DIVERSITY IN QUESTION:
INCLUSIONARY AND EXCLUSIONARY SOCIAL
INTERACTIONS AMONG INTERNATIONAL
GRADUATE STUDENTS

A Thesis in
Educational Theory & Policy
by
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ABSTRACT

A half-century after the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, segregation remains a prominent issue within the American education system. While segregation was imposed by law prior to the *Brown* decision in 1954, today self-segregation poses a challenge to the effectiveness of university diversification policies. Most studies of self-segregation have focused primarily on the African American experience within higher education institutions without taking into account the experiences of international college students. The majority of studies on international students’ experiences on U.S. college and university campuses have centered primarily on international undergraduates as opposed to international graduate students. This study, in contrast, examines how and why some international graduate students self-segregate and other do not while attending a large public university in the United States. Using Mid-Atlantic University as a case study, I explore this issue employing two main strategies. First, I investigate the sociological rationale behind social interactions among international graduate students, and second, I conduct an in-depth analysis of the extent to which university policies for diversity reinforce specific social tendencies among international graduate students. Following a qualitative methodological approach, I employ the following methods: open-ended interviews, focus groups, interaction chart analysis, and participant observation. In doing so, the present study draws upon, yet challenges, existing theories of cultural and social capital by analyzing the link between tendencies of social interaction and the formation of cultural identities. The results of this study shall inform the making of diversity policy recommendations for U.S. higher education institutions regarding the creation and implementation of more effective diversity strategies that encourage cross-cultural exchanges and “meaningful” social interaction among all students.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.................................................................................................vi  
List of Tables.................................................................................................vii  
Preface............................................................................................................. viii  
Acknowledgements........................................................................................ xi  

1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................. 1  
   I. Introduction to the Study................................................................. 1  
   II. Background................................................................................... 5  
   III. Problem Statement...................................................................... 7  
   IV. Purpose of the Study.................................................................... 8  
   V. Research Questions....................................................................... 9  
   VI. Significance of the Study.............................................................. 10  
   VII. Outline of Chapters................................................................... 11  

2. LITERATURE REVIEW..................................................................... 18  
   I. Introduction.................................................................................... 18  
   II. Self-Segregation and Higher Education......................................... 20  
   III. The Importance of Diversity & Social Interaction....................... 23  
   IV. Literature on International Students (1950s to Present)................. 28  
   V. Contributions to the Literature on International Students............... 41  

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK......................................................... 44  
   I. Introduction.................................................................................... 44  
   II. Student Interaction Theories & Identity Development Studies......... 46  
   III. Bourdieu’s Cultural and Social Capital Theories......................... 54  
   IV. Said’s Theory on “the Other”......................................................... 68  
   V. Conceptual Model on Social Interaction & Cultural Identity Development... 72  

4. METHODOLOGY, PILOT STUDY & LIMITATIONS......................... 78  
   I. Introduction.................................................................................... 78  
   II. Site of the Study........................................................................... 78  
   III. Participants.................................................................................. 80  
   IV. Sampling Strategy....................................................................... 84  
   V. Data Collection............................................................................ 89  
   VI. Data Analysis............................................................................. 92  
   VII. Pilot Study................................................................................. 95  
   VIII. Limitations of the Study........................................................... 102  

5. SELF-SEGREGATION & EXCLUSIVE GLOBAL MIXING AT MID-ATLANTIC  
   UNIVERSITY......................................................................................... 105  
   I. Introduction.................................................................................... 105  
   II. Self-Segregators: International Graduate Students Who Socially Interact Only  
       With Co-Nationals......................................................................... 108
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Cultural Identity-Social Interaction Feedback Loop</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Growth in the Number of International Graduate Students at U.S. Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Major Regions &amp; Countries of International Students Admitted to the University in 2006</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Demographic Characteristics of International Graduate Students Sampled at Mid-Atlantic University</td>
<td>87-88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>International Students by Academic Level, Selected Years 1954/55 2002/2003</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2</td>
<td>Percentage of International Students by Academic Level, 2006</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.1</td>
<td>Four Tendencies of Social Interaction</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE

Over the course of my academic career, a number of my colleagues during informal conversations have often commented that international students like to “hang out” with other internationals. Having attended and briefly visited a number of U.S. colleges and universities over the years, I have also personally observed that some international students tend to form segregated social networks while attending a predominantly white U.S. higher education institution. Additionally, as a Trinidadian immigrant living in the United States, who became a naturalized U.S. citizen a few years ago, I share a similar foreigner status as international students and have been able to expand my social network to include Americans and internationals. Yet, not all foreign students can, with certainty, say they have had similar success.

A combination of my own observations, statements made in passing by different colleagues, and my own personal experiences as a foreign student is what sparked my interest in conducting this study. I simply wanted to know how and why some internationals as opposed to others were more inclined to develop close friendships with ethnically similar internationals and not students from the host country. I designed the study in order to understand and explain the group dynamics of international students, in particular the inclusionary and exclusionary social practices carried out by internationals with respect to forming circles of friendships.

To a large extent, I attribute my ability and willingness to form multicultural circles of friendships to my cultural upbringing and national background. Growing up in Trinidad, a country where people share a national identity but remain racially and ethnically divided, my social skills and appreciation of diverse cultures was stimulated by my parents who encouraged me to move beyond looking at differences, and instead to find commonalities among individuals with whom I wanted to develop friendships. Moreover, growing up in New York City, during my
adult years, I was exposed to and engaged in social interactions with individuals from diverse nationalities. Such experiences in many ways contributed in shaping my own sense of self. I was able to develop a cosmopolitan sense of identity as a result of my diverse experiences.

However, while my cultural and national background motivated me to expand my social network to be more inclusive of various nationality groups, such a process does not necessarily take place among all foreign students studying in the United States. To some extent, grappling with how my own sense of cultural identity developed as a result of my diverse social interactions and how it differed from other foreign students also inspired me to pursue this study. Thus, one of the most important aims of this study was to show that culture and national background, along with the U.S. higher educational setting, are crucial social factors that shape international graduate students’ social choices, behaviors and construction of identity on a U.S. college campus.

My interests in this topic also grew out of a genuine belief that students of all different backgrounds can benefit individually and globally from engaging in meaningful social relationships with individuals from diverse nationalities within the context of a university. The university milieu provides a perfect setting for students of different nationalities to establish social contact with people that are culturally different from themselves. As a graduate student, I found the university setting to be a useful resource for meeting people from all around the world. I benefited in terms of building friendships with people that are very different from me culturally. I also gained knowledge and a better understanding of my friends’ cultural upbringing and national backgrounds. The idea that other students encounter barriers in their efforts to establish social relationships with other students on a college campus led me to explore in more
depth what sort of factors contribute in hindering students’ social interactions and cross-cultural exchanges.

In addition to this, the study was conducted in order to draw attention to the rhetoric of diversity that many U.S. colleges and universities promote without putting into practice or operationalizing strategies to stimulate diverse social interactions among the student body. Today, many U.S. higher education institutions appear to focus primarily on the structural and diversity-related initiative aspects of diversity without also considering ways in which to improve the diverse social interactions element of diversity. The promotion of cosmopolitan ideals without establishing steps to achieve such goals implies that a facade of diversity is presented by many higher educational institutions. Coming from a normative cosmopolitan stance, this study calls attention to the need for students and U.S. higher education institutions to move beyond the superficiality of diversity in order to establish diverse group solidarities with individuals from different nations.

To conclude, the research and writing up of this dissertation was conducted over the course of three and half years. The initial ideas for the dissertation evolved and expanded as I conducted more research, and as I learned more about diversity, higher education and student affairs issues within a college setting. I spent a great deal of time and effort exploring a variety of different literatures and developing the ideas for this project while completing my required coursework. The study answered a number of questions that I had going into this research project, yet at the same time it also raised additional questions over the course of conducting the study which I hope to explore in the future. My dedication, persistence and curiosity to know more about diverse students encouraged me to see this project to the end.
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I am grateful to a number of individuals who supported me throughout my dissertation process. First and foremost, my parents, Ralph and Chanderdai Rampersad have always encouraged me to work hard and do my very best academically and in life. My sister, Marilyn Mackiewicz, reminded me that there is definitely more to life than academic work and the dissertation. I am also thankful to my little brother, Wayne Rampersad, who generously loaned me his laptop computer to finish off the last few chapters of my dissertation. He made me laugh on the days when I was tired of writing. My family inspires me to do the research that I choose to pursue.

My co-chairs, Dr. Gerald LeTendre and Dr. Regina Deil-Amen, provided invaluable support and advice to me since I entered the Educational Theory & Policy Program in 2004. I am grateful to both of them for working with me and encouraging me to pursue this research topic. I am also appreciative of my committee members, Dr. Robert Reason and Dr. Patreese Ingram. Dr. Reason introduced me to the higher education and college student affairs literature, which were important to my study, and Dr. Ingram’s interest in my topic and encouragement motivated me to ask more questions and to consider the role that various other factors contribute in facilitating international graduate students’ social interactions.

Additionally, this dissertation would not have been completed without the financial assistance of the Penn State College of Education Bunton Waller Two-Year Assistantship, which I received upon entering the Educational Theory & Policy Program. Funds provided by the Penn State Alumni Society Research Initiation Grant in 2006-07 also allowed me to collect the data for the study. Both sources of financial support allowed me to successfully complete my dissertation research in a timely manner.
My fiancé, soon to be husband, Reuben Rose-Redwood, has been my greatest supporter. You bring sunshine to my life everyday and have given me your love since the day we met. You have seen me through this dissertation, listened to me talk about the ideas and have taken time out of your day to read numerous drafts of my work. I am indebted to you for all that you have done to assist me in achieving my goals. You have my love always. My little birds, Dewey and Angel, from whom I stole many kisses, also made me more relaxed as I wrote the dissertation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

I. Introduction to the Study

    Every year, students from around the world travel to the United States to receive an education at America’s well-respected higher education institutions (Al-Mubarak, 1999; Chin 2005; Chin & Bhandari, 2006). International students come in pursuit of both undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of disciplines, thereby enhancing the diversity of college and university campuses across the country. However, since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, greater restrictions have been placed on international students, who are now increasingly viewed as “foreigners” that need to be carefully monitored while pursuing degrees on U.S. soil.¹ Yet, despite such restrictions, international students continue to play an important role on many campuses, at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

    Throughout the twentieth century, the number of international students attending U.S. colleges and universities steadily increased, ranging from 48,486 (or 1.4 percent of total enrollment) in 1959 to over 500,000 (3.9 percent) by the end of the century (Chin & Bhandari, 2006). In 2006, those internationals pursuing associate’s and bachelor’s degrees accounted for 3.7 percent of total undergraduate enrollments nationwide, while international graduate students constituted 12.1 percent of all graduate students in the United States. International undergraduate students outnumbered their graduate counterparts during the second half of the twentieth century, yet for the first time in history the international graduate student population surpassed the number of international undergraduates in 2001, and this trend has continued up to the present.

