal animosity as the participants' descriptions made clear.

It is also important to note that Jacob and Tina described their professors' ability and inability to facilitate positive dialogue within the classroom. These insights affirmed Lanier's (2001) assertion that many teachers are ill-equipped to teach in these types of class settings. Tomalin (2007) noted that as teachers find themselves working with an increasingly diverse student population, they do so with very little support, training, and resources. Jacob described how his professor had facilitated constructive dialogue:

Actually the professor was really good because her son I believe is mixed, so it was almost like you know, she was more comfortable with it. So, I could feel like she was more comfortable with it, so it made me a little more comfortable. She would joke a little bit, but then she would say, "Hey, this happened, you don't have to feel awkward about it, it's in the past, but it did happen." But, we did have to discuss it. So, just making it free to open up and talk and say that it really is not offensive because it is a part of history, it is part of a learning experience, part of your education.

Tina noted her professor's inability to cope with the dissonance created in her classroom:

I think he (professor) kinda got uncomfortable. And then he kinda did his best to kind of avoid it all. Like he was all kinda like, ok, let's agree to disagree and then he did his best to move on to the next topic. So there was not really any settlement or anything like that. It was just kinda pushed by.

The participants' descriptions coincided with Smith's (2009) assertion that multicultural education should be present in preservice teacher education based on the fact that "teachers face multiple and complex issues that challenge many of their traditional educational practices and assumptions" (p. 45). The descriptions also related to O'Hara and Pritchard's (2008) indication that successful teacher preparation integrated issues of cultural diversity into all courses and field experiences and that university faculty and supervisors need to participate in this integration process.

The third form was diversity interaction which focused on student's exchanges with racially and ethnically diverse people as well as exposure to different ideas and experiences (Denson & Chang, 2009; Gurin et al. 2002). Certainly Cranston's structural diversity increased the likelihood of informal diversity interactions taking place on its campus and therefore enabled the theme progression and flow to continue. These diverse encounters increased the opportunity for individuals of diverse backgrounds, who have strikingly different perceptions, values and beliefs, to interact with one another (Chang et al., 2004). Participants described multiple venues where these interactions took place.

Mary and Jacob both spoke of the informal Bible studies that took place on their dorm floors. Jacob described why this diversity interaction was positive in regards to

interacting with diverse people, “It didn't matter what you looked like, or where you came from, it was what you were there for.” For Mary, this informal Bible gathering had enabled her to recognize and appreciate the differences in people, “People are different and I just have to appreciate people for who they are, not for what I want them to be or who I think they should be.” Everett’s encounter with an impromptu worship experience on campus challenged his long held belief regarding worship that “there’s one, one certain path and I’ve learned that’s not always the case.”

As participants engaged in diversity interactions, the experiences had a positive impact on the development of students by enabling greater growth in leadership skills and cultural awareness (Astin, 2004; Chang, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Bollinger (2007) affirmed that diversity interactions were indispensable in training future leaders on how to lead a growing multicultural world. In a larger sense, these experiences also increased the opportunity for higher education to fulfill its commitment to the common good and develop globally aware and responsible citizens (Antonaros et al., 2008; Thorton & Yeager, 2008). Jacob commented that diversity interactions had enabled him to “learn to handle yourself well when it comes to real world situations, if you haven't experienced them, then you wouldn't necessarily know how to interact or how to perform how you should.” Mia noted the sense of an expanded global perspective:

For me it’s more kind of global . . . Because the people from Kenya, and I've never met anyone from Kenya or South Africa, that have like grown up there and come here. So, meeting them has changed the way I view their countries.

Upon review, the participants’ descriptions described experiences from all three forms (structural, curricular, and interaction) of diversity experiences. Structural diversity

provided the probability that a student would interact with a student from another race. Curricular/co-curricular diversity provided programmatic efforts which included readings or discussions related to diversity that would cause critical reflection. And diversity interactions took place within a campus climate that encouraged contact among students from different backgrounds, faiths, and values.

Types of Diversity Experiences

As the progression and flow of themes filtered through the different forms of diversity experiences, the diversity interactions experienced within those forms brought into existence the second theme, types of diversity experiences, as described by the contributors. Over time the meaning of diversity has expanded from an emphasis on racial integration since Affirmative Action policies were brought into being (Tavares, 2007). Its definition has expanded to include gender, sexuality, ethnicity, income, socioeconomic class, body type, and other areas. Within higher education, different institutions function under different understandings of diversity since universities are complicated places serving multiple constituencies that have distinct and differing agendas (Arthur, 2008). The types of diversity experiences described by the participants defined the primary areas that diversity experiences reflected within the participants' college experiences. This theme, types of diversity experiences, described two dominant primary sub-themes: religious diversity and racial/ethnic diversity.

The first sub-theme, religious diversity, noted the experiences that took place in the participant's lives within the scope of faith and religion. The influence of religion on American higher education is nothing new for academe (Plant, 2006). Higher education's inception within the United States began when a church or religiously affiliated group

began most of our distinguished institutions (McArthur, 2005). Arthur (2008) claimed that private, religiously-affiliated colleges were concerned with diversity not only for educational purposes but for reasons that belonged to religion and personal faith. Private Christian institutions had a moral concern that human development was about the “whole of humanity for whom Christ died” (Plant, 2006, p. 27).

Since Cranston is a Christian university, it was reasonable that multiple participants described this as a dominant theme. This theme was consistent with Bernasconi’s (2006) assertion that private, religiously affiliated universities “possess distinct mission statements and declaration of principles, consistent with the orientations of their sponsoring organizations” (p. 303). Cherry, DeBerg, and Porterfield’s (2001) study found that while most universities had a spirituality component within them, Christian universities were more intentional to assert Christian principles since this was their ethos. Cranston’s mission statement clearly coincided with this notion of Christianity as a dominant theme:

The mission of Cranston University is to educate for a life of faith and service in the church and society. Established and sustained within the free and open traditions of the founding denomination, the university is committed to being a teaching-learning community of the highest order; engaged in the pursuit of truth from a Christian faith perspective. Through academic and Christian discovery, we intend to graduate people with a global perspective who are competent, caring, creative, generous individuals of character and potential. We will build those quality programs that will enable each member of the university to become stronger in body, mind, and spirit, to experience what it means to love God and

neighbor, and to adopt Christ-like servant ways in all of life. (All information retrieved November 28, 2009 from <http://www.cranston.edu/>; see Appendix)

According to Muntz and Crabtree (2006), it was important that religiously-affiliated universities not marginalize their commitment to the faith principles that were consistent with their distinct mission and the orientation of the sponsoring organization. This commitment enables universities like Cranston to make certain that the pursuit of a diversified campus was not from a secular public agenda but an agenda that stayed true to their unique mission (Arthur, 2008) centered on the Christian faith. Fowler (1981) noted that faith “is an innate capacity present in humans from the time of birth” (p. 38). Yet, faith capacities are dependent on what kinds of environment we are exposed to and the interactions one experiences within that environment.

