"Man, This Is Hard": A Case Study of How Race and Religion Affect Cross-Racial Interaction for Black Students

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During the Supreme Court affirmative action cases of Grutter and Gratz, the University of Michigan marshaled an array of quantitative studies that pointed to the benefits of student engagement in a racially diverse student body (Gurin, Dey, Gurin, & Hurtado, 2004). Such benefits include critical thinking (antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin, Milem, 2004), civic mindedness (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004), and overall satisfaction with college (Tanaka, 2003). In this line of diversity research, in order to understand how students’ background characteristics affect cross-racial interaction and other outcomes linked to diversity, researchers usually either control for students’ race/ethnicity or analyze racial/ethnic groups separately to identify whether various experiences or institutional characteristics linked to diversity are significantly related to the outcome of interest (Carter & Hurtado, 2007).
At times researchers control for interaction effects to examine whether a particular effect is associated with being, for instance, a low-income Latino/a student.

While such analyses are well suited for charting broad patterns in large datasets, the reductionist nature of quantitative research is less able to capture the nuances, complexities, and variation related to students’ experiences with diversity (Baez, 2004). One such nuance is the way that students’ multiple identities influence their experiences with diversity and cross-racial interaction. Several studies highlight how students manage intersections between the multiple components of their identities such as race, gender, social class, and sexual orientation (Harris, 2010; Jones, 2009; Patton & McClure, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). These studies help us understand some of the fluidity and complexity of students’ identities, and a persistent finding is that students often face multiple forms of marginalization as a result of intersecting forms of oppression. Depending on the context, certain students may be privileged due to one aspect of their identity but may simultaneously experience marginalization due to another. Smith (2009) noted: “Current research suggests that, rather than downplaying identity, a more powerful strategy for society and institutions would be to build on the multiplicities of identities and allow individuals to look at the similarities and differences across them” (p. 37). However, we know little about how the different components of students’ identities affect their efforts to interact across race.

The purpose of this study is to examine how the intersection between two identity categories—race and religion—affect Black students’ experiences with cross-racial interaction in a multiethnic1 campus organization, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) at California University (CU) (pseudonym). While this article addresses identity, its focus is less on students’ actual identity development or identity management, although findings may have implications for these areas of study. Instead, I use the case of IVCF to show how the multidimensionality of students’ identities affect their experiences with cross-racial interaction and diversity in a particular context, challenging campus educators to consider how intersectionality affects cross-racial interaction in other environments. I set the context for this study by addressing the campus climate for Black students at traditionally White institutions (TWIs) and its implications for cross-racial interaction. I

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1Generally I use “multiethnic” instead of “multiracial” to recognize the ethnic heterogeneity in the group, particularly among the different Asian American and Latino/a ethnic groups represented in the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) at California University. I also use the term to distinguish IVCF from predominantly Black co-curricular settings. I use “subculture” to describe the IVCF community as one of many communities existing within the broader California University community.
then address conditions that affect diversity in friendship groups and racial
dynamics in campus religious organizations.

**BACKGROUND**

*Campus Racial Climate for Black Students*

Numerous sources document the challenging climate that Black students
often encounter at traditionally White institutions (TWIs). Facing major
barriers to accessing higher education, Black students made up 13.1% of
undergraduates in 2005 but much smaller concentrations exist at many
TWIs, in part because many Black students attend historically Black colleges
and universities (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2007). Still, because of the
credentials that attending an elite institution provides and the educational
benefits associated with racial diversity, higher education leaders have stressed
the importance of Black student enrollment at prestigious and selective TWIs
(Bowen & Bok, 2000).

Despite this professed commitment to diversity, researchers report that
Black students find that TWIs can be unsupportive and unresponsive to their
needs (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Winkle-Wagner,
2009). Faced with a hostile campus climate, Black students tend to be less
satisfied with the diversity status of such institutions (Park, 2009; Solorzano,
Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). These difficult conditions often stem from stereotypes
or assumptions that non-Black students and faculty have about Black stu-
dents, and many challenges hamper the nurturing of positive cross-racial
interaction and friendships on campus. Research has highlighted the high
psychological cost that Black students pay to pursue an education in such
hostile environments, including alienation and racial microaggressions (Loo
& Rolison, 1986; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

The difficult racial climate that Black students often encounter inside and
outside of the classroom is a major barrier toward promoting healthy cross-
racial interaction. Accordingly, Black students may create “counter-spaces” or
safe spaces where they can socialize with same-race peers who are encounter-
ing similar challenges (Duster, 1991; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Some
argue that this dynamic results in pervasive self-segregation, which further
impedes efforts to bridge racial divides on campus (Lipsky-Karasz, 2003;
Mincer, 2005). However, some studies have found that Whites—in particu-
lar, affluent Whites—are actually more likely to have racially homogeneous
friendship groups (Aries, 2008; Espenshade & Radford, 2009). Both of these
studies found that Black students were more likely to have close friendships
with students of another race than White students.

These findings complicate our understanding of Black student experiences
at TWIs. On one hand, as much of the literature documents, Black students
often experience a psychologically taxing environment, marked both by explicit racial offenses and more subtle racial microaggressions. Still, Black students have higher rates of cross-racial interaction and interracial friendship than White students. Certainly the two trends—a difficult environment and interracial friendship—are not mutually exclusive, but understanding their apparent coexistence necessitates inquiry on cross-racial interaction for Black students and how these experiences are shaped not only by race, but also by other facets of students’ identities. One insight into this dynamic is that interracial contact in college tends to come from casual socializing and relationships formed due to having a roommate of another race rather than close interracial friendships (Espenshade & Radford, 2009). The next section outlines some reasons behind this dynamic.

**Diversity in Friendship Groups: More Than Choice**

One challenge to promoting meaningful cross-racial interaction and interracial friendship is that, by and large, social relationships that are based on voluntary associations tend to flourish along lines of similarity, the most dominant of which is race and/or ethnicity (Blau & Schwartz, 1984; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). The term “homophily” explains this phenomenon of “likes attract likes;” individuals generally divide along racial lines because race is what Blau and Schwartz (1984) call a “consolidated” characteristic. Because background traits such as religion, income, and residential background are highly correlated with race, people who share a racial background often share other social attributes. A degree of personal agency influences the formation of friendship networks, and students may deliberately seek out environments that are more or less diverse (antonio, 2004). However, beyond individuals’ intentional or unintentional decisions to have a racially homogeneous or heterogeneous friendship group, social forces such as homophily and propinquity affect friendship group diversity.