¹ University systems such as SERVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System), which are linked to the Department of Homeland Security, have become more active in gathering information on international students since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.
The majority of international students that are enrolled in higher education institutions are located in large metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington, DC, Chicago, and San Francisco. As of 2006, the University of Southern California had the largest number of international students (a total of 6,881), with Columbia University, Purdue University, and New York University not far behind. Students from India, China, South Korea, and Japan make up a total of approximately 42 percent of the international student population (Chin & Bhandari, 2006). Many international students choose to pursue degrees in practical fields including business & management, engineering, mathematics, and computer science as well as the social, physical, and life sciences. The choice of location and field of study suggest that international students continue to perceive the U.S. higher education system as offering a high overall quality of education that they deem necessary to prepare them for their future professional careers. International students also have a significant impact on the U.S. economy, adding over $13 billion on an annual basis. Only 26 percent of international students receive financial support from U.S. higher education institutions. Most international students (63 percent) support themselves, or depend upon their family’s financial contributions, to pay for tuition and living expenses (Chin, 2005; Chin & Bhandari, 2006).

Coming from every major geographical region of the world, the international students that attend American colleges and universities bring with them diverse cultural traditions and values. The experiences that international students have, and their perception of their new educational environment, are crucial to understanding how they construct and negotiate their cultural identity through social interaction within the context of a U.S. higher education setting. The process associated with constructing cultural identity is distinct for international students, especially when they enter a new learning environment that, in some cases, differs vastly from
that of their home country. The cultural values and norms linked to their upbringing are put to the test when they enter a U.S. higher education institution. These students have to engage in new experiences, both educationally and socially, which compel them to reevaluate their sense of self. International students struggle back and forth between the cultural values and norms they learned in their own country and those that they encounter with American host nationals and students from other countries in a U.S. educational setting.

This study examines the relationship between international students’ social interaction and their cultural identity development. Who these students choose to socially interact with, and the types of experiences they have while studying in the United States, can provide valuable insight into how they are adjusting to a different educational setting. Yet, it also offers a window of opportunity to explore how their social interactions with different students contribute in shaping their cultural identity. A significant number of studies have been conducted on international students, however very few scholars have specifically examined the relationship between these students’ social interaction patterns and the renegotiation of their cultural identity. Within the microcosm of the university, we can gain a stronger understanding of how internationals function socially with American host nationals and other international students. Depending on the types of experiences these students have, as well as how they interpret such experiences, we can also better comprehend how their cultural identity is constructed and reinforced through their social interaction with certain groups of students.

Documenting who they interact with and why in connection to how they construct their cultural identity is essential for determining whether international students are acquiring a full educational experience that entails development not just academically, but also socially. If international students are only learning or acquiring their education by drawing upon the
scholarly resources of a university, then this begs the question of whether they are adequately taking part in social activities that involve engaging with the people in the host country. To the extent that international students do not socially interact with students that differ from themselves in terms of nationality and cultural background, this leads us to question whether they are being proactive enough in the social interaction aspect of their educational experience. In addition, this raises another important question: Are U.S. higher education institutions sufficiently preparing internationals to become active participants within a diverse social setting in the future?

Studying international students’ cultural identity development, in relation to their social interaction patterns, is also important considering the fact that approximately half of all international students end up choosing to stay in the United States after graduation. The students that remain in the United States often acquire professional and academic positions in some of the top fields of study such as business, engineering and technology (Lee, 1991). Additionally, retaining international students for the U.S. labor market is significantly beneficial to the U.S. economy, especially since American students are often described as low achievers in subjects such as reading, writing, math and science. Some scholars argue that we should not depend on international students to take over occupations so that the U.S. can remain competitive in the global marketplace (Bracey, 1991; Kirst, 1991). Yet, with the increasing growth of international students pursuing degrees in business, engineering, math and the sciences, it is crucial to consider ways to better ensure that these students are socially interacting with Americans who may very well be their co-workers once they graduate from college. Those internationals who travel back home after graduating from a U.S. higher education institution often obtain high ranking professional, academic and leadership positions that boost their social and economic
status (Carter & Sedlacek, 1986; Szelényi & Rhoads, 2007). A degree from a well-known American college or university is generally held in high regard in their home countries. Yet, if international students leave the United States with negative experiences and views of American students, this could potentially affect the overall perception of the United States in the economic and political realms more generally.

The next section of this chapter provides a general background on the history of international students crossing regional borders to pursue higher education. In the remaining sections, I introduce the problem statement as well as discuss the main purpose and larger significance of this dissertation project. The chapter concludes with an overview of the dissertation chapters.

II. Background

*History & Purpose of International Students Traveling Abroad*

Throughout history, international students have traveled outside their own countries to pursue education. In many cases, they traveled abroad in pursuit of education because they had a “curiosity to know” what existed outside their “immediate environment,” and they possessed a genuine “desire for knowledge, i.e., intellectual development and personal advancement, [which were] . . . powerful forces for travel abroad for education” (Demoze, 1976, p. 1; also, see Metraux, 1952; Ceilak, 1955; DuBois, 1956). The availability of prominent educational institutions did not exist until the invention of the printing press in 1445, which led to the expansion of colleges and universities across the world, but especially in Europe (Haskins, 1927). In the United States, a number of outstanding higher education institutions were constructed during the 17th and 18th centuries, such as Harvard (1636), the College of William
and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), the University of Pennsylvania (1740), Princeton College (1746) and Columbia University (1754) (Lucas, 1994). However, even though such institutions existed, many American scholars still chose to pursue their education outside of the United States.

Many well-known scholars such as Charles W. Eliot, G. Stanley Hall, James B. Angell, Daniel Gilman, Andrew White and William Watts Folwell studied at German higher education institutions (Lucas, 1994). It was not until the late 19th and early 20th century that a shift occurred in which more students began entering the United States from abroad to pursue their studies as international students (Haskins, 1927; Metraux, 1952; DuBois, 1956; Lucas, 1994). The governments of various countries even financially sponsored the education of their students in order for them to study in the United States. The purpose of pursuing education in the United States was to acquire skills in science and technology that would allow their own countries to prosper and advance (Allen, 1935; Lengyel, 1941; Mitrany, 1950).

This shift in international students entering U.S. higher education institutions increased even further following World War I and II. After especially the Second World War, the theme of achieving global goodwill, friendship and tolerance through cross-cultural education became the principal goal of having international students study in the United States. The passing of the Fulbright Act in 1946 by President Harry Truman led to increased opportunity for foreign students to study in the U.S. The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act also led the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to create international visas such as F-1 (international student), F-2 (family members of internationals), and J-1 (visitor/exchange program students) to accommodate international students entering U.S. higher education institutions. Additionally, organizations such as the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA), the Committee for Friendly Relations Among Foreign Students, the American
Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS), and the Institute of International Education (IIE) were established to support and collect data on international students (McIntire & Willer, 1992).

Achieving a goal of creating global goodwill and improving foreign relations was conceived as attainable through international students studying at U.S. higher education institutions and through study abroad programs. According to Metraux (1952), “[s]uch exchange[s] of persons assume that cultural relations and personal contacts are conducive to world peace because they tend to decrease psychological causes of international friction due to ignorance and because, conversely, they strengthen unity of purpose and aspirations among the people of the earth” (p. 18). Thus, after World War II, this idea of cross-cultural education gained momentum with the admission of an increasing number of international students at U.S. higher education institutions.

Cross-cultural collaboration, particularly in the fields of science and technology, is still a significant goal for traveling to the U.S. and abroad. Most importantly, establishing cross-cultural interactions and understanding among peoples of diverse nationalities remains a prominent objective of many U.S. higher education institutions. Initiating cultural interactions between American and international students is an important component of preparing future leaders, professionals and scholars to work towards improving foreign policy relations and creating global friendships (Institute of International Education, 2007; American Institute of Foreign Study, 2007).

III. Problem Statement

Since 1954 data collected by the Institute of International Education, and reported in the Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange (2006), indicate that the majority of international students attending U.S. college and university campuses have been undergraduates
throughout most of this period. Thus, it is not surprising to find that the majority of studies on international students either directly and indirectly draw attention to international undergraduate students’ college experiences. This is not to say, however, that studies on international graduate student experiences are lacking. As previously noted, there are currently more international graduate students than international undergraduates attending colleges and universities in the United States. The continuous growth of the international graduate student population, therefore, calls for further research to be conducted on this group of students.

The studies on undergraduate and graduate international students that have been conducted thus far provide useful information relating to the adjustment processes and the coping strategies developed by these students as they adapt and function within U.S. higher education institutions. While research on international students as a whole is extensive, most studies that discuss international student social interaction neglect to fully analyze patterns of self-segregation within the international student community. Additionally, university administrators, policymakers, and educators continue to ignore the issue of self-segregation among international students on U.S. college and university campuses.

IV. Purpose of the Study

The current study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by conducting a qualitative analysis of the dynamics of social interaction among international graduate students attending a

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large predominantly white public university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The university will be identified under the pseudonym, Mid-Atlantic University, throughout this dissertation. In empirical terms, the purpose of this study is to examine whether international graduate students self-segregate as well as what social and institutional factors contribute to the process of social interaction. Drawing upon recent theories of cultural and social capital, along with identity politics (Chapter 3), this study explores the relationship between social interaction and cultural identity formation. The larger aim of the study is to provide the empirical and conceptual foundations necessary for devising effective educational policies that foster more meaningful social interactions between international students and the American student population. The term “meaningful” in this study refers to the establishment of close friendships or bonds with specific individuals. It can also refer to social or professional experiences that an individual perceives as enhancing his or her sense of identity.

V. Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to explain the social interaction practices and cultural identity development of international graduate students attending Mid-Atlantic University. To achieve the aims of the study, the following research questions are addressed:

1. Do international graduate students tend to self-segregate while attending the predominantly white Mid-Atlantic University? And, if so, how and why do they self-segregate? If not, how and why not?

2. Do international graduate students view Mid-Atlantic University as being “diverse,” and do they believe the University facilitates segregation between the international graduate students and the “white” American student body?
3. Do international graduate student social interaction practices support or challenge existing theorizations of cultural and social capital within the context of a U.S. higher education institution?

VI. Significance of the Study

The college and university setting is one of the primary environments in which students begin to socially interact with others from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Hurtado et al., 1998; 1999). However, self-segregation continues to pose a difficult challenge to university policies that aim to foster diversity. Self-segregation is not confined only to African Americans and other U.S. minority student populations. The international graduate student body also engages in social practices leading to the construction of self-segregation patterns. Research that examines international student social interaction has the potential to improve our understanding of the process of cultural identity formation among international students as well as how these students socially construct perceptions of Americans. Most importantly, this research will inform educational policymakers and administrators about creating diversity initiatives that seek to socially engage the entire student population within large campus settings.