The participants’ descriptions made clear that CU fostered an environment which enabled faith issues to be a part of the diversity experiences on campus in a myriad of ways. Amy, Mary, and Elizabeth asserted that the area of religious diversity experiences were points of dissonance and contention within their lives. This sense of discomfort related to Chavez et al.’s (2003) notion that diversity experiences moved individuals outside their comfort zones and created inner angst in doing so. Amy noted, “All the things that I thought I was so sure about, and even doctrinal things that were sort of grounding my faith were shaken up a little bit.” The dissonance created a sense of shock that such a variety of beliefs could be found on a Christian campus or those new ideas, which threatened old beliefs, could be offered in course settings. Mary offered, “Ok, this is a Christian University. So, this is a Christian university, so why is there so much resentment towards God?” In regards to new ideas threatening old beliefs, Steve stated,

“I’ve heard it said in the Bible, it’s wrong, but at the same time, there are people that are homosexuals that claim they are Christians, which to me, if the Bible says its wrong, how are they Christians?” These descriptions related to Wulff’s (1993) assertion that “when dawning critical reflection compels a person to take the reality of other, conflicting views seriously, he or she comes to realize the relativity for the authority and content of inherited tradition” (p. 183).

In regards to religious diversity, the exposure to different types of worship was also a prominent component within religious diversity experiences. Linda acknowledged that new ways of worship challenged her long held traditions of how worship should be done. Linda noted, “When I first got here freshman year, I was like, I can’t stand it when that person worships, like that is not how I worship.” The descriptions revealed that worship, as it related to faith issues, also held a passionate place in the lives of the participants. Worship traditions that had been passed down were difficult to surrender and held that place defined by Wulff (1993) as “inherited tradition” (p. 183). Only after critical reflection of deeply conflicting views had taken place were new worship styles embraced by some of the participants. Linda begrudgingly acknowledged:

I don't really care. I don't like that, but I think that is one way where I've opened my eyes and realized that I've become more accepting of it. That is something that is hard for me because I get so used to doing it.

For Cindy and Mia, different worship experiences were received with a different mindset. Different worship experiences for them were new opportunities of exploration and discovery. Mia described how experiencing different worship experiences through Gospel Choir had enabled her to gain new insights. She affirmed:

I learned a lot more about other cultures through that, like by it changing the way I looked at people. And um, we've done performances at different churches, like we did performances at an African American church, and that was a different experience. I grew through that by just going through those different experiences that I wouldn't have gone through if I wouldn't have been in gospel choir.

Both Mia and Cindy were raised in diverse households; therefore diverse and different in regards to religious diversity were not new for them. Certainly, their diversity experiences brought newness and otherness into their lives, but it did not create the dissonance or discomfort that other participants described. Cindy acknowledged, "I've grown up knowing that there are other things than Black and White. There are religions, and there are, um, there are people of different races and ethnicities, and the ideal goal is to embrace them."

The second sub-theme of types of diversity experiences was racial/ethnic diversity. This sub-theme noted the diversity experiences that took place in the participant's lives when engaged with persons of a different racial/ethnic background. The pursuit of a diversified campus was another unique component of Cranston's "distinct mission statements and declaration of principles" (Bernasconi, 2006, p. 303):

Diversity is an important part of CU's heritage and mission. CU seeks to reach beyond the status quo by becoming a community unlike any other; one that fully embraces persons of all races and cultures. The university's student body is made up of American students of many different ethnic backgrounds and over 80 international students representing approximately 40 different countries. With this diversity, Cranston recognizes the opportunity to journey together toward

understanding and personal growth (All information retrieved November 28, 2009 from <http://www.cranston.edu/>; see Appendix).

Recent research has contributed to understanding the potential benefits of racial/ethnic diversity on college and university campuses (Denson & Chang, 2009). Racial/ethnic diversity experiences provided the opportunity for undergraduates of diverse backgrounds, who have strikingly different perceptions, values and beliefs, to interact with one another (Chang et al., 2004). Elizabeth's story was a perfect example of this point. Her previous context was particularly homogeneous, "I'm from a very small community, so there was pretty much no diversity." She added, "There was one African American person in our whole entire school, and she actually ended up moving, so it was completely a White-dominated community." Elizabeth commented on her previous context's influence, "I think I was very set in my ways. So coming here and being around students of different nationalities, or like, African Americans, it was the first time that I'd like really ever experienced that."

Racial/ethnic diversity experiences provided opportunities for enhanced critical thinking into how one has formerly viewed a person, a group or differing cultures (Umbach & Kuh, 2006). Daniel, Everett, and Jordan discussed how these experiences had expanded their mindsets and given them new perceptions regarding people different than themselves. Daniel reported that diversity experiences "has just broadened my horizons and made me think about things in a different way and made me realize just I guess that, just to think about things more." Everett asserted that the process "makes you think of another person's perspective really. When you're learning about the class you don't just

think about it from the White, middle-class perspective, so, you definitely realize that there are other ones out there.”

Jordan’s description of this mindset change affirmed the potential of it being a part of a progression or flow. First, it was about the initial step of becoming more aware of diversity:

I guess when you're around a lot of people that you're comfortable with and that you hang out with, you get the mindset that like, everybody feels the same, and everyone thinks the same. But when you're aware that there are a lot of differences in people, there's different cultures, different backgrounds, not just Black and White or Hispanic and White or any of that, but lots of different people.

Second, it was about progressing past previous opinions and perceptions through critical thinking and flowing towards new understandings:

I know I can think of like, experiences where you might have an opinion based on someone just on who they hang out with, how they look like, or how they talk, or whatever. Then once you get to know them, you realize I was totally off base there, like, this person's like a great person, like, I'm glad I got to know them that way.

Jordan’s insights were closely tied to van Manen’s (1990) notion that experiences “becomes a part of a system of contextually related experiences” (p. 37) when they pass through a process of reflection upon their meaning.

The undergraduates’ descriptions also illustrated that their religious and racial/ethnic diversity experiences were contextually related toward the notion of the

common good. The common good was defined as standing for concepts of personal autonomy, individual rights and freedoms, and the principles of fairness, justice, equality and respect for diversity (Donlevy, 2008). Bernasconi (2006) noted that the private, religiously-affiliated institutions' commitment to the common good was related to a part of the moral and spiritual fabric of what distinguishes those institutions.

Mia and Daniel affirmed Walsh's (2002) notion of the equality of all people as God's creation. Mia acknowledged that for her "it doesn't matter what color your skin is, God loves us all equally so I just don't put anything against them just because they're a different color." For Daniel, diversity experiences also offered him the opportunity to find a tangible expression to his belief that equality is found in the Cross of Jesus:

In my Christian faith, Jesus came to save everyone, not just different sets of groups. He came to save everyone. And that's why He died for us, so that we could all be saved. So my Christian faith has influence in that I see everyone as equal.

Donlevy (2008) also noted that respect was a common component related to the common good. Tina and Charles described respect as a part of their moral concern for the common good of others. Tina remarked that she "was brought up that way, just to respect people as a whole." Charles stated, "I grew up with the understanding that I needed to be respectful and to treat different ethnic groups like I want to be treated."

Once again, the progression and flow of themes continued as forms of diversity experiences led to different types of diversity experiences taking place in the undergraduates' lives. Within the types of diversity experiences two sub-themes (religious and racial/ethnic diversity experiences) intertwined with each other and

progressed as “a part of a system of contextually related experiences” (van Manen, 1990, p. 37). The participants’ descriptions exemplified how racial/ethnic diversity experiences were interrelated to faith issues and in doing so progressed toward the benefit of the moral concern for the common good of all people. The contributors’ descriptions gave credence to Walsh’s (2002) notion that the common good could not only be a declaration for human rights; it could be a calling of an institution’s and individual’s faith tradition to see the value and equality of all people as God’s creation.