Propinquity describes how the proximity between people influences the likelihood of their forming a relationship (Sigelman & Welch, 1993). Accordingly, friendship groups often reflect the demography of the environment where an individual spends most of his or her time. Propinquity explains why structural diversity—the racial composition of the institution—plays an essential role in supporting cross-racial interaction and interracial friendship during college because such interactions are literally impossible without the availability of diverse peers (Blau & Schwartz, 1984). Structural diversity is a significant predictor of having a close friend of another race during college, even when controlling for pre-college interracial friendship (Fischer, 2008; Park, 2012). Structural diversity also matters because the lack of a critical mass of students of color can result in tokenization and marginalization, contributing to the likelihood that the cross-racial interactions that do occur
in the college environment will be of a more negative nature (Kanter, 1977; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998).

Due to propinquity, not only does the structural diversity of an institution matter, but so does the racial composition of student subcultures that exist within the student body. As Antonio (1998) notes in his discussion of propinquity, student engagement in racially homogeneous environments often results in friendship groups that are racially homogeneous. Such environments discourage the formation of deep and meaningful friendships across race because there are fewer opportunities for cross-racial interaction, let alone friendship. For instance, student subcultures such as fraternities and sororities tend to be racially homogeneous (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005); and because of the intense social commitments that these groups demand, such communities likely limit the opportunities that students have to form friendships across race.

Campus Fellowships: Divided by Race

Campus religious organizations are another subculture of the university that may limit cross-racial interaction and friendship, particularly in the case of campus fellowships, the name commonly used to reference Christian campus groups. These groups may seem like a strange environment in which to probe the dynamics of diversity. Unlike fraternities and sororities, notorious for perpetuating racial division on the college campus, campus fellowships have gone under the radar regarding diversity. However, multiple studies indicate that the majority of campus fellowships tend to be racially and/or ethnically homogeneous at TWIs, both for groups of White students (Bramadat, 2000; Bryant, 2004; Kim, 2006; Magolda & Ebben Gross, 2009) and Asian American students (Abelmann, 2009; Kim, 2006). Most American religious institutions are similarly homogeneous in composition; Emerson and Chai Kim (2003) document that fewer than 10% of American churches can be classified as racially heterogeneous.

These persistent racial divisions can be traced back to White Christianity’s role in promoting racial segregation (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Over time, overtly racist practices gave way to the use of more color-blind language by Christians (Hawkins, 2009); however, White Christians and Black Christians generally have drastically different viewpoints on issues of racial inequality, and the two groups generally worship in separate congregations despite sharing a common faith (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Thus, when religion arrives on a campus with a history of perpetuating racial divisions, it is perhaps not surprising that most campus fellowships are racially and/or ethnically homogeneous communities, which likely limit students’ opportunities for cross-racial interaction and friendship (Park, 2012). In an analysis of a national longitudinal dataset, Park (2012) found that students who were
more religious and who participated in campus religious organizations were significantly less likely to have close friends of other races during college.

Although multiracial churches are few and far between, some studies address congregations that have managed to cross racial lines and unite by faith. These congregations encountered a myriad of challenges in negotiating the complexities of race and ethnicity (Edwards, 2008; Garces-Foley, 2007). Such studies suggest that multiethnic campus fellowships are possible but that such groups require a high level of sacrifice from members who are not a part of the group’s dominant culture because they must pay a disproportionate cost to stay in the group (Christerson & Emerson, 2003). This dynamic further explains why groups like churches and campus fellowships based on voluntary associations are usually racially homogeneous: Diversity has real costs; and more often than not, when individuals have more comfortable options, they will congregate with others who share a common racial/ethnic background due to homophily (Kim, 2006; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Park, 2011). While numerous studies point to the significance of religion and spirituality for students of all races and ethnicities (Bryant, 2011; Kim, 2006; Magolda & Ebben Gross, 2009; Patton & McClure, 2009), the question remains whether a common religious identity can unite students on college campuses across racial divides.

Overall, these three groups of studies set the backdrop for the current study. To summarize, due to low structural diversity and a difficult campus racial climate, TWIs are often unwelcoming environments to Black students, and these dynamics discourage meaningful cross-racial interaction and interracial friendship. Propinquity affects friendship group diversity by influencing the likelihood that individuals will have the opportunity to befriend one another, and the formation of racially diverse student subcultures and interracial friendships is contingent on a racially diverse student body. Because students of different racial backgrounds may share a religion, campus fellowships have the potential to encourage meaningful friendships and interactions across racial/ethnic lines. However, at most campuses, campus fellowships tend to be racially homogeneous, thus discouraging the formation of interracial friendships and frequent, positive cross-racial interaction.

My study looks at an outlier to the trend of racially homogeneous campus fellowships. As I will describe in more detail, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) at CU transitioned from being a predominantly White group in the early 1990s to a more racially heterogeneous group by the late 1990s, due to shifts in the group’s values and priorities in favor of pursuing racial reconciliation and diversity. This study is an opportunity to examine closely how Black students in the group dealt with managing their identities of being both Black and Christian in a multiethnic, multiracial campus fellowship, shedding light on how the multiple components of students’ identities can affect cross-racial interaction during the college years.
Theoretical Guide

In *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport (1954) outlines the conditions under which intergroup contact can contribute to the reduction of prejudice: “Prejudice . . . may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals” (p. 281). He also adds that such contact is most successful when it has institutional support and leads to the perception of commonalities between the different groups. Because universities presumably fulfill the conditions that Allport prescribes, researchers have drawn on contact theory to explain why higher education institutions are ideal sites in which to study cross-racial interaction (antonio, 2001; Ariès, 2008; Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; van Laar, Levin, Sinclair, & Sidanius, 2005). However, beyond noting that students share common goals such as graduating or living together, little work has fleshed out the nuances and complexities behind how common goals can facilitate and complicate cross-racial interaction and friendship among students, perhaps because the majority of the aforementioned studies are quantitative.