Diversity policies that emphasize structural diversity, diversity-related initiatives, and social interaction individually without interweaving each aspect together fail to accomplish the goals of a truly diverse university (Hurtado et al., 1998; 1999; Chang, 1999; Milem, 2003; Chang, Witt, Jones & Hakuta, 2003). Furthermore, universities that promote “surface-level,” or “inauthentic,” social interactions work against creating solidarities between Americans and the international community, thus acting as a facilitator or agent for self-segregation. Universities need to construct more effective strategies that encourage American and international students to
socially interact in what Chang (1996) calls more “meaningful” ways. By “meaningful” he implies actively engaging in all three elements of diversity.

U.S. colleges and universities need to move beyond conceptualizing and promoting diversity only in terms of the number of international and minority students enrolled. Instead, higher education administrations must seek a more active role in constructing effective strategies which encourage all students to take part in diverse social interactions. The expanding global economy and the increasingly diverse American population demand that individuals of different racial, ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds be able to effectively communicate with each other both in the public and private sphere. Moreover, the effects of globalization call for colleges and universities not only to prepare students with technical knowledge and skills, but to also build global relationships among students of diverse nationalities. Meaningful social interaction between international students and the American student population is vital for building stronger ties with other countries across the globe. It is therefore essential to move beyond a narrow focus on American culture by emphasizing the cosmopolitan ideals of higher education institutions. As a future educator, I strongly believe that further research and action is necessary in order to address the issues of diversity and self-segregation if the American educational system is to live up to the promise of a unified nation committed to diversity and educational equity.

VII. Outline of Chapters

The dissertation is organized into nine chapters. The first four chapters provide the theoretical and methodological foundation for the case study presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. The present chapter provides a broad introduction to the study and reviews the literature on the history and demographics behind international students traveling to the U.S. to pursue post-
secondary education. Here, I also introduce the research questions that are addressed throughout the remaining chapters, and I discuss the larger significance of the study in relation to creating global connections and improving foreign relations.

Chapter 2 explores the literature on international students in more detail. I also draw upon studies that have focused primarily on African American and other minority groups’ experiences and self-segregation practices on predominantly white university campuses, in order to situate my own research on international students as an area of study that requires further attention. A variety of studies are critically analyzed and discussed in order to show the significance of studying international student social interaction in relation to studies that have focused primarily on African Americans and other minority groups. Studies relating to diversity issues in U.S. higher education settings are also examined in order to highlight the fact that U.S. colleges and universities need to better understand the experiences of international students in relation to constructing diversity policies which seek to initiate “meaningful” social interactions among all college students.

Chapter 3 introduces various theories of social interaction and identity development and suggests that international graduate students should be part of this discussion. I draw upon Bourdieu’s (1980, 1983/86, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) cultural and social capital theory and Said’s (1978, 1993) theory of the social construction of “the Other” to evaluate the experiences of international graduate students. The aim here is to rethink the idea that the marginalized student will assimilate and adopt the cultural and social symbols linked to the dominant class of students on a university setting. A new theoretical framework is presented using cultural capital, social capital and the concept of the Other in order to explain the social
interaction practices followed by international graduate students and how this shapes their cultural identity.

Chapter 4 outlines the qualitative methodology applied in conducting this study. Explanations relating to the case study site, sample of participants, sampling strategy, data collection and analysis process are presented for the study. This chapter also brings together the preliminary themes from a pilot study in order to highlight some of the initial results that explain the students’ social interaction practices. Lastly, I provide a critical discussion of the limitations associated with this study.

Chapter 5 focuses on the empirical data collected from the interviews, interaction charts, focus groups and participant-observations with international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University. The group dynamics of international graduate students are discussed with respect to observed social “tendencies” rather than fixed categories of interaction. In this chapter, I begin by connecting the theoretical framework on cultural and social capital, and the social construction of “the Other,” to the empirical data in order to provide substantive explanations behind international graduate student segregation patterns. The data is used to illustrate how some graduate students construct exclusionary social networks through selected social interaction practices.

The students’ cultural capital, in the form of their cultural background, is shown to be a key factor motivating their social practices. Moreover, the social capital they acquire from socially interacting with other international students is explained in relation to reinforcing their sense of essentialized cultural identity. Through such practices, social hierarchies of interaction are formed which perpetuate patterns of social segregation at the university. The social interaction that internationals are involved with acts as a feedback loop in which their
experiences at Mid-Atlantic University lead to the reinforcement of their cultural identity which, in turn, motivates socially interacting with other international students, thus acting as an international support system. These students’ cultural identities are also reinforced through a process of negative and/or non-interaction with American students who are perceived as “the Other” and individuals with whom they do not share much in common.

The social forces that lead international students to engage in specific social group tendencies are also discussed in terms of contributing to “breaks” in international students social practices. Thus, a few counter-cases of internationals who for the most part engage in social segregation, but once in a while socially interacts with individuals from nationality groups outside their normal social networks, are discussed in order to highlight the complexity that social forces play in facilitating group social dynamics. A critical discussion is also presented at the end of the chapter concerning the extent to which cultural and social capital are simultaneously limited and deepened from engaging in social segregation tendencies at the institution.

Chapter 6 is based on my findings of those international graduate students that described engaging in social interactions with host Americans, co-nationals and other international graduate students. Drawing upon the qualitative data collected, I examine the social characteristics that distinguish these students from other internationals. In particular, I discuss how international students that had a tendency to engage in social interactions with Americans conceptualized their own cultural identity in relation to American culture. These students engaged in social practices that enabled them to accumulate social and cultural capital, which led them to engage in social practices with multiple students from diverse nationality groups. The cultural and social capital exchanges that these students participated in led to the construction of
hybrid/pan-national and bi-cultural identities that were inclusive of internationals as well as Americans. The new meanings these students assigned to their cultural and social practices allowed them to navigate through the dominant symbolic elements characteristic of American students at Mid-Atlantic University.

Chapter 7 highlights the role that higher education institutions such as Mid-Atlantic University play with regards to reinforcing self-segregation. A critical evaluation of the international graduate students’ responses regarding their views of Mid-Atlantic University’s diversity policy, and efforts to encourage social interaction, are assessed in relation to the actual efforts and initiatives established by the University. The rhetoric of diversity from the students’ perceptions and the University is presented in order to assess the extent to which Mid-Atlantic University is responsible for facilitating self-segregation among the international student population.

The culture of U.S. higher education institutions is also critically discussed as influencing the diversity efforts of colleges and universities to the extent that it inhibits and promotes specific social tendencies between international and American students. In particular, the institution’s diversity actions are discussed in terms of the impact they have on students’ acquisition of potential cultural and social capital attainable from engaging in social interactions with multiple students from different nationality groups. I contend that the broad institutional environment of higher education, especially the culture of American universities, is a limitation in promoting international awareness and a commitment to developing cosmopolitan perspectives and social actions among the student body.

Chapter 8 provides a number of policy recommendations for improving social interaction between international and American graduate students. This chapter offers recommendations
from the international graduate students who participated in the study on how to open the doors of communication that will foster stronger international and American social relationships. The policy recommendations are critically evaluated using Cynthia Coburn’s (2003) reform ideas on depth, sustainability, spread and shift in ownership in order to determine the potential for success in stimulating social interactions between international and American graduate students.

The students’ recommendations to improve social interactions between international and American graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University are critically discussed in terms of the extent to which they represent “quick fixes” that are characteristic of the institution’s practice rather than its diversity ideals. Specifically, how international students themselves make sense of their social tendencies, and the cultural and social capital that they are building while attending the University, are discussed in relation to their proposed recommendations. While their recommendations might appear to be “quick fixes,” they nevertheless provide useful insight into ways in which to initiate deeper changes in the institutional culture which would lead to the development of cosmopolitan social practices.

Chapter 9 concludes with a broad discussion concerning the implications of creating international “global villages” that are not inclusive of Americans (Lin, 1999, p. 46; also, see McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, p. 63). If American higher education institutions are not equipped to foster a truly diverse social setting that encourages and promotes “meaningful” social interaction, what then are the implications for future U.S./international relations? A discussion is presented of the larger societal implications that are associated with marginalized groups creating solidarities that exclude members of nationality groups that are seen as economically, socially and politically dominant. Critically analyzing the microcosm of group relations within the
university setting draws attention to what the future holds for individuals living in a global world.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Introduction

The year 2004 marked the 50th anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education, in which the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the doctrine of “separate but equal,” yet racial segregation continues to persist in the American education system. While segregation was imposed by law prior to the Brown decision in 1954, today self-segregation poses a challenge to the effectiveness of university diversification policies. Most of the research that provides evidence of self-segregation within American higher education institutions reveals consistent patterns of self-segregation, especially among African American and other minority college students (Trent & Copeland 1988; Wells, 1989; Hardin, 1997; Myers, 1989; Buttny, 1999; Villalpando, 2003). The scholarship on African American students’ experiences on American college campuses is an important body of literature which has contributed significantly in shaping a variety of higher education diversity initiatives.

However, there has been very little research that examines the extent to which international students likewise follow a similar pattern of self-segregation while attending colleges and universities in the United States. A number of scholars have briefly commented on the tendency of international students to segregate by describing their actions in terms of forming a “subculture of co-nationals,” engaging in “social isolation” (Fahrlander, 1980, p. 5, 18), choosing “to isolate themselves” (Trice, 2004, p. 674), “forming enclaves [with] fellow nationals” (Chen, 1991, p. 40), and some have described them as “constrictors” of host nationals (Bennett & McKnight, 1956, p. 250, also, see Bennett, 1958). Furnham & Alibhai (1985) have even gone so far as to point out that international students have a greater preference to establish
friendships with co-nationals from their own country, or other international students, as opposed to forming friendships with American students. These studies suggest that internationals prefer socially interacting with international students because it is easier to build friendships with other international students that share a similar national and cultural background. Yet, the problem with much of this literature is that few studies provide a theoretically explicit analysis of how and why some international students choose not to socially interact with host nationals. Furthermore, there has not yet been a systematic attempt to explain the relation between international students’ social interactions and their cultural identity development.