Critical Reflection of Past and Present

As the themes progressed through forms and types of diversity experiences, the participants were brought to a place of critical reflection upon their previous and present context. Previous context related to the pre-college backgrounds which influenced the undergraduates’ values and conceptions in their college diversity interactions (Saenz, 2005). The research noted that students’ pre-college backgrounds had a strong, predictive relationship with positive diversity interactions; indicating that students carry pre-college values and conceptions into early college intergroup interactions (Saenz et al., 2007). It is important to note that every participant referred back to his or her previous context before attending Cranston. In doing so, the participants’ noted some aspect of that previous context that either hindered or helped positive diversity experiences to take place during their undergraduate experiences.

Saenz’s (2005) research examined students’ pre-college racial environments and their diversity experiences in college. His study had two main conclusions. First, the pre-college racial environments and experiences do have substantial perpetuation effects on college diversity outcomes regarding cross-racial interactions and students’ attitudes

about racial discrimination. Saenz's study related to Liang and Prince's (2008) study which noted that students who entered college with higher levels of cross-racial self-efficacy had more racial interactions prior to enrollment.

Amy, Tina, Charles, Everett, Jordan, Estelle, and Mia's descriptions affirmed that their pre-college environments and experiences had perpetuation effects on religious and racial/ethnic interactions with students of differing values and beliefs. Tina remarked that she "was brought up that way, just to respect people as a whole and that's how my mom brought me up." Charles stated, "I grew up with the understanding that I needed to be respectful and to treat different ethnic groups like I want to be treated." Everett stated that his "family has been the main thing" in influencing him "to be accepting of people and ideas that are different than my own." Jordan affirmed that notion:

I've learned from watching family and friends, and the people I've been around have kind of . . . like who you grow up with and who teaches you is how you're going to form your opinions and beliefs, and that's pretty much where I've come from.

Amy, Estelle and Mia's perpetuation effects were different and illustrated the fact that previous context could either hinder or help positive diversity experiences to take place. Estelle and Mia both come from diverse families; however, both have fathers who do not want their daughters dating an African American and created barriers that had to be overcome. Mia acknowledged:

It's the way I was brought up, because there are people, for instance, my dad, he doesn't want me to date a Black guy, but if I did, he's still going to love me for it, but he doesn't look, like, high upon it I guess.

In a similar way, Estelle echoed Mia's story, "There's still more ground to go, and like, for instance, my dad doesn't approve of my relationship with my boyfriend . . . And, so he like, took my car away and stuff."

Amy's previous religious context had laid a very strong faith foundation for her but also created barriers to enlisting new ideas presented by differing people. She noted that she "hadn't heard a lot of different opinions. I think in that sense, um, sort of made me closed-minded."

Many participants referred to the communities and high schools they had previously been a part of and how those had perpetuation effects upon their current experiences (Saenz, 2005). Brown's (2008) study revealed that many college students enter college with little diversity experiences. Elizabeth's previous context was evidence of that fact, "I'm from a very small community, so there was pretty much no diversity." Jacob's previous context was a blended experience and better prepared him for the diversity experiences he would encounter:

I'm actually, where I was born was Gary, Indiana and that is actually completely Black town. Everybody there is Black. And growing up, they used to say Blacks are a minority and I was like, "Everybody I see is Black, I don't know about minority!" But, then I went to Valparaiso High School, and Valparaiso is pretty much a White town. So, my eyes were pretty much opened.

As international students, Mary and Matthew's previous contexts were more diverse than many of the participants who grew up in the States. Mary noted that her country was a "melting pot" where "people of different color or races mixed together." However, when Mary and Matthew arrived at Cranston, they both realized that their

previous context, even though diverse, had not prepared them for the culture change that confronted them. Matthew's struggle centered on the fact that "when I came, I was now the opposite, I was the minority." This personal transition "forced me to look at like, my life when I was part of the majority, and look at the things I really appreciated while being the majority, and what I have to deal with being the minority."

The undergraduates' descriptions made clear that their previous contexts had a perpetual effect upon their current diversity experiences and mindsets (Saenz et al, 2007). Umbach and Kuh (2006) asserted that these experiences provided opportunities for enhanced critical thinking into how one had formerly viewed a person, a group or differing cultures. For some participants, their previous contexts led to positive effects and for others their previous context created barriers that had needed to be interrupted and overcome. Amy's previous context had little diversity and initially caused resistance towards new ideas and perceptions. However, she reflected that her coming to Cranston and engaging diversity experiences had created more openness in how she viewed other people and "broadened my mindset."

This leads to Saenz's (2005) second conclusion which centered on the notion that racially and ethnically diverse university settings and students' diversity experiences significantly interrupted these perpetuation effects and can positively affect students' present attitudes regarding racial discrimination. The participants' descriptions affirmed Saenz's conclusions and illustrated how diversity experiences not only involved the process of critical thinking regarding racial/ethnic and religious diversity issues also. In doing so, the progression and flow moved participants past old stereotypes and prejudices toward new perceptions and values in the present.

Tina, Elizabeth, and Charles described how the progression had taken affect in their lives. Tina described the process as evaluating different people in a more personal manner:

They definitely influenced me to believe more, instead of just looking at the person on the outside, more to go towards what they are actually thinking in their mind and in their heart, beyond "well, he looks a little questionable." Like once you talk to the person it changes. Once you get to know people it changes. You get to move past what you always thought.

Elizabeth noted that her previous context had been laden with racism and her diversity experiences at CU had changed her perspectives:

I think people in my community are very racist. Some of them are very racist. Some of them, well you know there's a difference between racism and prejudice. Some of them are just prejudiced; some of them are definitely racist. And um, I had never considered myself to be racist or prejudiced, but it was very interesting to me to come here freshman year, and actually like, have encounters with African American people and learn, you know what, like, you're not as bad as I expected it to be! Like, I don't want to sound narrow-minded, but it's really opened up my perspective.

Charles reflection led to remorse regarding his past stereotypes of people, "This sounds bad, but you have these stereotypes that people say like, 'These people are like that.' But, then you meet these great people and all the previous is thrown out the window."

Chang et al. (2004) noted how these diverse interactions increased the opportunity for individuals of diverse backgrounds, who have strikingly different perceptions, values and beliefs, to interact with one another. Engberg's (2007) work examined how undergraduates captured the skills and "ability to see multiple perspectives, work cooperatively with diverse people, discuss and negotiate controversial issues, and tolerate others with different beliefs" (p. 285). As each participant reflected on their previous context, they realized that who they are becoming is not what or who they once were. The contributors' also recognized the benefits that diversity experiences had brought into their present lives. Daniel succinctly noted this when he stated that diversity experiences had "just broadened my horizons and made me think about things in a different way." It was this type of critical reflection regarding the past and the present that continued the progression and flow of themes moving towards the benefits of student and faith development.