In one rare example, Wolf-Wendel, Toma, and Morphew (2001) demonstrated how students united through the common goal of competition in intercollegiate athletics. At the high school level, Moody (2001) found that having students pursue common goals through co-curricular activities resulted in overall lower levels of friendship segregation. His work suggests how experiences outside the classroom are a key opportunity to promote healthy cross-racial interaction through cooperative interdependence, yet few higher education scholars have explicitly focused on this dimension of Allport’s theory.

I was interested in how “pursuit of the common goal” facilitated and affected cross-racial interaction in IVCF. Because IVCF was a religious community, I was curious to learn more about how the pursuit of a common goal—promoting a shared faith—affect IVCF’s ability to recruit and sustain a racially diverse membership. IVCF is a national organization; the CU chapter was founded in the 1940s as a religious organization with the explicit primary goal of supporting the religious and spiritual well-being of its students, and it continues to do so. Thus, a key aim of my study was to understand whether students’ shared faith was enough to sustain IVCF’s racially diverse membership or whether race-related conflict and divisions challenged the group’s unity. These two scenarios are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and qualitative inquiry can unveil some of the complexities behind how pursuing common goals affects cross-racial interaction.

A relevant consideration in understanding how the pursuit of common goals affected IVCF is whether the group took a more race-conscious or color-blind approach in fostering diversity. After all, there are multiple ways to pursue a common goal while seeking diversification. One option on the
The color-blind end of the spectrum is the process of recategorization, as articulated in Gaertner and Dovidio’s (2000) Common In-group Identity Model. In this model, a new, superseding identity is created for a diverse population; accordingly, out-group members can be brought into the in-group and be associated with the positive feelings assigned to in-group members. Pursuing common goals is a key component of forging the new common identity. Recategorization focuses on setting aside racial and ethnic differences in favor of incorporating out-group members into a common group identity that is unrelated to race. Marti’s (2005) research is an example of recategorization at work in a religious organization, a process that he refers to as “ethnic transcendence.” In studying Mosaic Church in Los Angeles, he found that the church sustained a racially diverse membership by encouraging members to transcend racial differences by adapting a new identity as a member of Mosaic’s Christian community. Notably, Mosaic’s diversity came mostly from its White, Asian American, and Latino/a members; few Black Christians found the church’s approach appealing despite the shared religious identity.

As we will see, IVCF did not take a color-blind approach to addressing race, nor did it downplay the issue. In the mid-1990s, the group started to proactively address race by holding forums on race, addressing ethnic identity, and supporting Black and Latino/a students. Pursuing racial reconciliation became a core part of the group’s organizational identity. IVCF staff defined racial reconciliation as: “People of different races forging relationships based on repentance, forgiveness, justice and love in order to address, heal and redeem the effects of personal and systemic race-based sin” (Tomikawa & Schaupp, 2001, p. 3). This context affected how IVCF brought together students of different races to pursue a common goal of faith in a way that differed notably from the recategorization-based, ethnic transcendence model. Instead it reinforced race as a means of cultivating diversity, a method known as ethnic reinforcement (Garces-Foley, 2007; Marti, 2010). Both concepts, ethnic transcendence and ethnic reinforcement, are helpful in examining how IVCF’s approach to pursuing common goals affected Black student participation in the group as students negotiated both their racial and religious identities.

**Methods**

This study uses qualitative methods; I conducted semi-structured interviews with six Black alumni and former staff who were involved with IVCF at California University from 1995 to 2007 as part of a broader ethnographic case study on IVCF. I recruited two participants through meeting them during fieldwork; I recruited two others based on their being mentioned in IVCF documents, and I found the final two via snowball sampling. Examples of
interview questions included, “How would you describe IVCF to others, or how would other Christians on campus describe it?,” “What are some of the things you like about IVCF? What are some of the things that are more difficult or challenging?,” and “How do you think that issues related to race and diversity are addressed in IVCF?” Interviewees received a $10 gift card as an incentive. I assigned pseudonyms to all; and at the completion of the broader study, participants had the opportunity to review the final manuscript and provide feedback to enhance trustworthiness.

To identify themes and patterns in the interview transcripts and field notes, I used open coding to identify repeated patterns, which I then sorted into categories. Using the constant comparative method, I compared and contrasted each code with those already in the category, as well as codes in different categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Although I had Allport’s (1954) concept of the pursuit of common goals in mind when I began the study, I did not impose codes related to the theory on the data during the open-coding process. Upon organizing the data into initial categories, I used axial coding to identify linkages and relationships between categories, as well as linkages to Allport’s work (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Once I developed a core story from the interconnections between categories, I selectively coded the data corpus from the broader ethnographic study, as well as from the remaining documents and transcripts.

I triangulated data by comparing participants’ accounts of events and documents written by IVCF staff. For instance, in the case of one highly sensitive incident, the narrative of Paul and the “n-word,” I heard multiple similar accounts from alumni and then found documentation of the event in an IVCF staff document. I ultimately used the description of the event related by the individual most directly affected by it but added insights from witnesses to relay multiple perspectives on the event. The reader may notice that Jennifer, Paul, and Kimberly are quoted most frequently. As alumni from the late 1990s and early 2000s, they were involved in IVCF during its transition from a predominantly White group to a racially heterogeneous group, or shortly thereafter, while Erica and Darren (who graduated in 2007 and 2005, respectively) were involved in IVCF when its diversity was already a given. Thus, I relied more on Jennifer, Paul, and Kimberly’s quotations to capture IVCF in its earlier days of experimenting with bridging racial divides, and on Erica and Darren’s quotations to display how some of the themes played out in more recent years.

Limitations and Role of the Researcher

Like most qualitative research, my study does not make claims of generalizability, nor does it present one authoritative account of Black student experiences in IVCF (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). The reader should consider several aspects when reading the find-
ings and their interpretations. The small number of participants, while not uncommon to qualitative research, cannot claim to represent the voices of all of the Black students who participated in IVCF during this time period. In gathering the sample, my initial interest was not to collect a representative sample of Black alumni from 1995 to 2007; however, participants’ involvement happened to span this time frame. My intention in this article is less to capture a single era and more to gain insight into participants’ experiences with cross-racial interaction while they were involved in IVCF. However, because the alumni whom I interviewed were connected to social networks of IVCF alumni, they likely represent Black students who were more involved in IVCF versus those on the fringes of the organization.