This chapter is divided into three major sections. First, I introduce the literature on self-segregation issues in order to highlight the lack of research which examines international students’ self-segregation patterns. Second, I discuss current studies that address diversity issues and the importance of interacting with diverse groups in a higher education setting. Here, I also describe how international students have not been fully included as part of higher education diversity initiatives, especially in the area of promoting social interaction between international, American host national, and co-national students. Lastly, I provide an in-depth literature review on various studies that have been conducted on international students (both undergraduate and graduate) since the 1950s. This section is divided into different decades in order to highlight what I consider the most prevalent areas of research that were conducted on international students over the last five decades. The purpose of this section is to draw attention to the lack of research that specifically addresses the connection between international students’ social interaction practices and the formation of cultural identities.

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3 Co-national refers to members of one’s own nationality group.
II. Self-Segregation & Higher Education

Self-segregation among African Americans has been examined by a number of scholars over the course of the last two decades. Buttny (1999) highlights patterns of self-segregation by African American students attending predominantly white university campuses across the United States. Using a qualitative methodology, specifically conducting interviews with students at various universities, Buttny (1999) examines the “discursive constructions of racial boundaries, difference, and voluntary segregation” among African American students (p. 247). Asante & Alseem (1984) also provide evidence of social segregation between African American and white students on university campuses. More recently, Lane (2003) conducted a qualitative study on African American students’ voluntary segregation practices in which he discusses how their self-segregation behavior on a predominantly white campus was directly related to their socio-economic status. These authors suggest that within American colleges and universities there tends to be an atmosphere of social and cultural separateness between black and white students (also, see Duster, 1992; Gitlin, 1995; Steele, 1996).

Similarly, Villalpando (2003) documents self-segregation patterns among Chicana/o college students and points out that some scholars, including Bloom (1987) and D’Souza (1991), have argued that this practice results in a form of racial balkanization and social fragmentation (Altbach & Lomotey, 1991; Ravitch & Asante, 1991; Duster, 1991, 1993, 1995; Astin, 1993b). According to Villalpando (2003), “[r]acial balkanization is perceived as the tendency for students of color to self-segregate from the university’s predominantly white student body and into their respective racial ‘enclaves’” (p. 619). Clearly, self-segregation reinforces division among individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds within a society. However, there are also positive aspects associated with engaging in patterns of “voluntary” segregation. By
conducting a quantitative longitudinal study over a nine-year period, Villalpando collected survey data of Chicana/o college students across 40 different universities in order to determine the benefits these students associated with “same-race peer group” interactions during their college experience. While most research portrays self-segregation in a negative manner, Villalpando’s (2003) findings indicate that for Chicana/o students their “socially conscious values [were] reinforced, they increase[d] their likelihood of pursuing careers in service of their communities, and they [were] more inclined to become involved in community service activities after college” (p. 619). His study illustrates that self-segregation can serve as a social support system for minority college students, although the larger implication for inter-group solidarity remains an open question.

Villalpando (2003) contends that self-segregation is “beneficial” to minority students as it leads to civic participation with respect to community involvement after graduating from college. He addresses the question of whether self-segregation is beneficial to minority students yet does not consider the more important question of whether self-segregation is beneficial in general for all college students. Conservative scholars view minority self-segregation patterns negatively since they see such social acts as hindering the formation of a cohesive American national identity (Bloom, 1987; D’Souza, 1991). While they rightly maintain that self-segregation leads to further separateness between different groups, they also advocate for minority assimilation and conformity into a single American national identity. I would agree that self-segregation indeed divides different groups, but it is also possible to maintain ties with one’s own group and at the same time engage in “meaningful” social interaction with individuals of different nationalities than one’s self.
The process of self-segregation by minority groups acts as a social support system for these college students, but the extent to which self-segregation negates these students’ abilities and efforts to socialize with other students outside of their own racial/ethnic group is problematic. If minority college students socialize only with other minority students, then this raises the question: Are they truly taking part in the full college experience in which they might engage in “meaningful” social interactions across racial and national lines? Similarly, international students benefit from the social networks resulting from their self-segregation patterns; however, if these students are not actively interacting with American students (both white and minority), then they too are not engaging in the full college experience of socially interacting with different groups of students. The full college experience that I am referring to entails both academic and social experiences. Thus, if international students are only engaging in meaningful academic relationships with American host nationals, then the question becomes: Are they really getting a complete cross-cultural experience? Without socially interacting with American host nationals, the cross-cultural interaction goal that organizations such as the Institute of International Education and the American Institute of Foreign Study promote as being attainable through study at various U.S. higher education institutions is not actually being accomplished when these students attend U.S. colleges and universities.

International graduate student self-segregation on American college campuses diminishes the goals of diversity initiatives. Social segregation by internationals limits the establishment of inter-group solidarities with Americans. Explaining how international graduate students socially navigate within an American college setting is essential for theorizing how their cultural identity is constructed. Understanding how one’s cultural identity is reconstituted on an American university campus can in turn help explain what motivates international students’ tendencies to
engage in segregated social practices. This disconnection in international students’ social interactions with American host nationals suggests that strong efforts must be made to foster “meaningful” social interactions with American students without sacrificing the support system gained from segregating and socializing with members from one’s own nationality group. This research addresses the larger question of how to assist a university in creating inter-group solidarities within a college setting. Specifically, the key challenge is learning how to balance the social interaction scale without tipping it to one end in which groups socialize only with members of the same group or to the other end in which socializing with different groups can diminish same-group solidarities.

III. The Importance of Diversity and Social Interaction

Most American colleges and universities have declared that diversity should be an important part of their mission statement, especially since the U.S. is becoming increasingly diverse. Scholars such as Levine (1996) contend that in order for higher education institutions to effectively prepare students to function within a multicultural society, the university must have strong diversity policies which promote social interaction among a diverse student body. However, even though universities are declaring support for diversity, it is important to understand what type of diversity policies universities are creating to foster social interaction. Conceptions of diversity that involve increasing enrollment patterns without emphasis on social dynamics lead one to question whether universities are truly accomplishing “diversity” if they are not taking steps to encourage social interaction among all students.

Expanding upon Gurin (1999) and Chang’s (1999) discussion of diversity, Milem (2003) argues that the concept of diversity should include three main elements: structural diversity, diversity-related initiatives and diverse interactions. Structural diversity is “the numerical and
proportional representation of students from different racial/ethnic groups in the student body” (Milem, 2003, p. 132; also, see Hurtado et al., 1998; 1999). The next aspect of diversity, diversity-related initiatives, includes university-sponsored programs, workshops, and activities that emphasize the importance of cultural diversity (Milem, 2003; also, see Chang, 1999). Finally, according to Milem (2003), “diverse interactions [are] characterized by students’ exchanges with racially and ethnically diverse people as well as diverse ideas, information, and experiences. People are influenced by their interactions with diverse ideas and information as well as diverse people” (p. 132). Milem (2003) also highlights four educational benefits of diversity: individual, institutional, economic, and societal benefits. Individual benefits involve the positive effects that occur in a student’s college experience and future success as a result of a diverse campus setting. Institutional benefits, on the other hand, are the accomplishment of creating a diverse campus resulting from a university’s active efforts to carry out diversity initiatives. Additionally, economic benefits are the positive effects of diversity that lead to developments in the marketplace. Lastly, societal benefits consist of the influence that diversity within the college setting has on a person’s life and their motivations to accomplish civic goals and take part in community actions after attending college.

Since the early 1990s, Mid-Atlantic University has made significant efforts to improve the structural and diversity-related initiative aspects of diversity. Mid-Atlantic University is ranked among the top 25 U.S. higher education institutions with a large enrollment of international students. Minority student enrollment at the university has also increased since the 1990s. The most recent fall 2006 data show African American student enrollment at over 4,000 and Hispanics at close to 2,000 (Mid-Atlantic University Demographic Information, 2006). Additionally, women currently represent close to 50 percent of the student population. In the area

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4 The pseudonym for the university is used in this citation.
of diversity-related initiatives, the current *Mid-Atlantic University Diversity Plan* (2004-09), which is in its second phase since the initial plan was established in the late 1990s, lists a number of strategies and efforts put into effect to improve diversity at the university. Diversity-related initiatives are constructed around such areas as the campus climate, recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and students, and diversifying the curriculum as well as the leadership and organizational aspects of the university.

While Mid-Atlantic University has made significant efforts to increase diversity on campus, debates over structural diversity and diversity-related initiatives remain prominent at the university. Student protests in recent years suggest that improvements in these two areas of diversity still remain to be accomplished by the university. In the area of improving social interactions among the student body, the extent to which the university is creating meaningful social connections between students is also questionable. The university’s emphasis on the structural and diversity-related initiative aspects of diversity, which are highlighted in the diversity plan, suggests that a disconnection exists between the first two elements of diversity and the third in which students should also engage in “meaningful” social interactions with the diverse student body.

A growing number of scholars suggest that both minority and white students benefit from a diverse campus setting (Springer, Palmer, Terenzini, Pascarella & Nora 1996; Gurin, 1999; Chang, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Pascarella & Terenzini (2005), for instance, point out that “the weight of evidence is reasonably clear and consistent . . . that across racial-ethnic groups, having friends of another race and being a member of an interracial friendship group has significant and positive net effects on racial-ethnic attitudes and values” (p. 311; also, see Smith, 1993; Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe & Ropp, 1997; Antonio, 1998, 1999, 2000; Hurtado et.

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5 The pseudonym for the university is used in this citation.
al., 1998, 1999; Asada, Swank, Goldey, 2003). The theoretical framework that scholars have developed to examine the benefits of diversity (i.e., all three aspects) within a college setting has focused primarily on the “cognitive and psychosocial” development of college students (Perry, 1970; Coser, 1975; King 1978; Astin, 1993a; Villalpando, 1994; MacPhee, Kreutzer, and Fritz, 1994; Springer et al., 1996; Pascarella, 1985; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini & Nora, 1998; Gurin, 1999; Milem, 1999; 2001).

In particular, Gurin (1999) theorizes that college students tend to benefit cognitively and psychosocially from diversity in terms of experiencing a “greater awareness of the learning process, better critical thinking skills, and better preparation for the many challenges they will face as involved citizens in a democratic, multiracial society” (p. 134). His quantitative analysis of survey data collected by the University of Michigan and the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) on African American and white students’ engagement with issues of diversity also illustrates that students experiencing “contact with diverse ideas, information, and people were more likely to show growth in their ‘active thinking processes,’ which were represented by increases in measures of complex thinking and social/historical thinking” (p. 138, also, see Coser, 1975).

MacPhee et al. (1994) utilize a mixed methods approach to study the effects that a diverse curriculum and teaching approach have on a student’s openness to diversity. Their findings indicate that both a diverse curriculum and innovative teaching methods changed students’ views about different racial/ethnic groups, and the students also increased their critical thinking skills.