Student and Faith Development

Chang et al. (2004) asserted that certain aspects of growth as a human being may not be realized unless that person is around groups of people that differ from him or herself. It was this type of personal and deep inner growth that participants experienced regarding student and faith development. The progression and flow of themes brought undergraduates to a place of greater maturation and self-efficacy. Umbach and Kuh (2006) defined the importance of this kind of personal cognitive growth in students' lives:

These diversity experiences shape the way students think about themselves in relation to others, about the nature of activities in which they engage, and about

the value they place on attitudes toward others and their skills and competencies in working with different types of people during and after college. That is, as a result of experiencing diversity in college, students learn how to work effectively with others and how to participate actively and contribute to a democratic society. Moreover, through engaging with people from different backgrounds and with different life experiences, students are adding to the foundation of skills and dispositions that is essential for living a productive, satisfying life after college in an increasingly multicultural world. (p. 170)

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) asserted that the evidence was consistently clear that diversity experiences have significant and positive effects on student's attitudes and values. Michael noted this type of personal transition taking place in his own life. He realized that before his diversity experiences on Cranston's campus he judged people before he really knew them. By taking the initiative and engaging different groups of people, Michael changed in his attitude and values toward people that were different than him:

It's really cool once you open your eyes and you figure out like, hey there's a huge world out there with tons of different people, and if I just keep a closed mind the whole time, then I'm just going to have these thoughts and I'm never going to enjoy that person or that group.

Gurin et al. (2002) explored the relationship between students' diversity experiences and "understanding how diversity introduces the relational discontinuities critical to identity construction and its subsequent role in fostering cognitive growth" (p. 330). It was this discontinuity within Amy and Matthew's diversity experiences that

provided the challenge that was needed for their development of a healthy sense of self and more complex cognitive structures. Amy noted that her diversity experiences had caused her to understand how important diversity was and to have the confidence to push past the discontinuity and outside her comfort zone to experience new and different situations:

My first instinct is to just shy away from it. Because I'm definitely a creature of habit, I like things to be the same, and familiar is always good, and I don't like change, and um, but I've definitely, when I push myself out of my comfort zone, I see that there's growth that happens, and I see that I always find something new.

Matthew's diversity interactions taught him that the discontinuity associated with diversity experiences can cause hurt and pain. Yet, as Matthew was able to work through his hurt, he progressed toward a more healthy sense of self and a more complex cognitive understanding of diversity, "That experience has helped me though, just knowing that whenever you're dealing with diversity, it's not always going to be a smooth road, you will have setbacks and you will have people who still may not accept diversity."

Laird (2005) suggested that diversity interactions were important influences on the "development of student learning and democratic outcomes, including students' intellectual engagement and motivation as well as citizenship engagement" (p. 366). For many participants, the notion of the democratic greater good and citizenship was strongly associated with their faith and their personal commitment to the equality, value and worth of all people. Although Amy's previous context was more narrow and limited in its religious and racial/ethnic diversity, her deeper sense of the democratic greater good was brought forth through her diversity experiences:

I believe that everyone is equal, I believe that everyone is made in the image of God, so I mean, it was my faith, well because of my faith I know that although we are all diverse, we are all equal, and that we are all created in God's image, and that looks different on everyone. And maybe some of us get along and some of us don't, but that doesn't mean that any person is less valuable or less worthy.

Liang and Prince's (2008) findings also "indicated that multicultural experiences were positively related to new or different multi-culturally oriented, interactional, relationship building skills" (p. 176). In sum, the results of the study affirmed the importance of providing multiple opportunities for cross-racial mastery experiences for students' development of cross racial self-efficacy. Michael and Jacob's experiences affirmed Lange and Prince's notion. Jacob noted:

I feel it is necessary to be cultured by being able to interact and be able to get along with other types of people who have different backgrounds from yourself. Um, learn to handle yourself well when it comes to real world situations, if you haven't experienced them, then you wouldn't necessarily know how to interact or how to perform how you should. So, I think it's really been beneficial.

In many ways, Michael echoed Jacob's comments regarding personal growth:

The more diverse people I'm around, the more easy it is for me to grow as a person. And when that gets shut down, or when I'm just around one specific group all the time, like, the fire kind of goes away. So like, when you get into a routine, you start doing the same things with the same people, it kind of gets old and you kind of just die out a little bit. But when you're experiencing different

things with different people, it's so easy to grow and mature in your faith and as a person.

In regards to faith development, Fowler's (Chickering et al., 2006) theory of faith development was widely considered to be a critical component of the psychology of religion and student development. As stated previously, Fowler (1981) noted that faith was "an innate capacity present in humans from the time of birth" (p. 38). His faith development theory defines the importance that the social/interactive element plays in faith development:

Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual, and nurture. Faith is also shaped in initiatives from beyond us and other people, initiatives of spirit or grace. How these latter initiatives are recognized and imaged, or unperceived and ignored, powerfully affects the shape of faith in our lives. (1981, p. xiii)

Fowler's theory of faith development consists of six stages and they form an invariant sequence as each new stage integrates the functions of the previous stage (Chickering et al., 2006). Once again, this is similar to van Manen's (1990) notion that experiences become "a part of a system of contextually related experiences" (p. 37).

Fowler (1996) offers the following sequential stages of faith development:

- Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early Childhood)
- Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith (Middle Childhood and Beyond)
- Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescence and Beyond)
- Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young Adulthood and Beyond)
- Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith (Early Midlife and Beyond)

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith (Midlife and Beyond)

As it pertained to student and faith development, Stage 4 was significant to undergraduates involved in this study (Chickering et al., 2006). It was during this stage that undergraduates began to progress through firmly held faith beliefs established during earlier stages. The fourth stage enabled undergraduates to progress through critical reflection and compelled them to take the reality of conflicting views seriously. During this progression or flow undergraduates came to realize the relativity for the authority and content of faith traditions passed down to them (Wulff, 1993). As diversity experiences increased with individuals of diverse religious backgrounds, perceptions, values, and beliefs, undergraduates began to reassess their previous held values, beliefs and attitudes (Chang et al., 2004). The participants' descriptions described how this progression or flow ultimately led participants to take personal ownership of new faith beliefs and in some cases moved beyond faith beliefs established during earlier stages.

This outcome related to Parks' (2000) research which extends Fowler's (1981) work by proposing another stage of faith development between adolescent and adult. The stage, labeled young adult, included traditional undergraduates. In Parks' work, faith was a process of meaning making and discovering connections among experiences and events (Love, 2001). Parks asserted that this process of interacting levels resulted in undergraduates progressing from "seeing the world as ultimately knowable and certain, to seeing the world as complex, ambiguous, and not completely knowable" (p. 12). During this stage, undergraduates' own roles as authority emerged.

The participants' descriptions affirmed Fowler's (1981) Stage Four: Individuative-Reflective Faith and the need for Parks' (2000) Young Adult Stage.

Elizabeth, Linda, Everett, Estelle, and Amy confirmed that their diversity experiences caused them to reassess previously held beliefs as new roles of faith authority evolved for each of them. Elizabeth asserted, “That really challenged me because in some ways, it kind of made me doubt my faith, but in other ways it helped me to grow in my faith.” Amy stated, “I think it's made me take a different perspective on my faith, and like, know better why I believe what I believe . . . or for what reason.” Linda acknowledged how diversity interactions had caused faith development within her, “My faith in general has grown since I've been here because I am making it my faith and not my family's faith.” Everett's faith authority evolvment was similar in how he had grown to think beyond the values and beliefs that were handed down to him:

It has kind of broadened my horizons on it a little bit. I'm not necessarily in the little box that I've been raised in, which yes, I've been raised to respect diversity, but at the same time, we still always worship in the same way, and always, just...you have your own way of doing things. Your family's way of doing things, and coming here, I've been able to see and learn a lot of different ways of doing things that I've learned are not bad, it's just not the same way that I've always done it.