My own role as a researcher is important to address. I participated in an Asian American-focused IVCF chapter in the Southeast during my own college years. That chapter did not address issues of race. Thus, I became curious about how West Coast IVCF chapters initiated programs such as its important discussion forums called Race Matters. During the study, I saw myself an insider-outsider. On one hand, sharing a faith background with participants helped me build rapport that a complete outsider might not have been able to establish. However, IVCF was still a strange environment to me in many ways, giving me opportunities to question the ordinary, as ethnographers seek to do. As an Asian American interviewing people of another race, I had no idea if my conversations with participants may have differed had I shared their racial background or had been of yet another race. Thus, I found it especially important to allow participants to review the manuscript and offer feedback, which was incorporated into the final manuscript.

**Site Description and Context**

The site for the study was the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF), a multiethnic group of evangelical Christian students at California University (CU), a large, selective public institution with approximately 25,000 undergraduates. IVCF is a national organization with 860 chapters across the country serving approximately 35,000 students (Ministry overview, 2010). IVCF’s chapter at CU began in the 1940s and had existed for decades before it began to address race in an intentional manner starting in the early 1990s. As a national organization, IVCF has undergone notable development as it has sought to diversify its staff, campus chapters, and governing board. (For more information on the history of race in IVCF, see Rendall & Hammond, 2007.) However, changes in IVCF as a national organization were not the primary impetus for organizational change in the CU IVCF chapter.

Three factors piqued my curiosity about IVCF at CU as a place to study diversity. First, its demographic journey intrigued me. The IVCF at CU evolved from a majority White organization in the early 1990s to a racially heterogeneous group in the late 1990s but had become a majority Asian
American organization by the time I came to study the group in 2006. Throughout this time period, the number of Black students involved in the group fluctuated from only one in 1990 to a high of about 41 (out of 215 total students) in 2003. By the late 1990s the number of Black students attending IVCF had grown to about 6% to 9% of the group and upwards of 10% to 19% between 2001 and 2003.

Second, several shifts in the group’s organizational culture contributed to this growth. Beginning in the mid-1990s, IVCF began to address race in a highly intentional way through programming and teaching on the issue of racial reconciliation. The leader of the IVCF staff team, a White male, took an assistant pastor position at a Black church. IVCF students worked to diversify the fellowship. For instance, student leaders worked as staff for a program for first-generation college students so they could build relationships with first-year Black and Latino/a students. Encouraging a sense of community for its students, IVCF held “family nights” where Black students would gather and socialize in an informal setting. The group directly addressed race in some of its programming, for instance, holding its quarterly dialogues entitled Race Matters. Eventually the group started having separate small-group Bible studies held for Black, Latino/a, South Asian, and Korean American students.

Third, IVCF’s efforts to attract critical masses of Black and Latino/a students were limited by the structural diversity of CU. In 1996 Black student enrollment stood at 6.0%; but the passage of Proposition 209, an anti-affirmative action ordinance, in November 1996 started a sharp decline. Ten years later in 2007, Black undergraduate enrollment at CU had dropped to 3.3%. Not only was there a literal cap to the number of Black and Latino/a students that IVCF could hope to attract, but the small Black and Latino/a populations at CU created another barrier to assembling a multiethnic student community.

At CU, Black and Latino/a students experienced isolation as an underrepresented minority population, especially in the classroom. It was understandable that they would want to spend their time outside of the classroom in environments where they could constitute the majority, such as ethnic student organizations or social clubs, and not in groups where they would again be the minority. Raina, a former staff member at CU, explained how this dynamic affected IVCF:

The pattern at CU is that [Black students] will usually rub up against racism in their relationships with non-Blacks by November of their first quarter. This is typically when Black students will want to retreat into all-Black friendship networks. . . . This is typically when the CU fellowship used to lose contact with any Black students who were involved.
These two intersecting forces—lack of structural diversity and the understandable desire of minority students to spend free time with same-race peers—help explain why Black and Latino/a students remained a minority in IVCF, despite IVCF’s commitment to pursuing multiethnnicity. As the findings report, participants displayed complex, mixed emotions toward their experiences in this multiethnic environment.

**Findings**

Three categories of findings illuminate how a shared religious identity affected interactions between Black students and students of other races: (a) positive or novel experiences with interracial friendships, (b) experiences of isolation and misunderstanding, and (c) highly hurtful experiences.

**Positive Experiences: “My Best Friend Is . . . of a Different Background than Me”**

While the number of Black and Latino/a students in IVCF fluctuated over the years, a key benefit of the relatively multiethnic environment of IVCF was the chance for students to form meaningful relationships across race with students who shared their religious affiliation. Darren, who attended CU from 2000 to 2004, explained that his faith challenged him to share the challenges of his life with friends who were not Black:

I remember those moments where I’m going through something as a Black man that’s really, really hard, and I want to run to my Black friends. I do, and it’s good. Then God’s, like, “You need to share with your roommate. You need to share with Hiroshi. You need to share with Matthew,” and all these men that aren’t Black that God really wants me to let into my life. And I’m, like, “Why? They won’t understand.” The point isn’t for them to be able to understand per se, but the point is for them to be able to know me better and to support me in something that they don’t understand. Now I look back and I love those people. I wouldn’t be who I am without them. I know that God used them to show me more of who he is and that they’re an important piece of that.

He spoke poignantly about the role that such friendships played in his life and spiritual development. As Jennifer, an alumna who graduated in 2003 explained, these friendships were not just token relationships:

I think there was something about folks having actual depth of relationship across culture, not just, “I know that person and we work together, we’re in class together,” but, like, “My best friend is someone who is of a different background than me or this girl that I’m in ministry with or someone whose home I’ve been to”—things like that.
In this account, Jennifer acknowledged how the interracial friendships formed in IVCF went beyond casual acquaintanceship. IVCF provided opportunities for students to serve together in the fellowship, an avenue for students to build meaningful relationships across race.