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6 Active thinking relates to active learning which is one of two types of outcomes discussed by Gurin (1999), and it refers to the process by which “students become involved while in college, the engagement and motivation that students exhibit, the learning and refinement of intellectual and academic skills, and the value students place on these skills after they leave college. Democracy outcomes [the second type of outcome] refers to the ways in which higher education prepares students to become involved as active participants in a society that is becoming increasingly diverse and complex” (p. 136).
Additionally, Springer et al. (1996) suggest that increasing interaction between minority and white students during their college experience leads to a reduction in negative views about campus climate.

Gurin (1999), Coser (1975), MacPhee et al. (1994) and Springer et al. (1996) also focus on undergraduate college student experiences in order to discuss the “social and personal identity” development experienced by the typical undergraduate (age 18-22 years) who is considered to be at a stage of growth in which their experiences are essential in influencing the development of their identity (Milem, 2003, p. 134; also, see Erikson, 1946; 1956). Milem (2003), for instance, notes that “among the conditions in college that facilitate the development of identity is the opportunity to be exposed to people, experiences, and ideas that differ from one’s past environment” (p. 134, also, see Gurin, 1999). Undergraduate college students’ experiences in a diverse college setting are central to their identity formation; however, the development of cultural identity is not a static process that ends at a particular stage in life. An individual’s sense of identity is multifaceted and continuously changing throughout the course of their life based on their experiences and social interaction with different groups of people.

Moreover, while a principal goal of American colleges and universities is to prepare students for civic participation within the American democratic context (i.e., students are taught to become “good citizens” and to become involved in the development of their communities), scholars such as Bikson & Law (1994) maintain that higher education institutions are also responsible for preparing students with “cross-cultural competence” skills that will allow them to interact and communicate with people of different racial, ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds. The idea of cross-cultural competence suggests that college students should be equipped with a high level of social, cultural and communication skills if they are to succeed in
the global workforce. Bikson & Law (1994) suggest that many corporations do not find employees who are well-equipped with the cross-cultural competence skills that they require. They further imply that higher education institutions are not efficiently fostering a setting which encourages all of their students to interact with individuals that are culturally different from themselves. Thus, they are ill-prepared with the necessary cross-cultural competence that would allow them to function with other individuals in a business organization.

As noted above, the current literature emphasizes the significant benefits associated with engaging in diverse social interactions. Much of this work consists of heavily quantitative studies that examine minority college students’ social interaction on large college campuses. While quantitative studies are crucial to measuring the degree to which students socially interact with other groups, and the effect of their actions in terms of cognitive and psychosocial development, prior research has not adequately utilized qualitative methods that provide the interpretive tools necessary for considering the intersubjective meanings that international graduate students themselves ascribe to their social interaction patterns or the role that the university plays in reinforcing their social interactions. A qualitative study examining international graduate student social interactions is necessary as it draws attention to a complex set of issues associated with these students’ cultural identity development and social practices.

IV. Literature on International Students (1950s to Present)

Research on international students studying in the United States is by no means limited. Beginning around the 1950s, with dramatic increases in international student enrollments on U.S. college and university campuses, a number of studies were conducted on international students, who some scholars refer to as the “foreign” or “sojourner” student (Huang, 1977; Church, 1982; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Khoo, Abu-Rasain & Hornby, 1994; de Verthelyi, 1995; Hechanova-
There is great variation across these studies in terms of the groups of international students that are studied and the number of students that compose a study. For instance, in some cases, the sample is clearly defined as only undergraduate or graduate students or a combination of both, whereas in other studies no clear distinction is made, yet generalizations are offered about international students as a whole. Furthermore, most studies are directly restricted to investigating international students from one specific country, with the exception of a few which incorporate multiple nationality groups, in order to make broader generalizations about the international student body on a larger campus. The number of international students that are examined in a given study also varies greatly from 15 students to over 200 students in some cases.

It is also evident that the bulk of the literature on international students is quantitative and based on the analysis of a number of different variables that are used to explain some significant pattern that exists across the board for a particular sample of internationals. Only a few studies apply qualitative methods to studying international students (Oberg, 1960; Brinson & Kottler, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995; Abadi, 2000; Fatima, 2001; Otieno, 2001; Tseng & Newton, 2002; Zhai, 2002; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Heggies & Jackson, 2003). Undoubtedly, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on these students since the 1950s, and it has continued to expand over the decades with the growing international student population in the United States.

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7 “International student” is the primary terminology that will be used to reference the group of students that will be discussed in this dissertation. It refers to a student pursuing a higher education degree outside of their national boundaries. The terms “foreign” or “sojourner” student can also be used to define an international studying outside their home country.

Researchers often use the terms adjustment, adaptation, acculturation or assimilation to discuss international students studying in the United States (Oberg, 1960; Fiedler, Mitchell & Triandis, 1971; Ruben & Kealey, 1979; Church, 1982; Landis, Brislin & Hulgus, 1985; Hannigan, 1990; Searle & Ward, 1990). According to Hannigan (1990), the terms “Adjustment, Adaptation, Acculturation and Assimilation describe changes that occurs when individuals or groups have contact with a different culture. These terms are not clearly differentiated” (p. 92). While distinctions among these concepts are not explicitly identified, the idioms of adjustment and adaptation are generally the most prevalent among scholars when describing the experiences of international students.

The early studies on international students, beginning around the 1950s, describe the adjustment or adaptation problems faced by these students while attending U.S. higher education institutions. Most scholars at the time primarily sought to evaluate international student adjustment in terms of measuring the effect that different variables have on their ability to become integrated within their new educational settings. These studies took into account factors relating to the effect that personality traits, attitude to cross-cultural experiences, degree of social contact with host nationals, language/cultural difficulties and support from institutions had on international students’ overall academic, social and psychological adjustment.

*International Students Adjustment & Attitude Changes (1950s to 1960s)*

Between the 1950s and 1960s, most studies mainly described the academic and social adjustment and adaptation challenges faced by internationals during their educational experience.

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in the U.S. (Peterson & Neumeyer, 1948; Du Bois, 1956; Lambert & Bressler, 1956; Sewell & Davidsen, 1962; Scott, 1956; Beals & Humphrey, 1957; Coelho, 1958; Morris, 1960; Oberg, 1960; Bailyn & Kelman, 1962; Selltiz & Cook, 1962; Selltiz, Christ, Havel & Cook, 1963). These early studies present international students as having problems in such areas relating to difficulties in coursework, language barriers and “culture shock” (Oberg, 1960). Fahrlander (1980) and Chen (1985) note that much of this early research was largely descriptive, with scholars focusing on documenting the changes that international students undergo over the course of their studies. During the latter half of the 1950s and into the 1960s, scholars focused on describing various stages of adjustment experienced by international students (Lysgaard, 1955; Smith, 1956; Lambert & Bressler, 1956; Coelho, 1958; Jacobson, 1963; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Selby & Woods, 1966). These studies highlighted modifications that occurred in international students’ attitudes about host nationals and the institution.

For instance, Lysgaard (1955) describes international students’ stages of attitudinal adjustment in terms of following a U-curve trend. The results of this study suggest that for international students from so-called “developing countries,” the curve followed a pattern of unfavorable, favorable and then back to unfavorable attitudes towards the host country. In contrast, Selby & Woods (1966) discuss changes in international students’ attitudes as a J-curve. International attitudes changed based on changes in their academic year. In some academic years, their social contacts grew and other years they declined, which created an up and down type of attitudinal trend. Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) expand upon Lysgaard’s (1955) U-curve using a W-curve to describe a second level of adjustment that international students undergo when they have to decide at the end of their educational pursuit in the U.S. if they want to return to their home country. They maintain that international students experience a decline in attitude then a
second peak once they make a decision. A number of other scholars have also discussed international students’ adjustment more broadly in terms of the stages of culture shock that they undergo upon entering the United States. Such studies provide a description of three (Garza-Guerrero, 1974), five (Adler, 1975) and even nine (Jacobson, 1963) stages of development of culture shock that international students experience.

These early studies provide a strong background on the problems that international students face while studying in the U.S. However, they do not provide an adequate discussion of the larger implications associated with their findings. Generally, they do not theorize what role the institution plays in creating the problems that these students encounter or the extent to which the institution has applied strategies to integrate international students within the university. Additionally, very little theoretical discussion is provided concerning how international students make meaning of their experiences and reconstruct their identity while studying at a U.S. higher education institution as a result of their experiences with host nationals, co-nationals, and other internationals. The approaches taken to studying international students also automatically assume that internationals have to adjust, adapt, acculturate or assimilate to the American culture and university setting if they are to succeed both academically and socially. The problems are simply presented, then the next step is what can be done to help internationals better adjust to the American university. The question of whether international students actually need to “adjust” in order to pursue their degrees in the U.S. is not even taken into consideration.

*International Students’ Social Interaction & Academic Achievement (1960s to 1990s)*

From the 1960s to the 1990s, a substantial amount of research on international students studying in the U.S. drew attention to the role that social interaction with host nationals plays in
relation to changes in these students’ attitudes, satisfaction and psycho-social adjustment. Research conducted by a number of scholars focused on how well internationals are able to engage in social contact with host nationals and co-nationals to the extent that changes occur in their overall attitude and satisfaction with their new learning environment. They also focused primarily on examining the social, academic and mental adjustments that took place when an international student moved from their familiar home culture to a new culture (Selltiz et al., 1963; Fisher, Epstein & Harris, 1967; Ibrahim, 1970; Golden, 1973; Yeh, 1976; Hull, 1978; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Ruben & Kealey, 1979; Church, 1982; Vaz, 1985; Chen, 1985; Abu-Hilal, 1987; Schram & Lauver, 1988; Chen, 1992; Petress, 1995; Alreshoud & Koeske, 1997).

For instance, a study by Selltiz et al. (1963) illustrated that international students who lived with American roommates were more likely to express positive attitudes and feelings of satisfaction regarding the social contacts they had with host nationals. Klein (1977) also surveyed a number of international students who did not engage in any type of cross-cultural contact with host nationals. According to these findings, international students who did not socially interact with members of the host culture often tended to communicate feelings of social isolation and would articulate negative attitudes towards American host nationals. In another study, Church (1982) argued that international students who choose to participate in superficial social exchanges with host nationals often do not benefit from the full intercultural social exchange that is linked to their educational experience. Other scholars also suggest that social interaction between foreign students and host nationals can improve the overall social and mental health of these students. Golden (1973) and Yeh (1976) both conducted studies in which international students described seeking psychological assistance because they were not able to develop social relations with host nationals. These scholars suggest that international students’
inability to engage in cross-cultural interactions often contributed to their poor mental and social health. Unsuccessful attempts to socially interact with host nationals contributed to their mental and emotional stress which resulted in the development of negative views about host nationals and the institutions.