Estelle was even more passionate regarding how diversity experiences had caused her to reassess her faith and discover a deeper commitment to her faith:

That experience led up to being able to have a real relationship with Christ, and now I'm daily working on that relationship. That experience made me realize that I was just, you know, living. You know, going to church on Sunday, the typical story. You go to church with your parents on Sunday morning, you know, blah

blah blah, but you don't really care and you don't really have a heart for Christ, and you don't really pray and you don't really read your Bible, and stuff. And like, after that summer, it was just like, this is what I want, you know? This is what I want.

Durka (2004) noted that these interactions and conversations regarding faith issues are essential exercises in “reaching relatively adequate knowledge . . . and creating an openness to mutual transformation” (p. 425). However, the participants’ descriptions made evident the fact that “reaching relatively adequate knowledge” was not a simple process. Elizabeth’s religious diversity experiences had caused such dissonance in her life that she was “struggling with my faith” and didn’t “know what to believe.” She noted that this was a difficult time in her life. In fact, the inner angst was so fresh during the interview that we needed to pause long enough for her to gather her emotions.

Matthew’s negative racial/ethnic diversity experience “in the valley” was one that shook him to the core of who he was. He noted, “That experience, I took it really hard, and that was sort of not a good phase in my being here at college, because I sort of lost trust in a lot of things.” This was an experience he could not let go of and even questioned dropping out of Cranston. Ultimately it caused him to question his perceptions of himself and others, “There are a lot of things in my life that I've had to deal with when it came to um, how I viewed other people, and how I believed other people viewed me.” Both Elizabeth and Matthew had support systems that enabled them to process through these difficult times.

Although Amy experienced much the same inner struggles that Elizabeth and Matthew did, an important component of her critical thinking process was a mentor with

whom she engaged while at Cranston. This person gave her someone to bounce new ideas off of and process critical issues she was inwardly wrestling with. Issues like, “How do I reconcile that with my own personal faith, or with who I think God is in my life?” This step of securing a mentor was a significant event for her.

It is probably important that this support system not be taken for granted. Pearce (2006) asserted that students need assistance in learning how to best interact with people from different backgrounds and to discuss issues related to faith and belief. If these interactions are sensitively and knowledgeably handled, these encounters can be powerful opportunities for learning and development. Universities cannot assume these types of support systems exist for undergraduates and that these situations will always be handled sensitively and knowledgeably. Pearce (2006) noted the importance of creating these types of support venues for extended dialogue to take place between student and teacher.

As this section concludes, it is important to return to Chang et al.’s (2004) assertion that certain aspects of growth as a human being may not be realized unless that person is around groups of people that differ from him or herself. In regards to student and faith development, Matthew, Jacob, and Amy’s descriptions noted the significant growth as human beings that the diversity experiences produced within them. In doing so, they spoke for many participants’ who also described this type of significant inner growth. Matthew described a time “during the summer, I got to go home, and people realized I was different. I don't really know how it was different, but I had developed a different outlook, I had changed without even realizing it.” He “had learned to tolerate other views, other people's positions.” As Matthew reflected more deeply regarding this

personal growth and change regarding faith and diversity experiences, he commented about his growing concern for others:

I can't really say specifically in what areas I've changed, but my whole life has sort of been turned upside down and it's just a whole different outlook on life. And just having a multi-faceted outlook on life, and not just this is the way, and this is what I believe in, but what do other people believe in? How does that help me? How do we build each other based on our differences, and also based on our similarities? How do we help each other out?

Jacob spoke to his personal growth and maturity as a result of his experiences with diversity:

I've grown more as a person and I even talk to some of the guys that I was friends with back in Gary and I could see their perception of the world has not changed, I don't see any growth or maturity. I mean yeah, they've grown and matured, but I've outgrown and out-matured them. And there are a lot of falsehoods that you are told as far as, you stick with one group. You begin to believe things that are not necessarily true. There are a lot of misconceptions. Um , and as far as moving out beyond that, I've grown and I feel like I know a lot more and I'm better able to interact and cope with the world as it is today.

Amy acknowledged the personal growth that takes place when she moved outside her comfort zone and confronted the scary and different world of diversity experiences:

When I push myself out of my comfort zone, I see that there's growth that happens, and I see that I always find something new. Whether it's just like a new relationship I've built, or just a really cool interaction that I've had with someone,

or um, I don't know. I think it's hard to see the value of that when you're not in it, because it's scary or it's different, but I think I'm still learning how important that is, I mean, just in general, to put yourself out of your comfort zone. And just to be sort of proactive about it, not to let opportunities come to you, but to go out and find them.

The insights shared by the participants leave little doubt about the student and faith development that the benefits of diversity experiences have produced in these undergraduates' educational and personal lives. However, to truly understand the depth and meaning of the personal growth that has taken place within the lives of the participants, it was almost a necessity to be in the interview room as participant after participant described personal transformation through deep reflection and rich description. There were moments when the contributors' words did not adequately define the sense of passion expressed regarding the transformation that had taken place in these undergraduates' lives as a result of their diversity experiences.

Practical Implications of the Findings

This phenomenological study explored the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. The practical implications of the findings are significant because the demographics of American higher education are changing (Ryu, 2009) and because diversity is a defining issue of our time, as noted by Macedo (2000). The research made clear the benefits of a diversified campus are far reaching in a student's educational life (Banks, 2009). Furthermore, certain aspects of growth as a human being may not be realized unless students are around groups of people that differ from themselves (Chang et al., 2004).

By phenomenologically studying the experiences of some undergraduates, their descriptions highlighted five emergent themes: types of diversity experiences, forms of diversity experiences, influence of previous context, benefits of diversity experiences, and faith issues regarding diversity experiences. Those themes were utilized to investigate van Manen's (1990) notion that "phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience" (p. 79). He asserted that in analyzing the themes in such a manner, the intent was to determine the experiential structures that make up the essence of that experience. The examination of the participants' descriptions received in this study resulted in an exploration of how a progression or flow of the themes worked within a system of contextually related experiences to help bring about benefits of student and faith development within the participants' educational lives.

The progression began when forms of diversity experiences enabled different types of diversity experiences to take place in the participants' lives. In turn, the dynamics created within those types of diversity experiences instigated critical reflection of the participants' previous context and previously held beliefs and values. This process of reflection/critical thinking enabled personal reassessment/transformation to take place as the benefits of diversity experiences produced life change within the undergraduates' lives. In sum, the progression or theme flow of diversity experiences within the undergraduates' educational lives enabled significant individual student and faith development to take place.

The practical implications of the findings are significant because as Umbach and Kuh (2006) noted, "We are only beginning to understand the relationship between diversity and student experiences while in college" (p. 169). While at the same time,

Umbach and Kuh noted, “We know very little about the factors and institutional conditions that promote and enhance students’ experiences with diversity” (p. 171). This study was conducted to fill that gap. Because research tended to focus on the benefits of diversity (Umbach & Milem, 2004), the problem addressed in this phenomenological study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. As a result, the study determined themes regarding the factors and conditions of students’ diversity experiences.