One byproduct of interracial friendships was the development of perspective-taking or empathy. Alumni spoke about how friendships could spark interest in understanding one another’s stories regarding race. In this account, Paul talked about one of the first people to befriend him in IVCF, a White male named Robert:

> It started my freshman year. There was this guy named Robert, he was this older student, White guy, about 6’4”, from Salinas, and I just didn’t understand why [IVCF] cared about race so much. It struck me as a little strange. I felt like they were clueless and didn’t know what the heck they were doing but . . . I was curious, so Robert wanted to know what it was like to be a part of Black culture, to get to just know me as a person, but I didn’t make it easy on him at all. I was a complete ass, for lack of a better word, but he stuck through all the things that I put him through, and he chose to suffer with me as a Black person and that’s when things, I guess, started to shift a little bit for me. . . . I had experienced a lot of racism, and so coming into college, I was very much the angry Black guy. [IVCF] my freshman year did a lot to kind of help me get over that, sometimes through prayer, sometimes through going and visiting places where there were basically all these Black folks and just really trying to learn the culture.

Paul described the turning point of their relationship as being when his friend “chose to suffer with me as a Black person.” Seeing his friend make that choice was pivotal in Paul’s willingness to stay involved in IVCF and build trust with people of different races. Religion provided a common ground for them to begin to understand one another’s experiences with race.

A final way that a shared religious identity affected students’ interactions across race was through how they sought to identify a “Christian standpoint” on issues of race. Kimberly reported that some in the group had stereotypes about Blacks:

> Other people growing up, their parents are immigrants and they’re not aware of a lot of the history of United States and particularly the history of African Americans. So they just see Black people as lazy, they’re always getting in trouble, they’re, like, always struggling, like, “Don’t associate with them.” That mindset. So then we have these discussions [on race] and all these things come out, and then it was kind of, like, what do you do with that? So I think that was kind of the first step in our fellowship to really deal with issues of race. Because I think overall people will try to deal with race, like, “Let’s just try to get along and just kind of brush our differences under the rug and the melting pot, yada yada.” Whereas we were trying to tackle it with the mindset of,
like, “Well, how would Jesus deal with this?” “What’s the Christian standpoint on this?” So instead of trying to brush it under the rug, let’s try to talk about our differences.

In another part of her interview, she acknowledged that IVCF made her realize that she harbored stereotypes regarding Asian Americans. She also noted that for “80 to 90%” of her friends, she was the first (or one of the first) Black friends they had ever had. As students grappled with difference, they sought to discuss issues of race through the lens of their religious beliefs, even wondering how Jesus would address such issues. While the honest discussions about race provided a rare opportunity for students to reap the benefits of diversity in a community with meaningful friendships, taking on the elephant of race presented some difficulties despite sharing a religion.

Isolation and Sacrifice

One challenge of promoting interracial friendship in IVCF was the tension between intentionality and tokenization. By deciding to be proactive about making race matter, IVCF encouraged students to be intentional about forming friendships across race. However, the imbalance between Black and Latino/a students versus White and Asian American students in the group, due in part to the demography of CU, meant that Black students could feel that non-Blacks were trying to befriend them merely to make a friend of another race, as Jennifer explained:

I think it started in my sophomore year, so there was a really big push on relationships, so not just, “Well, I know some people of a different race,” or “We are all in the same fellowship together,” but really looking to build friendships and relationships with people of a different race or ethnic background. They made little bookmarks that had, like, an acronym that I can’t remember now, but it was basically supposed to help you enter into conversation [about race]. . . . So I ended up in a lot of conversations with people when they initiated, “What’s it like for you to be Black at CU? What are classes like? What’s this like? I want to know.” So on one level I get it, right, because that’s part of the problem. People aren’t aware that, “Oh, I’m having a different experience than she is having or than he is having.” So it’s great to talk about it and I think it’s right to talk about it, but it ended up for me feeling a little unnatural, and I had this conversation with all these people who I didn’t even know. . . . It makes me feel like you’re checking something off a list.

While IVCF had positive intentions in encouraging students to cross racial boundaries, because of the low number of Black students in the group, Jennifer found herself being approached more often than the typical White or Asian American member. With people whom she barely knew asking her quite personal questions about her racial background, some interactions felt obligatory. IVCF’s emphasis on racial reconciliation was explicitly religious;
members believed that there was a biblical rationale for bridging racial divides. However, the uneven racial composition of the group complicated their efforts.

Although faith gave students a reason to congregate, alumni confessed that sharing a faith background did not erase all racial tensions. IVCF began to talk about race in a more direct manner in the mid-1990s. IVCF was already CU’s most diverse campus fellowship, and its focus on race attracted more Black and Latino/a students. However, just because IVCF was more diverse than other groups did not mean that Black students always felt at ease, as Kimberly recounted:

There's this one [Bible] passage that talks about being a slave to all. [NIV Mark 10:43–45: “Jesus . . .said,“…Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”] I probably read that growing up but reading it in, like, a Bible study when you’re really aware that you’re the only African American person in a room of, like, White, Asian, some Latino folks in there. I mean, I understood the point of the passage, but it . . . was just one of those moments where I just felt really aware: “Wow! I am the only Black person in this room and there's only . . . there's probably, like, maybe at best 10 Black people in this whole fellowship.” You just realize, the more I choose to be with this group, I’m taking myself away from my cultural group, the group I’m more comfortable with, my ethnic group. Because obviously we are united by Christ, this is like the strongest bond, but at the same time there’s certain things that, you know, I felt like I had to explain because people just didn’t get it.

This memory manifests some of the price that Black students paid for staying involved in IVCF. By choosing to be involved as a minority in a multiethnic community, they were spending less time with same-race peers, which could heighten the isolation that they already felt as minority students at CU. Kimberly also noted a tension between her religious and ethnic identity during her IVCF days: She was united with other students in her Christian identity, but their inability to fully grasp her ethnic identity limited her ability to feel completely at ease in the fellowship. Perhaps she would never be able to feel fully comfortable without a greater Black student presence in IVCF, but attracting more Black students was difficult due to the lack of structural diversity at California University and the understandable tendency for Black students to seek out same-race peers.

As a Black student, Kimberly was a minority both at CU and in IVCF. This minority status was amplified by the fellowship’s response, or lack thereof, to Proposition 209, which banned affirmative action at California’s public institutions of higher education. When the proposition passed, IVCF was still early in its journey of making race matter. Although the ordinance was
a live issue at CU and generated student protests, it did not trigger a strong response from IVCF. Raina, a Black staff member for IVCF at the time, described the scene:

There were protests and marches that our fellowship largely stayed out of—except for the Black students. . . . We knew that this issue was tearing our fellowship apart beneath the surface. It was obvious that the only ones who cared at all or who even knew what was happening were the Black students. They felt betrayed by people in their fellowship who called themselves their friends but didn’t care about this important piece of legislation that passed into law and affected the lives of their friends.