The general consensus among these scholars is that social interaction with host nationals is a necessary factor for effective adjustment and that engaging in positive social interaction with host nationals increases international students’ attitudes and satisfaction with their academic and social experiences in the United States. Very few of these studies have drawn upon a specific theoretical framework to explain international students’ social interaction practices, with the exception of a more recent study by Trice (2004). In particular, Trice (2004) uses Bourdieu’s (1980, 1983/86, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) social capital theory to explain international graduate student social interaction practices at one higher education institution in the Midwest. Similarly to prior studies, Trice highlights the benefits international graduate students gain from socially interacting with American host nationals. Using Bourdieu’s social capital theory, she suggests that international graduate students who were better able to engage in positive social interactions with Americans were also able to accumulate social capital through social networks. The ability to form social networks with Americans allowed them to acquire social capital in the form of “access to information about cultural norms, insight into how organizational units operate (e.g., chains of command, explicit and implicit rules), and knowledge of the U.S. labor market” (p. 672). Trice’s (2004) use of an explicit theoretical framework to demonstrate how international graduate students access capital resources through their social interaction patterns is rare across the international student literature.
Trice’s study provides important insight regarding the advantages of socially interacting with American students. Similar to the other scholars cited above, she implies that being able and/or willing to adjust to the American culture at the institution can significantly influence international graduate students’ academic and social outcomes. While Trice draws upon Bourdieu’s theory of social capital, she does not fully link this to a discussion of cultural capital. Additionally, by focusing heavily on the benefits associated with interacting mainly with American host nationals, Trice does not explore the benefits of both cultural and social capital resources that are accumulated through interacting with co-nationals and internationals more broadly.

Studies that explore the positive social, academic and psychological benefits that international students gain from socially interacting with co-nationals became more prevalent during the 1970s and 1980s. Many scholars began to argue that positive effects result from international students’ social contact with co-nationals from their own country (Johnson, 1970; Chu, Yeh, Klein, Alexander & Miller, 1971; Klein, Alexander, Tseng, Miller, Chu & Workneh, 1971; Bochner, McLeod & Lin, 1977; Kang, 1972; Alexander, Workneh, Klein, & Miller, 1976; Hull, 1978; White & White, 1981; Bochner, 1982; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Mickle, 1985; Salim, 1985; Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Schram & Lauver, 1988). Bochner, Lin & McLeod (1977) and Bochner (1982) emphasize that by restricting their social relations with only co-nationals, international students can enhance their perceptions of their own culture and increase their confidence level. Furnham & Alibhai (1985) also maintain that establishing social networks with co-nationals is essential in helping internationals better adjust to the host institution. These scholars agree that engaging in social interactions and building friendships with host nationals can aid internationals in making their adjustment and adaptation much easier.
The next step of explaining what the negative views of American host nationals and positive relations with co-nationals mean for these students’ identity is not critically discussed by most scholars. Additionally, the question of whether international students feel it is necessary to socially interact with American students is not given much attention in the literature. It is assumed that internationals want to participate in cross-cultural contact with American students and that this is necessary if they are to acquire their degree. The general assumption is that social interaction with host nationals and co-nationals enhances adjustment, yet an explanation concerning the implications associated with socially interacting too much with one group or engaging in limited social interaction is neglected in scholarly research. Most of the research on international students’ social interaction is focused on how institutions can better assist internationals in their overall adjustment or adaptation. International students’ interpretation and explanation of their social interaction with Americans and other international students as it relates to cultural identity development is not theoretically examined in the majority of the literature on international students.

With the exception of several recent studies that examine international students’ identity issues (Ward & Searle, 1991; Larsen, Killifer, Csepeli & Krumov, 1992; Bagley & Copeland, 1994; Noels, Pon & Clement, 1996; Ueno, 2001; Poyrazli, 2003), the link between what motivates the types of social relations that internationals engage in, and how such interactions contribute in the reconstruction of these students’ cultural identity, has not fully been explored from an explicitly theoretical perspective. Schmitt, Spears & Branscombe’s (2003) recent article, “Constructing a minority group identity out of shared rejection: The case of international students,” is one of the only studies that offers a more theoretical approach to studying international students’ identity construction in the context of a U.S. higher education setting. The
authors utilize Branscombe, Schmitt & Harvey’s (1999) rejection-identification model to theorize whether perceptions of “rejection” and “discrimination” by host nationals lead international students to construct a shared sense of collective identity (Schmitt et al., 2003, p. 1). Quantitatively measuring the responses from a survey given to international students from non-European and non-English-speaking countries, Schmitt et al. (2003) predict that increases in perceptions of rejection and discrimination by internationals confirm the theory that they are more likely to identify with other international students. This idea of forming hybrid or pan-national identities by international students will be discussed in more depth in Chapters 3, 5 and 6.

Another major body of literature that was produced between the 1960s and 1990s concerns international students’ academic achievement in relation to their adaptation to various U.S. higher educational settings (Hill, 1966; Ohuche, 1967; Ford, 1969; Jarrahi-Zadeh & Eichman, 1970; Sharma, 1971; Jammaz, 1972; Pruitt, 1977; Chongolnee, 1979; Hosseini, 1982; White & Brown, 1983; Kashani-Siadat, 1986; Tanchareonrat, 1989; Hu, 1991; Epstein, 1996; Stoynoff, 1996, 1997; Ying, 2003). Much of this research highlights the extent to which international adaptation problems are directly influenced by their academic difficulties experienced upon entering a U.S. college or university campus.

Hill (1966), Sharma (1971) and White & Brown (1983) specifically examine the effect that language barriers have had on international students’ achievement. Their findings illustrate that international students’ English-language proficiency is significantly linked to their overall academic achievement. Epstein (1996) also compared the achievement motivation of international and immigrant students in order to assess whether international students’ personal achievement motivation, along with other curricula and support services, affected achievement in
terms of their GPA and the number of credits and awards they earned while attending the Miami-Dade Community College. The results of her study indicated that international students were more highly motivated to achieve because they held a different set of personal attributes and they engaged in very different activities which enhanced their achievement.

More recently, Ying (2003) conducted a longitudinal study, focusing exclusively on Taiwanese graduate students’ academic achievement. He explored the role that choice of discipline and relationships with host nationals has had on these students academic performance. The students’ writing skills and their choice of pursuing degrees in the engineering field had significant effects on their achievement level. In terms of these students’ overall experiences in the U.S., the study revealed that the degree of social contact with Americans, along with their reports of not experiencing loneliness, were also critical factors in determining how well they were able to adapt to the U.S. educational setting. An extensive array of research is available on international students’ academic achievement. Such issues as English language proficiency, field of study, the degree of social interactions with host nationals, married life, financial status, age and sex factors have all been considered to assess the effect they have had on these students’ overall academic performance.

Counseling Strategies & Services (1980s to 1990s)

The question of how well student development services are able to assist international students became an important area of study beginning in the 1980s. Along with studies on international student social interaction and academic achievement, scholars began to shift their interests to explore the effectiveness of student development services. In particular, a number of Education, Social Psychology and Counseling Studies researchers began to study university counseling services and programs approaches in terms of attracting international students to
utilize available counseling services and their ability to meet the needs of these students who are coming from very diverse national and cultural backgrounds.

The dramatic increases in the 1980s of over 150,000 international students entering the United States to pursue degrees, along with criticism from scholars in the 1970s and early 1980s, led scholars to move beyond simply describing the problems faced by international students (Vontress, 1969; Chang, 1981; Wrenn, 1983; Chen, 1985). Many of the more recent studies highlight the disconnection between what counselors think international students need and their actual needs. The counselors’ limited knowledge about the diverse cultural norms and values of different international students often make it difficult for them to determine just how best to assist these students. On the other hand, the international students’ stereotypes about attending campus counseling services can also contribute to misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations concerning the social and psychological services provided by such student services offices.¹⁰

Some scholars have also conducted research which specifically draws attention to the types of international students that are more likely to use counseling services on campus (Komiya & Eells, 2001; Yi, Giseala & Kishimoto, 2003; Zang & Dixon, 2003). Komiya & Eells (2001) surveyed 122 international students to assess their attitudes about counseling services. They found that young international women were more inclined to seek counseling since they expressed more openness to discussing emotional issues. Yi et al. (2003) collected demographic data on 516 international students at a university in Texas, and they found that young undergraduate international women were more likely to utilize career counseling services.

Interestingly, their study also indicated that older male graduate students sought counseling services for personal reasons. Zang & Dixon (2003) collected data on 170 Asian international students concerning their attitudes towards counseling services and their degree of acculturation in the U.S. There were significant effects associated with both attitude and acculturation level. Thus, the type of Asian international students who are more open-minded about the quality of counseling service, and who demonstrated a higher level of acculturation, were more likely to use university counseling services.

Other scholars have also begun to think critically about new policies and strategies that could be established to address the unique needs of these students. Various scholars have even made specific recommendations on how to counsel or provide guidance to international students in order to alleviate the cultural and social difficulties associated with their transition to the United States. For example, Dillard & Chisolm (1983) recommend that higher education counselors and international students in a multicultural context need to construct an open dialogue, which involves mutual learning and understanding from both parties. Essandoh (1995) examines the counseling needs of African students and illustrated that these students often come from cultural backgrounds which place strong beliefs in therapeutic healing. Thus, she proposed that counselors need to recognize the socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs held by some international students when they seek counseling services.

Scholars such as Khoo et al. (1994) have suggested improving counseling strategies in terms of counselors changing their overall approach to counseling in such areas as their communication styles and sensitivity to the emotional aspects of international adjustment. The recommendations made by these scholars and others are an important step towards recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of different international students attending colleges and
universities across the country. These studies represent new directions for higher education administrators, policymakers, academics and staff to better assist international students throughout their educational experience in the United States.

V. Contributions to the Literature on International Students

International students’ social interaction is a topic that has been widely discussed over the last few decades. As noted above, much of the early research that focused attention on international students’ social interaction often explored the social, academic and psychological stress resulting from international students not being able to effectively interact with American host nationals. In the process of describing the social and academic difficulties faced by international students, scholars have noted the fact that since the 1950s international students have been engaging in some form of self-segregation when they state that these students tend to participate in limited social interactions with host nationals or that they prefer to interact mainly with co-nationals. However, the exact usage of the term self-segregation has not been directly or fully discussed in relation to international students.