As previously stated, those themes were utilized to investigate van Manen’s (1990) notion that “phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience” (p. 79). In doing so, the study investigated the experiential structures that make up the essence of the participants’ experiences. The findings resulted in an exploration of how a progression or flow of the themes worked within a system of contextually related experiences to help bring about the benefits of student and faith development within the participants’ educational lives.

It is readily noted that this is not a definitive progression or flow of themes that describes the essence of all undergraduates’ diversity experiences within their educational lives. However, as van Manen (1990) noted it is “a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience” (p. 41); that experience being the diversity experiences of some undergraduates on the private, religiously-affiliated university utilized for this study. In establishing this progression or flow of themes, this was an attempt to be rationalistic in order to “make things understandable ” (p. 16) and to enable the essence of the participants’ diversity experiences to “be made intelligible” (p. 16). The notions of granting understanding and being made intelligible are important concepts regarding the

practical implications of the findings. van Manen noted that phenomenology does not offer us an effective theory that can explain or control an experience. Rather, it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with that experience. Hopefully, in offering the progression and flow of themes the findings have been made more understandable and intelligible.

To assist in the understanding, imagine if you will that the progression or flow of themes utilized in this study be conceptualized as the flow of a river. The flow and boundaries of the river are never static or constant. The river is given to change as the conditions around and within it change. The same can be said for the essence of these undergraduates' diversity experiences described through phenomenology. These experiences can never be controlled or explained in a completely adequate manner for they also are never static or constant. However, if they can be described in a manner that gives us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with those experiences, then we can somewhat navigate through the progression of those experiences as a barge Captain does a river. In terms of practical implications, this means that by following the progression or flow of themes, educators can hopefully navigate towards certain outcomes.

If certain types of diversity experiences are desired by a university then a positive structural diversity will need to be worked towards to offer more possibilities for that specific type of diversity experience to take place. If racial/ethnic diversity experiences are desired in a curricular/co-curricular form, then programmatic efforts that expose students to content about that particular diversity issue will need to be designed and facilitated by a professional who is experienced in multicultural pedagogy. If educators

are aware of the angst and dissonance created within some undergraduates through diversity experiences, then dialogue sessions or mentoring programs can be created to help students process through their inner turmoil. If student life professionals are aware of the culture shock that international students endure through experiencing overt racism within their lives, then preemptive counseling can be provided to help them navigate through the anger and disillusionment.

There are other groups, such as para-church organizations involved on a like campus, which could also follow the progression or flow of themes to navigate towards certain outcomes regarding positive racial/ethnic and religious diversity experiences. Multiple para-church organizations work toward the goals of racial reconciliation and faith development. As these organizations become aware of the progression or flow of themes, they could build their ministries around small groups defined by a high percentage of structural diversity. This positive racial/ethnic and religious diversity would multiply the opportunities for diversity experiences to take place in the undergraduates' lives. These experiences would enable critical thinking to take place as participants reflect upon their past and present context. As undergraduates in the small groups move toward the positive outcomes of student and faith development, the goals of racial reconciliation and faith development would also be enhanced.

The examples of practical implications are many. However, embracing van Manen's (1990) concept of themes defining the structure of experiences may allow the progression or flow of themes to provide the possibility for colleges/universities to chart an intentional course along a progression directed towards achieving the positive benefits that diversity experiences can bring to undergraduates' during their college years. Will

each course be pinpoint in its accuracy of outcomes and will each charted course be the same for every institution? The answer to both questions is, no. The channels and sand bars of the river are given to change just as affiliated universities possess distinct mission statements and declaration of principles (Bernasconi, 2006) that will call for different courses to be charted. However, there are ports and landmarks along the way that stay fairly constant in their positioning and description of what to look for. It is hoped this progression and flow of themes can provide the possibility of charting productive courses for colleges/universities interested in the essence of diversity experiences and the benefits they can produce.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

All participants in this study referred back to their previous context before attending Cranston. Saenz's (2005) research asserted that pre-college racial environments and experiences do have substantial perpetuation effects on college diversity outcomes regarding cross-racial interactions and students' attitudes about racial discrimination. Saenz also noted how the diverse university settings and undergraduates' diversity experiences significantly interrupt these perpetuation effects. The participants' descriptions affirmed that previous context had substantial perpetuation effects on different types of diversity experiences; not just racial/ethnic. Additional studies might illustrate how to utilize pre-college backgrounds as strong predictors within positive diversity interactions. In doing so, studies might also illustrate how undergraduates' pre-college values and conceptions can enable or hinder early college intergroup interactions (Saenz et al., 2007).

Hockman's (2009) research asserted that as our nation's demographics continue to change, our preparation of teachers to work with diverse students becomes an important challenge to address. Multiple participants described how their professors were positive or negative conduits of diversity interactions and dialogue within the classroom. Additional studies might focus on how institutions could implement faculty development programs for the training of faculty with the skills needed to partner with students and understand different cultural ways of knowing (Baldwin et al., 2007; Lanier, 2001). These skills could enable teachers to understand the synergy and tension that take place when diversity dialogue occurs and as a means of improving teachers' cross-cultural sensitivity and effectiveness. Additional studies might be a part of a larger investigation into the professional, emotional, and physical demands of teaching diversity-education courses (Perry et al., 2009).

In regards to recommendations for practice, the component of continuing dialogue groups could be utilized by some version of Student Affairs on a like campus. The creation of diversity dialogue groups could become an intentional, on-going component of how greater racial/ethnic and religious diversity is pursued. Research indicated that synergy takes place when dialogue occurs between the parties involved in diversity experiences (Baldwin et al., 2007; Lanier, 2001). These groups could be facilitated by faculty and administrators who had participated in cross-cultural development workshops to increase their awareness and sensitivity regarding diversity issues. In doing so, Student Affairs would maximize the reality that when students are allowed to process the information received during diversity experiences the benefits for those undergraduates and the campus as a whole can be exceptional.

Astin's (2004) research noted an imbalance between exterior and interior aspects of students' lives. While society has made recent advancements in external areas such as technology, business, medicine, and science; internal concerns such as values, emotional maturity, and self-understanding have been left behind. Astin's concern was that if these trends continue to develop, students will feel fragmented and less holistic education will occur. Parks' (2000) research suggested extending Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development by proposing an additional stage titled the young adult phase. Parks suggested it is during this stage that the interior aspect of students' "transitions from seeing the world as ultimately knowable and certain, to seeing the world as complex, ambiguous, and not completely knowable" (p. 12). During this time, the interior aspect of undergraduates' lives begins to develop as their own roles of authority emerge. Many participants' descriptions affirmed the effect that diversity experiences had upon the interior aspects of their lives. Additional studies could benefit the holistic education of students by illustrating how the aspects of values and faith could work towards the interior goals of know thyself and the common good; which in turn would hopefully bring about less fragmentation in undergraduates' lives.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. Sixteen undergraduates from a Midwestern private, religiously affiliated university were interviewed and described their diversity experiences. The key components of their experiences revealed five categories: Types of diversity experiences, forms of diversity experiences, influence of previous context, benefits of diversity experiences, and faith

issues regarding diversity experiences. Upon further reflection and analysis, the participants' descriptions revealed a progression or flow of four emergent themes: forms of diversity experiences, types of diversity experiences, critical reflection of past and present, and student and faith development. These over-arching themes were viewed through van Manen's (1990) notion that phenomenological themes may be defined as the structures of experience. This examination of a progression or flow of the themes explained how the following progression or flow worked within a system of contextually related experiences to help bring about benefits of student and faith development within the participants' educational lives.