Kimberly remembered how Black and Latino/a students felt frustrated at the lack of response from IVCF regarding the controversy:

We were of the mindset of, like, “We’re sacrificing a lot to be a part of this fellowship.” I mean, it’s about wanting to learn about Jesus and getting closer to Jesus, but I mean, we were, like, we’re giving up a lot to be here and you guys aren’t even trying to, like, hear us out and at least say, “Hey, explain it more to me.” Like, even if you don’t agree, even say, “Oh, I don’t necessarily agree or I don’t understand what’s going on, but I want to try to feel your pain,” or something, at least. . . . It was just, like, “Why are we even here?” So I think a few of us were seriously considering leaving the fellowship.

Black students were “giving up a lot” to stay in IVCF. They saw it as being involved in a community that reinforced their minority status instead of being the haven that Black student organizations could offer. Kimberly acknowledged that they were all there to “learn about Jesus,” but the lack of response and empathy from the broader IVCF community was hurtful. While interracial relationships had fostered a sense of individual, relational empathy within IVCF, having friendships across race did not result in an instantaneous understanding of the effects of Proposition 209. In later years, IVCF mobilized as an organization to protest hate crimes and the decreasing Black student enrollment at CU, but in 1996 and its immediate aftermath, the group was still learning what it meant to recognize the role of race in society.

When Race Explodes: “Man, This Is Hard.”

Occasionally talking about race became explosive. Having a shared religious identity could facilitate a sense of civility on hot topic issues, as Erica, who graduated in 2007, reflected:

I’ve learned a lot about different people’s perspective on race, and it has been, like, respectable time. We’re Christian people, so we’re not, like, screaming at each other, but I’ve learned a lot. . . . I would say that in a Christian setting, there’s a certain freedom that comes with knowing that everybody respects each other’s opinions; we understand that we are different. We’re very delib-
erate in making the younger students feel welcome and expressing whatever their experiences have been. It’s more of a safe environment to talk about race as opposed to an African American studies class or African Student Union meeting where you gotta be more politically correct in how you say things.

The nurturing and civility described by Erica may have been a byproduct of the voluntary nature of IVCF. Students may have felt a collective investment in building a strong sense of community in order to sustain membership, given that people were there entirely by choice.

Nonetheless, there were still times when Black students experienced deep hurt due to others in the group. Several alumni told me about an incident that occurred at a Race Matters forum at the spring retreat in 2001. When I had the chance to interview the alumnus most affected by it, Paul, he explained the situation like this:

Basically I had mentored two [Asian American] students for a year, John and David. They were having a Race Matters and the question at this Race Matters was: Which group are you least welcoming to and why? And so every group went around and eventually it became like a “blame Black people” fest, like, “We’re the least welcoming to White . . . or Black people and that’s because we don’t really trust them, blah, blah, blah, blah,” and so it was just like, “All right, this kind of sucks.” And then there came the time where people had a chance to confess their sin—their sins that they felt toward Black people, and so then John stands up and he shares, like, “Paul, you know I love you, blah, blah, blah, you know how much I love you, but when I see Paul I see niggrer.” Now the context of that is that whole previous year I had been one of John’s main grief counselors. His mother had passed away, so I was pretty much the only person in his life that helped him grieve through that.

The discussion focus of that night’s Race Matters was to talk about which racial/ethnic group students felt they were least welcoming to and why. John was an Asian American student whom Paul had invested in heavily, mentoring him and supporting him through his mother’s death. Jennifer, who was present at the episode, described Paul’s reaction:

Paul felt very hurt and he was, like, “I’ve been carrying a lot of the load of particularly this sin of our fellowship for a long time and I feel kind of like a scapegoat and I’m tired,” and he was . . . I think he was graduating, he was a senior or something at the point and he’s, like, “I’m really tired and I just can’t do it anymore.” And so then he breaks down crying.

Summarizing what happened, Paul added: “They had messed with dynamite and it blew up in their faces.” While exceptional, the incident exemplifies the heavy cost that Black students paid to stay involved in IVCF. Not only were they distancing themselves from the chance to spend time with
same-race peers on a campus where they were already a minority, but the downside to honest forums like Race Matters was the potentially explosive nature of what could be said. IVCF’s direct approach to discussing race was what drew some ethnic minority students to the group. Unfortunately, the aftermath of such talks could also be deeply hurtful, especially to students who were more vulnerable as minorities. Jennifer described the fellowship’s reaction to the incident:

It was a very emotional time I think for all the Black students in the fellowship, and it was kind of this moment where we’re all sort of standing in the middle of the room with this older brother to us. There was this distinct moment where I felt very, like, “We are on display to the rest of the group here.” And everybody’s crying, and it’s quite snotty and nasty and one of the staff members challenged the rest of the group, like, “Oh, you know, these are your brothers and sisters. This is your family, just be with them, if there’s something to say. . . .” It ended up being a good time, I think, for the group at large in terms of recognition of some of the underlying racial tensions and stuff in the group and some tensions on our part as a whole body. It was a good experience of people really coming along beside us and . . . it was a very emotional time, right, so some people cry and “Oh, forgive me,” and “Oh, I’m with you,” or whatever. So in that way, I think it was really, really good, but I remember leaving that time and just feeling like, “Man, this is hard.” It’s hard to feel like I always need to be continually forgiving and open and willing for people to practice their interracial relating with me and sort of stumble over the newness of that with me and with us.

Like a hate crime that invidiously affects an entire community, not just an individual, the racial slur was incredibly painful to all of the Black students present, not just to Paul. Jennifer saw some positive outcomes emerge from the situation, feeling that it was good for people to directly confront and react to the underlying tensions related to race. At the same time, the psychological cost of being “willing for people to practice their interracial relating with me” was deep. She explained how Black students had to shoulder a disproportionate amount of that responsibility in the IVCF community:

I think because there were so few of us, it felt weighty. I think if there had been 50 or 100 Black students or something, it would feel a little different. I think there was that point where I started to feel, like, “Yeah, I don’t know. I don’t know if I want to do this.” But I remember my thought as part of that process was like, “Well, where else would I go?” Like, I have found it to be helpful for me in my growth with God to be in a community of believers, to study the scripture and have some of these relationships, to be in ministry with other people. I found that to be good for me, and so I wanted that, but . . . I didn’t feel at that time that there was another place on campus where I would be welcome really. So I don’t know if that’s overstating on my part, like, maybe it
would have been fine for me to be a part of other groups, but I just felt, like, I just can’t walk into the Asian American Christian Fellowship or the Korean Student Christian Movement . . . because . . . I don’t know, it just felt, like, “Well, they’re not really looking for me exactly.”