Research on higher education diversity initiatives also fails to take international students into account, especially in the area of establishing and promoting policies that encourage social interaction between internationals and American students. The diversity literature and the studies on international students clearly agree that cross-cultural interaction, both academic and social, is essential for educational development. However, few studies specifically draw attention to higher education diversity issues in relation to international students. Additionally, the research conducted on international students’ social interaction practices is one-sided when it emphasizes cross-cultural education between international and American students. An assumption is made in most studies that internationals must adjust, adapt, or assimilate to American culture in order for
cross-cultural interactions to take place. Few studies discuss whether internationals find it necessary to socially interact with Americans while pursuing their degrees in the United States. Furthermore, few studies have attempted to devise a theory which explains how international students interpret their social interaction practices or the influence that their social interaction has on their cultural identity development.\(^{11}\)

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature that has been conducted on international students. The limitations found in the self-segregation, diversity and international literature are a principal rationale for conducting this study, especially since these issues all relate to the growing body of international students who attend various U.S. higher education institutions. The theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3, and the evidence provided from interviews, interaction charts, focus groups and participant-observation data collected for this study presented in Chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8 attempts to fill the gap in the literature in all three areas of study. As noted in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to theorize how and why some international graduate students choose to self-segregate and others do not while attending a large public U.S. higher education institution. This question is significant because it seeks to address the complexities associated with cultural identity development and how this might vary from one international student to the next.

In the next chapter, I introduce the theoretical framework for this study. Here, I discuss Pierre Bourdieu’s (1980, 1983/86, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) social and cultural capital theory and Edward Said’s (1978, 1993) work on the exoticized “Other” in relation to social interaction practices and the process of cultural identity development. I also examine the different educational and sociological studies that draw upon these two scholars research. Next, I

\(^{11}\) Schmitt et al.’s (2003) study is the only one thus far that has attempted to theorize international students social interaction practices in relation to forming collective identities with co-nationals.
situate my own study within this literature and explain the reasons why I have chosen to draw upon these two theories. Lastly, I describe the theoretical framework for this study through a conceptual model that incorporates the ideas of social and cultural capital, along with the process of “othering,” to explain how and why some international students tend to engage in social segregation while others do not.
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I. Introduction

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon a number of educational and sociological studies that discuss theories of cultural and social capital with regard to establishing social relations. The concepts are applied in the context of this study to describe specific social interaction tendencies and cultural exchanges carried out by various international graduate students. To begin with, a discussion is presented on the different theories of U.S. college students’ interaction practices in connection to their academic and social outcomes. Studies related to U.S. college students’ identity development are also briefly introduced in order to highlight key underlying assumptions associated with the interaction theories. In particular, the assumption that marginalized groups of college students have to assimilate into the dominant cultural norms and values of a higher education institution is challenged as a practice that international graduate students follow while attending a large predominantly white U.S. college campus.

The concepts of cultural and social capital, originating from Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron’s (1980, 1983/86, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) social reproduction theory, are discussed in the next section in terms of how scholars of education and sociology have applied each concept in their own research. Specifically, the exclusionary practices that some scholars link to Bourdieu’s theories are discussed in relation to international graduate students, who structurally represent a marginalized group at Mid-Atlantic University.

In the next section, Bourdieu’s theories are aligned with Edward Said’s (1978, 1993) theory on the social construction of “the Other” (p. 210). Theoretical connections are made
between cultural and social capital exchanges in relation to constructing one’s cultural identity while also engaging in a process of “othering.” Criticisms of Said’s theory of “the Other” are also considered. The idea that members of a dominant group—i.e., individuals who are perceived as having high levels of cultural capital—are the only ones that participate in cultural and social exclusion practices is challenged in this section. The concept of “the Other” is also applied in discussing whether international graduate students’ tendencies to engage in segregated social practices limit or deepen their cultural and social capital. In particular, does their tendency to participate in social interaction with specific nationality groups, while excluding others, limit their overall accumulation of cultural and social capital? Or, do internationals’ social investments in smaller, more narrowly-defined social networks lead to the development of deeper quality social relationships?

The final section integrates both Bourdieu and Said’s theories in order to introduce the theoretical framework being put forth in this study (Section V). The framework draws upon and challenges prior ideas linked to both scholars. A conceptual model is used to theorize the impact that international graduate students’ national and cultural backgrounds, along with the role of the institution, have on their social interaction and cultural identity development. This framework brings together the idea of individual agency and the institution as contributing factors involved in international graduate students’ social experiences and identity formation. Cultural capital, social capital and the concept of the “Other” are connected to explain how some, though not all, international graduate students engage in segregated social practices at Mid-Atlantic University. The framework is used to explain the social interactions and the cultural identity development processes that non-segregating international students engage in as well.
II. Student Interaction Theories & Identity Development Studies

The majority of theories of student interaction and cultural identity development are often conceptualized within a sociological and/or psychosocial framework (also discussed briefly in Chapter 2, Section III). The focus has primarily been on the higher education institution, specifically the college environment, with respect to influencing student development (such as development in cognitive and psychological skills and student ability to persist within an institution). Furthermore, attention is given to undergraduate college students who often demographically represent the largest percentage of the student body. The college student literature also highlights American students’ (white and minority groups) social interactions in relation to their overall adjustment and ability to persist in their new college environment (Braxton, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Sociological theories put forth by scholars such as Astin (1970a, 1970b, 1985, 1991), Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), Pascarella (1985) and Weidman (1989) offer important insight on how to better understand student development and change within a higher education setting. These theories describe a number of factors relating to students’ academic achievement, interactions with faculty/peers, and their ability to become involved in extracurricular activities in relation to their academic and social outcomes. From a sociological perspective, these factors draw attention to student development within a higher education context in terms of changes in their behavior, attitudes, skills, values, goals, commitments. These theories on student interaction also tend to underscore the institutional role as central to student outcomes and development, only discussing students’ pre-college characteristics and cultural background more generally as part of the process (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).
For instance, Astin’s (1970a, 1970b, 1991) input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model explains student change—i.e., their academic and social development—in terms of how much the student puts into their college experience and takes advantages of opportunities made available by the university. In this model, Astin makes note of pre-college characteristics such as age, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, traits acquired through family, and prior educational experiences as relevant to student development. Similarly, Astin’s (1985) theory of involvement suggests that student involvement and willingness to take part in the opportunities provided by the institution is central to their persistence within the institution. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), Astin’s involvement theory implies that “[t]he student . . . plays the lead role inasmuch as change is likely to occur only to the extent that the student capitalizes on opportunities and becomes involved, actively exploiting the opportunities to change or grow that the environment presents” (p. 54). The activities and interaction opportunities provided by the institution are theorized in relation to the student’s capacity and willingness to take advantage of such opportunities in order to enhance their development. If they are actively involved at the institution then they are perceived as integrating within the university and therefore undergoing a process of change or development.

Tinto’s (1975, 1987, 1993) interaction model assesses student development by describing the institutional impact on student departure. In this model, Tinto explains how student interaction within the college environment is essential to their persistence. He maintains that students’ pre-college characteristics are significant, yet he emphasizes that the institutional context plays an even greater role in shaping student development and their decision to depart from an institution. A student’s ability to interact within the college setting implicitly assumes accepting the norms and values that are characteristic of the institution. If students cannot
integrate themselves as part of the institution, it is suggested that they will not successfully engage in positive interactions, which increases the likelihood that they will withdraw from college.

Pascarella (1985) and Weidman (1989) put forth theories more explicitly focusing on college student social interaction, and they discuss pre-college characteristics to a greater extent as part of their model in comparison to other theories. Pascarella’s (1985) general model draws attention to variables such as student backgrounds prior to entering a college, the composition of the institution, socially interacting with key members of the institutional structure, and time/value invested in academic development as principal factors affecting the intellectual and social outcomes of students. In general, student background characteristics and the structure of the institution are viewed as significant factors affecting student change and development.

Weidman’s (1989) undergraduate socialization model is even more inclusive of pre-college background characteristics. He maintains that characteristics linked to students before entering college such as their family relations, peer interactions and other external background traits outside the college environment are important to a student’s college experience. This model takes into account pre-college characteristics to the extent that they affect student actions within the college environment. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) suggest that Weidman’s undergraduate socialization model incorporates pre-college characteristics to explain the extent to which they influence “interpersonal interactions, intrapersonal processes and changes, and the normative order and expectations expressed in various ways by the institution’s mission and faculty” (p. 58).

The assumption made by each of the scholars cited above is that student development takes place by assimilating/acculturating into the dominant norms and cultural traits

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12 These models are discussed in greater detail in Pascarella & Terenzini (2005).
characteristic of the institution. This assumption has been critiqued by a number of other scholars, especially in connection to Tinto’s interactionalist theory (de Anda, 1984; Tierney, 1992; Hurtado, 1997; Braxton, 2000). The assumption is that minority student groups have to assimilate/acculturate to the dominant white student culture that exists at an institution in order to persist academically and socially. Similar to minority students, it is assumed that other marginalized student groups such as international graduate students must also assimilate/acculturate in order to succeed and develop academically and socially at a predominantly white higher education institution.

In his revised model, Tinto (1993) points out that there are multiple subculture communities within different higher education settings. Thus, it is important to move beyond this assumption of assimilation to understand how and why some students choose to seek membership in a subculture community within a college environment. Likewise, Hurtado (1997) agrees that it is imprudent to assume that minority students have to assimilate/acculturate into the white majority culture of an institution in order to persist. Considering that not all higher education institutions are structurally white dominated, and taking into account the racial/ethnic demographic changes occurring in the United States over the last few decades, it is equally important to examine the role of the traditionally-defined “minority” as the structural “majority” within some U.S. higher education settings. Such critiques need to be considered in the context of studying international graduate students as they also represent a subculture community and are a growing segment of U.S. higher education institutions.\(^\text{13}\)

As the above scholars have noted, student development is not solely a “unidirectional” process of conforming to the dominant culture that exists within an institution (as noted by Hurtado, 1997). However, Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) note that “sociological impact models’

\(^{13}\) For more detail, see Braxton (2000).
specification of the student characteristics that are considered important tends to be general” (p. 60). Rather, pre-college traits, and cultural background characteristics in particular, are not simply general characteristics that influence student development (Braxton, 2000). In terms of international graduate students, these students are coming from a variety of different countries, bringing with them multiple cultural characteristics that need to be fully examined in order to interpret the role they play in motivating their social practices. Similar to white and minority students, international students in particular may undergo a process of renegotiating their cultural background within a higher education milieu which can factor into who they choose to socially interact with at a predominantly white institution. The strength of one’s cultural background should therefore not be underestimated, shifted to the side or be included as a secondary factor next to the institution when discussing student behavior patterns.