The progression began when forms of diversity experiences enabled different types of diversity experiences to take place in the undergraduates' lives. In turn, the dynamics created within those types of diversity experiences instigated critical reflection of the participants' previous context and previously held beliefs and values. This process of reflection/critical thinking enabled personal reassessment/transformation to take place as the benefits of diversity experiences produced life change within the undergraduates' lives. In sum, the progression or theme flow enabled significant individual student and faith development to take place as a result of diversity experiences within the undergraduates' educational lives.

It should also be noted that a specific limitations section was not included in this study. This lack of action was due to the fact that phenomenology is ultimately concerned with learning about the nature, or essence, of particular, everyday experiences in people's lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005) and not in making its findings generalizable. However,

it can be noted that because of the small sample group and the single institution utilized generalizability would have been limited.

At the beginning of this section, it was stated that the purpose of this study was to explore the essence of diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university. In hindsight it has accomplished much more. As I look back over my life, I am acutely aware that Kuh (2003) was right when he noted that the very act of experiencing diversity during the college years enables students to develop habits that will influence decisions of the mind and heart long after their college experiences end.

This insight has held true in my own life. My subjectivities statement noted that the diversity engagements that I experienced over thirty years ago are still influencing and shaping my life today. As I interviewed these 16 undergraduates, I was moved deeply as I saw a part of myself in each of their stories and descriptions. Their descriptions echoed feelings of my undergraduate experiences as I wrestled with the different dichotomies of past and present context. Old truths and passed down biases were overruled by the new truths and insights that current interactions and relationships brought into my life and heart. The same was taking place in the lives of these participants and their new found freedom of discovery was evident in their individual choice of words and stories.

In addition, I could sense their angst and disillusionment as their faith was stretched beyond the comfort zone of the status quo. As I looked into their eyes and listened carefully to their words, I remembered a time ago when a deeper faith beckoned me out of the shallow water I had resided in so long. As many of them described their

experiences, my heart would resonate with theirs as I understood the courage and strength it takes to let go of that which is safe, and swim towards that which less is known.

Yet, this is the place and the process that brings about true inner transformation. I am not the same person I was when I entered college over thirty years ago. Because of diversity experiences my life has charted a different course than it would have. I pray that course has been for the better. After completing this study, I believe the same will be true for the participants involved in it. Because of diversity experiences, their current beliefs and values are not the same as they previously were. It is my hope that these different values and beliefs will make Kuh's (2003) words prophetic and will influence the decisions of their minds and hearts long after their college experiences end. It is also my hope that this study and its progression of themes will enable more of those types of diversity experiences to take place on private, religiously-affiliated campuses so that greater life change and transformation can happen in the lives of undergraduates, influencing them for a lifetime.

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APPENDIX

Semi-structured Interview Questions
Informed Consent Form
IRB Introductory Letter
IRB Email Script
IRB Approval Letter
Cranston University Mission Statement
Cranston University Approval Letter
List of 132 Codes
Reduced List of 97 Codes

Semi-structured Interview Questions:

Question 1: Describe an experience when you became aware of diversity on this campus?

Question 2: How did that experience influence you regarding diversity?

Question 3: What made that experience influential?

Question 4: Did a person/persons influence that experience?

Question 5: How did that experience influence your conception of diversity?

Question 6: How has your faith influenced your experience of diversity?

Question 7: Can you think of a second experience? (Repeat questions 1-6)

Question 8: Is there anything else you would like to say regarding experiences of diversity?

Informed Consent Form

Study Title Exploring the diversity experiences of undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university.

Study Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study is to explore the diversity experiences of some undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The only criterion is that subjects be undergraduate students currently enrolled in a single private, religiously-affiliated university.

Participation Procedures and Duration

For this project, you will be asked to complete a semi-structured interview in which you will be asked a variety of questions regarding your experiences of diversity at a private, religiously-affiliated college. The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete.

Audio or Video Tapes

For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped. Any names used on the audiotape will be changed to pseudonyms when the tapes are transcribed. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office indefinitely.

Data Confidentiality or Anonymity

Confidentiality will be secured in the transcription process and in any subsequent submission of the findings by using pseudonyms in place of the participants' real names, their university and the names of any other persons mentioned in the interview. Only the Researcher and the Faculty Supervisor will have access to the raw data. After member-checks and final correspondence have been completed, personal identifying information (real name, email address, etc.) will be removed and all data will corresponded only to the pseudonyms. These coding documents will be destroyed by shredding. The findings will be used for the development of manuscripts for publishing and conference presentations and will be shared with colleagues in a classroom setting.

Storage of Data

All paper representation of the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Researcher's home, and all the electronic data files will be password protected on the Researcher's personal computer indefinitely. Only the Researcher and the Faculty Supervisor will have access to the raw data.

Risks or Discomforts

There is no foreseeable risk for this study.

Who to Contact Should You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study

Although the Researcher foresees little or no risk of discomfort for the participants in this research, in the event that a participant experiences some form of emotional discomfort, the Researcher will refer that person to the counseling center at Ball State University at 765 285-1736.

Benefits

Your participation will enable society to benefit from this study by the creation and dissemination of new knowledge regarding the perceptions of some college students currently enrolled at a private, religiously-affiliated university, and the implications it may have for improving the university community.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs Office, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

Consent

I, _____, agree to participate in this research project entitled, "Exploring the diversity experiences of undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher Contact Information

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IRB Introductory Letter

Dear Respondent,

This letter is to provide you the opportunity to participate in a research project I will be conducting in 2010. The title of the project is “Exploring the diversity experiences of undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university.” The purpose of this study is to explore the diversity experiences of some undergraduate students on a private, religiously-affiliated university.

If you choose to be involved in the study, I will need to meet with you at a mutually convenient site for an interview which will last between 45 to 60 minutes. During the semi-structured interview, you will be asked a variety of questions regarding your perceptions of diversity at a private, religiously-affiliated college. The interviews will be tape-recorded using an audio recorder for accuracy and interpretive credibility.

Your confidentiality will be secured in the process and in any subsequent submission of the findings by using pseudonyms in place of the participants’ real names, their university and the names of any other persons mentioned in the interview. The findings will be used for the development of manuscripts for publishing and conference presentations and will be shared with colleagues in a classroom setting.

Prior to beginning the interview, I will review the Informed Consent Form (please see the attached) and secure the appropriate agreements/signatures. It will be emphasized that you are free to discontinue participation at any time, for any reason, without prejudice from the investigator. A copy of the agreement will be retained by both of us. There is no foreseeable risk for this study.

It is my belief that society will benefit from this study by the creation and dissemination of new knowledge regarding the diversity experiences of some undergraduates currently enrolled at a private, religiously-affiliated university, and the implications it may have for improving the university community. I hope you will agree to be a part. If you have any questions regarding the research project, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs Office, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

Sincerely yours,

Rolland E. Daniels

IRB Email Script

Dear Respondent,

This email is to provide you the opportunity to participate in a research project I will be conducting in 2010. The title of the project is “Exploring the diversity experiences of undergraduates regarding the concept of diversity on a private, religiously-affiliated university.” The purpose of this study is to explore the diversity experiences of some undergraduate students regarding the concept of diversity on a private, religiously-affiliated university.