Like Kimberly and an earlier class of Black students who were debating whether to stay in IVCF following Prop 209, Jennifer questioned whether staying in IVCF was the best thing for her. Her question, “Where else would I go?” reflected the lack of options for spiritual community for Black students at CU. She could not just walk into any fellowship. For all of the talk of being welcoming to people of all backgrounds and united by faith, the Christian community at CU was divided by race. IVCF welcomed Black students, but as the stories of Paul, Kimberly, and Jennifer all show, there could be a heavy cost for them to invest in a multiethnic community.

Amazingly, Paul and John eventually reconciled and remained friends, which may have been facilitated by the religious value of forgiveness. Still, the incident left a raw spot in IVCF. As Paul remembered, “I mean, Race Matters was dead for a year. All the Black people who were left hated John. The entire campus, the fellowship at this time was really angry with him and they were angry with themselves.” Paul’s story had an impact on the legacy of the fellowship. It came up in multiple interviews with alumni and even current students referred to it, even though it had happened before most of them started attending CU.

**Discussion**

Overall this study points to some of the complexities involved in cross-racial interaction and interracial friendship when students share one identity category (religion) but differ in another (race). To some extent, the pursuit of common goals enabled and facilitated interracial interaction in IVCF. However, Black students paid a high psychological cost to stay involved in IVCF. Unlike White and Asian American students who could come to IVCF, have their spiritual needs met, and enjoy the relative diversity of the fellowship, Black students had to be willing to experience some marginalization in the fellowship for IVCF to retain its diversity, on top of the marginalization they already felt at CU.

Perhaps the most strenuous experience for Black students was feeling that they had to be “willing for people to practice their interracial relating with me,” as Jennifer put it. Her comment reflects the concept of “racial battle fatigue,” the cumulative stress that students of color can experience due to isolation and marginalization at TWIs (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Other scholars have highlighted the “cost of diversity,” the disproportionate burden that minorities take on in diversifying an environment (Christerson
In IVCF, sometimes interracial relating could feel simply unnatural, when students tried to be overly intentional about forming interracial friendships. At other times it could be extremely hurtful, as in the case of Paul and the incident at Race Matters.

This study uniquely shows how students’ multiple identities can both facilitate and complicate cross-racial interaction, highlighting the complexity of Black student experiences in a multiethnic setting where they experienced both joy and hurt, friendship and betrayal, conflict and reconciliation. One might question the voluntary nature of IVCF given that it was the only fellowship on campus that intentionally encouraged Black students to join, but the fact remains that the Black students who stayed in the group were there ultimately by choice, and many Black students chose not to join or stay. So what made some stay? What were some of the elements that allowed this multiethnic environment to survive when most of the campus fellowships at CU were racially homogeneous and when IVCF itself experienced rifts due to race?

Sharing a common faith made it possible for a group like IVCF to exist and the “pursuit of the common goal” facilitated interracial interaction to some extent (Allport, 1954). The commonality of faith also helped students work through deep conflicts linked to race, such as Paul’s being able to reconcile with John. However, IVCF’s approach to pursuing common goals was a double-edged sword for the group. Unlike other efforts to facilitate interracial interaction that mute or downplay the significance of race, such as in the Common In-group Identity Model or strategies of ethnic transcendence (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Marti, 2005), IVCF specifically took a race-conscious approach by encouraging students to recognize their ethnic identities and by promoting dialogue on race through events like Race Matters.

Reinforcing, not avoiding, ethnicity seemed critical to IVCF’s being able to attract Black students in the first place. As Jennifer noted, she did not feel that there was a place for her in the Asian American Christian Fellowship or (majority White) Campus Crusade for Christ chapter, and Black alumni spoke enthusiastically about how their lives were touched, not only through interracial friendships, but also through meaningful discussions on issues of race in IVCF. Still, ethnic reinforcement also opened the door for conflict and misunderstanding around race, and common goals were somewhat limited in their ability to ameliorate the conflict and tensions related to racial difference. Even when students were “united by Christ,” Black students felt betrayed by incidents like the aftermath of Prop 209 and Race Matters.

I do not wish to diminish the importance of pursuing common goals as a means of facilitating interracial interaction. Although these efforts did not always go smoothly, affirming both students’ religious and racial identities was critical to retaining Black students in IVCF.
Another complication to IVCF’s attempts to use a shared religious identity to facilitate interracial interaction was the lack of truly equal status between Black students and other students in IVCF. Besides pursuing common goals, equal status is a precondition for healthy cross-racial interaction (Allport, 1954). Some studies that apply Allport’s work to college settings argue that students share equal status as students, thus meeting the precondition (Aries, 2008). Antonio (2001) suggests that, although the alienation and marginalization that students of color experience may preclude the fulfillment of equal status, cross-racial interaction outside of the classroom occurs on a voluntary basis and such interactions therefore occur in a context of equal status.

While college students share a status that is more equitable than, say, the relationship between a student and a professor, this study’s findings complicated the assumption that students of different races share equal status in the context of voluntary associations. Jennifer’s recollection of feeling tokenized because there were so few other Black students in IVCF for everyone else to “practice their interracial relating;” her explanation of how the incident at Race Matters felt even worse because of the lack of a critical mass of Black students in IVCF; Raina’s memory of how the low Black enrollment at CU created a racial climate where Black students did not want to join multiethnic groups like IVCF—all of these accounts point to a climate of unequal status, not only in IVCF, but more generally at CU, where Black students made up only 3–6% of the student body during the course of the study.

While structural diversity on its own does not ensure equal status (Hurtado et al., 1998), a lack of structural diversity contributes to unequal status by increasing the likelihood that minorities will experience tokenization and marginalization (Kanter, 1977). It is difficult to disentangle the effects of Black students’ minority status at CU from their minority status in IVCF, perhaps because the two reinforced each other. Correspondingly, interracial contact in voluntary contexts does not necessarily fulfill Allport’s condition of equal status because the lack of equal status in the broader student body—and likely even the lack of equal status in broader society—carries over into the co-curricular realm. We cannot ignore the broader macro-level context of structural inequality in which micro-level cross-racial interaction occurs (Osei-Kofi, 2003). Smith (2009) reminds us: “The existence of stratification requires that power, equity, and discrimination be addressed in any discussion of diversity and identity” (p. 23).

This study makes an important contribution to the literature by illuminating how the unequal status of students in the university environment can hamper efforts to use common goals to bridge racial divides among students. IVCF would not necessarily be a perfect picture of racial harmony even if both the group and CU were able to achieve more equitable demographic conditions. However, the lack of such conditions constrained IVCF’s ability
to recruit and sustain a diverse membership, and it hindered efforts to promote equal status contact among its members. The multiethnic experiment of IVCF at CU resulted in rich learning experiences for students of all races, but at what price to Black students? It would seem that the ideal situation would be multiethnic, multiracial subcultures where critical masses of different racial/ethnic groups exist, providing opportunities for both interracial and intraracial interaction, but such groups may be a literal impossibility at institutions like CU due to anti-affirmative action policies and structural inequities impeding college access. In later years, IVCF at CU created a Black student small group to give Black students a safe space where they could be with same-race peers while also encouraging them to stay engaged in the broader multiethnic community, although this group also caused some tensions within IVCF. There are no easy answers. University and societal intergroup relations may benefit from multiethnic student subcultures, but certain groups often pay heavy costs to make these communities exist.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall this study adds richness and depth to the existing literature on cross-racial interaction and friendship by showing how students’ multiple identities can both facilitate and complicate interaction across race. It showcases the complex nuances of students’ lives as they grappled with what it meant to engage in meaningful relationships across race and the racial battle fatigue that they encountered in making themselves vulnerable to students of other races through being in community together. It also gives researchers a fleshed-out example of how pursuing common goals can facilitate cross-racial interaction, while demonstrating that common goals do not fully subsume the inequality, misunderstandings, and conflicts linked to race. If anything, the heterogeneity of IVCF was probably what opened the door to some of these difficult issues. Such conflicts provided the opportunity for rich learning experiences and conversations about race but sometimes jeopardized the immediate well-being of Black students in the group.

One implication related to this set of findings is that, when Black students do become engaged in multiethnic student subcultures of a traditionally White university, curricular or co-curricular, campus educators need to be more conscious of the challenges that Black students face and the inherent lack of equal status at such institutions. Practitioners can use this study’s findings to conceptualize how they can promote environments where students who differ in one aspect (race/ethnicity, religion, etc.) can come together in pursuit of common goals while also being cognizant of how common goals may not subsume all differences. While formal curricular programs such as intergroup dialogue may be an ideal venue to foster dialogue across dif-
ference (Zuniga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007), the reality is that students, and particularly affluent White students, often spend much of their discretionary, social time in racially homogeneous environments (Park, 2010). Thus, fostering racial diversity in co-curricular settings is critical to promoting social ties across racial lines, and common goals like religion, community service, and sports can help bridge racial divides (Moody, 2001; Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morphew, 2001). Nurturing multiethnic student subcultures is a critical way to provide linkages between different racial/ethnic groups and to promote healthy intergroup relations on campus.

Future research, both qualitative and quantitative, is needed to document the processes undergirding the pursuit of common goals in different contexts, as well as the relationship between this component of Allport’s (1954) theory and other components such as equal status and institutional support for diversity. We also need additional work interrogating the assumption that students automatically share equal status on college campuses. Researchers could examine how different environments facilitate or hinder equal status between groups. Additional research is also needed on how the multiple components of students’ identities affect their experiences with cross-racial interaction and friendship, showcasing the complexity of students’ lives.

This study also points to the need for institutions to understand the way that structural diversity influences patterns of social interaction and intergroup relations on campus. My work affirms previous scholarship on how structural diversity shapes opportunities for cross-racial interaction and friendships, and how such opportunities cannot exist without the literal availability of people of other race/ethnicities to befriend (Blau & Schwartz, 1984; Chang, 1999). In light of CU’s context, IVCF’s ability to attract a critical mass of Black students was limited despite its high intentionality in pursuing diversity. A two-fold process occurred. First, there was a literal limit to the number of Black students available to join a group like IVCF. Second, the extreme minority status of Black students at California University also fostered a campus culture in which Black students were understandably inclined to spend their discretionary time with same-race peers, in part because of how they were marginalized by the greater university.

This trend is qualitative evidence of what quantitative research has documented extensively: that lower levels of structural diversity result in less cross-racial interaction and friendship (Chang, 1999; Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004). Not only are there literally fewer students of color to interact across race, but the resulting campus racial climate discourages further cross-racial interaction as students of color seek refuge among their own and are less willing to let people “practice their interracial relating with me,” as Jennifer said. While greater diversity at CU on its own would not automatically lead to a critical mass of Black students in IVCF, such diversification was impossible
without an increase in Black student enrollment at CU. Structural diversity may be an insufficient condition for creating multiethnic student subcultures on college campuses that foster meaningful friendships across race, but it is still an essential minimal condition. Simply put, “We are obviously not free to become friends if there are no opportunities for such friendships in our surroundings” (Blau & Schwartz, 1984, p. 13).

Thus, if TWIs truly want to have students engaging across racial/ethnic lines in meaningful ways that open the door for friendship and learning, they need to continue their commitment to recruit and retain racially diverse, heterogeneous student bodies. Critics decry so-called self-segregation on college campuses, but such clustering by race is not surprising when minorities experience marginalization in the classroom and want to “recharge” with same-race peers in their social time. As this study shows, even when a common identity like religious affiliation provides common ground for friendship, Black students who choose to stay engaged in multiethnic student subcultures at TWIs may pay a high psychological cost for engagement, including social alienation, stereotypes, and explicit racism. Working to recruit and retain a diverse student body is the minimal step that higher education can take to better support such students and their courageous willingness to invest in multiethnic community against the odds.

REFERENCES