If you choose to be involved in the study, I will need to meet with you at a mutually convenient site for an interview which will last between 45 to 60 minutes. During the semi-structured interview, you will be asked a variety of questions regarding your perceptions of diversity at a private, religiously-affiliated college. The interviews will be tape-recorded using an audio recorder for accuracy and interpretive credibility.

Your confidentiality will be secured in the process and in any subsequent submission of the findings by using pseudonyms in place of the participants’ real names, their university and the names of any other persons mentioned in the interview. The findings will be used for the development of manuscripts for publishing and conference presentations and will be shared with colleagues in a classroom setting.

Prior to beginning the interview, I will review the Informed Consent Form (please see the attached) and secure the appropriate agreements/signatures. It will be emphasized that you are free to discontinue participation at any time, for any reason, without prejudice from the investigator. A copy of the agreement will be retained by both of us. There is no foreseeable risk for this study.

It is my belief that society will benefit from this study by the creation and dissemination of new knowledge regarding the experiences of some undergraduates currently enrolled at a private, religiously-affiliated university, and the implications it may have for improving the university community. I hope you will agree to be a part. If you have any questions regarding the research project, you may contact the following:

Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs Office, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306,
(765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

Sincerely yours,

Rolland E. Daniels

IRB Approval Letter

DATE: October 14, 2009
TO: Rolland Daniels, Masters
FROM: Ball State University IRB
RE: IRB protocol # 135090-2

TITLE: Exploring the diversity experiences of undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university.

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED

DECISION DATE: October 14, 2009

EXPIRATION DATE: October 13, 2010

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

The Institutional Review Board has approved your Revision for the above protocol, effective October 14, 2009 through October 13, 2010. All research under this protocol must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission.

As a reminder, it is the responsibility of the P.I. and/or faculty sponsor to inform the IRB in a timely manner:

- when the project is completed,
- if the project is to be continued beyond the approved end date,
- if the project is to be modified,
- if the project encounters problems, or
- if the project is discontinued.

Any of the above notifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>). Please reference the IRB protocol number given above in any communication to the IRB regarding this project. Be sure to allow sufficient time for review and approval of requests for modification or continuation. If you have questions, please contact Amy Boos at (765) 285-5034 or akboos@bsu.edu.

CRANSTON UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Cranston University is to educate for a life of faith and service in the church and society. Established and sustained within the free and open traditions of the founding denomination, the university is committed to being a teaching-learning community of the highest order; engaged in the pursuit of truth from a Christian faith perspective. Through academic and Christian discovery, we intend to graduate people with a global perspective who are competent, caring, creative, generous individuals of character and potential. We will build those quality programs that will enable each member of the university to become stronger in body, mind, and spirit, to experience what it means to love God and neighbor, and to adopt Christ-like servant ways in all of life. (All information retrieved November 28, 2009 from <http://www.cranston.edu/>)

Cranston University Approval Letter

From: Lee Griffith [glg@cranston.edu]
Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2009 5:05 PM
To: Rolland Daniels
Subject: Proposal Approved

Reverend Daniels,

I am pleased to inform you that your proposed research on "Exploring the diversity experiences of undergraduates on a private, religiously-affiliated university" has been approved.

If there are changes to your design or approach these would need to be approved by the committee.

I wish you the best of success in your research.

For the Human Research Participant's Committee
G. Lee Griffith, Ph. D.

Dr. G.
glg@cranston.edu
765 641 4474

List of 132 Codes

10:07 worship	Accepting	AE Africa
Art department	Arts	Athletics
Baseball team	Better relate to people	Beyond parents
Bible Class	Bible Studies	Black guys in trouble
Broaden my horizons	Bubble	Building trust
Change how I think	Change stereotypes	Chapel
Christian school	Class conversations	Classroom
Close-minded	Comfort Zone	Connected
Curricular	Dad	Differences
Different beliefs	Different Perspectives	Different perspectives
Different values	Dorm	Equal
Equality	Equally	Faith development
Faith gives strength to persevere		Faith influenced me
Family influence	Feel a part of campus	Floor bible studies
Football team	Friendships	Global
God has shown me that people aren't what we think		
God loves everyone	God made them	Gospel Choir
Grow into myself	Growth and maturity	Hebrew and Old Testament Class
High school	Homogeneous community	Informal interactions
Informal small groups	Informal worship	International Students
Jesus taught us	Judge people	Learn about culture and countries
Learn about different world		Learn about others
Love others	Love unconditionally	Love your neighbor
Majors	Media	Melting Pot
Mentor	Mom	Multicultural dinner
Multicultural Student Association		My faith
Narrow minded	Negative chapel	Negative diversity experience
New aspects of life	New outlook	New perspectives
Open to different world		Open to new people
Open-minded	Openness	Openness to listen
Orientation	Outside comfort zone	Outside my bubble
Overcome mindsets	Own my faith	Parents told me
People who are different		Perceptions
Personal Growth	Personal maturity	Preconceived ideas
Predominantly white	Prejudices	Previous beliefs
Professor did a great job of facilitating		Psychology Class
Purpose	Race Ethnicity Class	Racism
Real world	Relationship with someone	Religious diversity
Respect	Room to grow	Roommate
See people differently	Segregated	Sheltered
Soccer team	Social Clubs	Step out of norm
Stepping out of norm	Stereotypes	Stereotypes of African Americans
Stories	Story	Structural

Support systems	Take time to know	Talk out differences
Trip home with a friend	Uncomfortable	Uneasy
What I believe	What should I believe	Why should I believe
Workplace	Worship	

Reduced List of 97 Codes

10:07 worship	Accepting	AE Africa
Art department	Athletics	Better relate to people
Beyond parents	Bible Studies	Black guys in trouble
Broaden my horizons	Building trust	Change how I think
Change stereotypes	Chapel	Christian school
Classroom	Close-minded	Comfort Zone
Connected	Curricular	Differences
Different Perspectives	Different values	Dorm
Equality	Equally	Faith development
Faith gives strength to persevere		Faith influenced me
Family influence	Friendships	Global
God has shown me that people aren't what we think		
God loves everyone	Gospel Choir	Grow into myself
Growth and maturity	Hebrew and Old Testament Class	
High school	Homogeneous community	Informal interactions
Informal worship	International Students	Judge people
Learn about culture and countries		Learn about different world
Love unconditionally	Love your neighbor	Majors
Media	Melting Pot	Mentor
Multicultural dinner	Multicultural Student Association	
My faith	Narrow minded	Negative diversity experience
New perspectives	Open to new people	Open-minded
Openness	Orientation	Outside comfort zone
Own my faith	Parents told me	People who are different
Perceptions	Personal Growth	Personal maturity
Preconceived ideas	Predominantly white	Prejudices
Previous beliefs	Professor did a great job of facilitating	
Purpose	Race Ethnicity Class	Racism
Real world	Religious diversity	Respect
Roommate	See people differently	Segregated
Sheltered	Social Clubs	Step out of norm
Stereotypes	Stories	Structural
Support systems	Take time to know	Talk out differences
Trip home with a friend	Uncomfortable	What I believe
Workplace	Worship	