From a psychosocial perspective, research conducted on U.S. college student identity development is also salient when discussing student change or development. According to Pascarella & Terenzini (2005), researchers that explore student psychosocial development often focus on student “identity status and ego development, academic self-concept, social self-concept, and generalized self-esteem” (p. 213). The literature on “identity status and ego development,” however, is sparse (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 215). Nevertheless, research on students’ psychosocial development is often linked to student outcomes in terms of how well they are able to function and relate to individuals in general (Inkeles, 1966). The outcomes associated with students’ psychosocial development often entail researching the student’s success in areas such as their “autonomy, independence, and locus of control; authoritarianism, dogmatism, and ethnocentrism; intellectual orientation; interpersonal relations; personal

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14 For the purpose of this section, I only review studies that specifically discuss student identity development in relation to the institution.
adjustment and psychological well-being; and maturity and general personal development” (p. 213-214). The psychosocial changes that students undergo at college, especially their identity development, are significant for understanding their academic and social growth. It is also important not just to examine the role that the institution plays in their identity development, but to take into account cultural background factors as equally valuable to students’ psychological growth. Both the institution and cultural background facilitate the identity development process which is important for understanding the types of actions and behaviors that students engage in during and after college. While student behavior and identity should not be conflated, I contend that cultural identity development is a performativ e practice, which takes place through social interaction. Cultural identity, therefore, is expressed through behavioral actions and is, in turn, reshaped by social behaviors (Butler, 1993).

With respect to college student identity development, Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) suggest that most researchers have drawn upon Erik Erikson’s (1963, 1968) psychosocial theories to discuss student identity development. Erikson (1963, 1968) examines different developmental stages that individuals of the typical college age (18-22 years) undergo in relation to constructing their sense of identity. In particular, the fifth stage (identity versus identity confusion) is what scholars draw upon to provide explanations of student identity development processes (Constantinople, 1969; Whitbourne, Jelsma & Waterman, 1982; Zuschlag & Whitbourne, 1994; as cited by Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). There are only a few studies that examine specific forms of college student identity development such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion (Cheatham, Slaney & Coleman, 1990; D’Augelli, 1991; Evans & Wall, 1991; Sears, 1991; Rhoads, 1994; Anderson, 1995; McCowen & Alston, 1998; Kim, 1998;
Since the 1990s, the majority of college student identity development studies have primarily examined racial-ethnic identity development among mainly African-American college students. McCowen & Alston (1998) and Cokley (1999) are two key studies cited by Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) that examine racial-ethnic identity development among African-American college students attending historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). In general, both studies provide evidence suggesting that African-American students gained a stronger sense of racial-ethnic identity from attending an HBCU. There were no significant differences between first-year and senior female students in terms of racial-ethnic identity at the HBCU and PWI universities, but the senior women at the HBCU did engage more extensively in their own African-American culture and they expressed a stronger openness to diverse groups of people in general (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Several studies exist that examine international student identity in terms of how well these students are adjusting to the U.S. educational setting (Ward & Searle, 1991; Larsen et al., 1992; Bagley & Copeland, 1994; Noels et al., 1996; Ueno, 2001; Poyrazli, 2003). For instance, Ward & Searle (1991) investigate the impact that international students’ cultural identity has on their psychological and social adjustment. Approximately 115 international students filled out a questionnaire composed of variables relating to the students’ knowledge, experiences, interactions and attitudes of the host culture in order to assess their overall adjustment at the institution. In another study, Poyrazli (2003) examines the effect of international students’ ethnic identity and English language proficiency in relation to their psychosocial adjustment at four different universities. Around 118 international students took part in the study which revealed
that strong English skills, along with a strong sense of one’s ethnic identity and loyalty to one’s own ethnic background, contributed in improving student adjustment at the university. Additionally, Begley & Copeland (1994) analyze African and African-American graduate students’ racial identity in relation to their problem-solving strategies using a Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAs). The results indicate that initially significant differences existed in the racial-identity scale between African and African-American students. However, overtime African students were more likely to accept a Euro-American culture.

A principal critique of the international and U.S. college student identity studies is that few attempt to theoretically draw a connection between student social interaction practices and their cultural identity development (with the exception of Schmitt et al., 2003 study discussed in Chapter 2). The theories generated in this study, which are described using a conceptual framework (Section V of this Chapter), are linked to qualitative data that explain international graduate students’ social interaction in relation to their cultural identity development (discussed in Chapter 5 and 6). Most U.S. studies explore identity development in relation to how well students are able to become integrated to the extent that they are able to enhance their own individual sense of self, independence and confidence.

The cultural background that students bring with them to college is not explicitly explored in terms of the extent to which it influences student actions and behaviors within the college environment, which in turn contributes to defining student cultural identities. Especially with international graduate students, few of the international identity studies provide a clear discussion of the relationship between student cultural backgrounds, social interactions and cultural identity construction within a U.S. college setting. It is crucial to consider both the institution’s role and the student’s cultural background when examining international graduate
students’ social interaction and cultural identity development, as it addresses concerns associated with voluntary and involuntary social practices among students. The voluntary act of choosing to self-segregate can be discussed in terms of students’ own cultural background and the involuntary factor relating to institutional forces can also explain another set of factors facilitating international graduate student self-segregation practices (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8).

III. Bourdieu’s Cultural & Social Capital Theories

Defining Cultural and Social Capital

Bourdieu’s (1980, 1983/86, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) theories of cultural and social capital take into account an individual’s background and experiences as important elements motivating their everyday actions. His social reproduction theory, and his conception of different forms of capital, has its roots in Marxian views of capital (1933/1984; 1995/1867, 1885, 1894; Brewer, 1984), which are thereby linked to issues of social class, access to resources, economic exchange practices, capital accumulation and production. Scholars that draw upon Bourdieu’s theories of cultural and social capital tend to link these two concepts with the notion of economic capital. They also define and interpret Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital theories using different constructs, while mostly still ascribing similar meanings as that put forth by Bourdieu (1983/1986) himself.

The concept of cultural capital applied in this study is linked to two key ideas discussed by Bourdieu (1983/1986). First, cultural capital in this study is defined as such properties that are “embodied” in an individual over the course of time and one’s upbringing. It is not a “materialized form” of capital, but rather it exists in an “‘incorporated’ embodied form,”
meaning that it is something that is a symbolic resource and it does not exist in a tangible form.\textsuperscript{15} In this context, according to Bourdieu (1983/1986), “[t]he accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, Bildung, presupposes a process of em-bodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs of time, time which must be invested personally by the investor” (p. 244). This form of cultural capital is also very much related to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, which he defines as a “system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (Bourdieu, 1971, p. 71). This idea is also linked to the “embodied” meaning of cultural capital. Thus, this idea of cultural capital is drawn upon to underscore the important characteristics that international graduate students learn from their social and cultural backgrounds that include: family upbringing, religious affiliations, relations with peers, authority figures, and larger national and societal norms/values.

Second, the meaning of cultural capital in this study also comes from Braxton’s (2000) interpretation of Bourdieu’s theories. For Braxton (2000), cultural capital refers to common characteristics such as “informal interpersonal skills, habits, manners, linguistics, educational credentials, and lifestyle preferences” (p. 97). A third interpretation of cultural capital from Kincheloe & Steinberg (1996), which is very similar to Braxton’s (2000) definition, is also incorporated which describes cultural capital as “dressing, acting, thinking, or of representing oneself” in certain ways that distinguish individuals/groups from others (p. 20). Together, these three meanings ascribed to Bourdieu’s cultural capital concept are applied to describe the types of cultural resources that the international graduate students involved in this study invested in

\textsuperscript{15} Note: Bourdieu (1983/1986) suggests that cultural capital can be converted to economic capital under specific conditions (p. 243).
and also expected returns, in terms of reinforcing their sense of self. These definitions are selected because, in terms of describing the theoretical framework for the study in connection to the empirical data, these ideas are explicitly linked to the students’ social interaction choices and the social construction of their cultural identity while attending Mid-Atlantic University.

Bourdieu’s idea of social capital is also applied in the context of this study. Specifically, international graduate students’ social interaction practices with host nationals, co-nationals and other international students in general are motivated through the establishment of social networks with individuals whom the students assess to have similar cultural capital resources. Bourdieu (1983/1986) defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (p. 248-249). To add to this definition, I also draw upon Lin’s (1999) work in which he interprets Bourdieu’s social capital concept as “captured from embedded resources in social networks” or “assets in networks” (p. 28). The creation of social networks results in the accumulation of resources that international graduate students gain while at the institution or later in their future careers.

Other sociologists have likewise characterized Bourdieu’s social capital theory as involving the formation of social connections and networks (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). This terminology is useful in describing international graduate students’ social interaction practices, especially with respect to discussing how they invest in friendships to the extent that profit in the form of “information, influence, social credentials and reinforcement” is gained from their social investments (p. 31). Profits acquired from social
networks with American and international students contribute in the international graduate students’ identity development process.

In particular, the engagement in social actions with individuals of a similar or dissimilar national and cultural background allows students to accumulate and exchange resources which contribute in either reinforcing their essentialized cultural identity or result in the formation of hybrid and bi-cultural identities. The idea of social capital is directly aligned with the concept of cultural capital to describe international graduate student social interaction tendencies and cultural identity development process. Bourdieu’s theories of cultural and social capital are used together, since the cultural capital that individuals possess influences the types of social networks they form. These theories help explain the process in which international graduate students bring cultural capital resources with them to a higher education setting, and this allows them to connect socially with some students and not others on a college campus. This, in turn, facilitates different social interaction tendencies, giving individuals access or membership into a collective group. There are also resources gained from being part of a social network, which motivate one’s social interaction. The conversion of cultural capital into social capital, and its reconversion back into cultural capital, is therefore an important aspect of international graduate students’ cultural identity development within the boundaries of a higher education institution.

Social and Cultural Capital within the Educational Context

A number of sociologists and educational scholars have utilized Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural and social capital to explain the socio-cultural influence on reinforcing educational and social inequalities within the American school system.\textsuperscript{16} Most of these scholars utilize the

\textsuperscript{16} DiMaggio, 1982; Brubaker, 1985; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lareau, 1987, 1989; Coleman, 1988; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Farkas, Sheehan, Grobe & Shuan, 1990; Mehan, 1992; Persell, Cookson & Catsambis, 1992; Freeman, 1997; McDonough, 1994, 1997; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lin, 1999; Roscigno &
concepts of cultural and social capital to discuss inequities for K-12 students, with the exception of a few that highlight educational disparities associated with college students within higher education institutions (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; McDonough, 1994, 1997; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996; Freeman, 1997). These scholars and others have noted the widespread impact that Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory has had across multiple disciplines. His discussion of various forms of capital has stimulated interest from various researchers not just in Education and Sociology, but also in disciplines such as Economics, Political Science and Anthropology (Serageldin & Dasupta, 2001).

In general, most scholars articulate Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital concepts in ways that help better explain their own suppositions and research ideas. Some scholars have sought to extend the meanings behind Bourdieu’s theories of cultural and social capital (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Emmison & Frow, 1998; Dumais, 2002). Others have simply explored the weaknesses of Bourdieu’s cultural capital concept from a critical standpoint either as being too provincial in its definition (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996; De Graaf, De Graaf & Kraaykamp, 2000) or not adequate to consider the role of individual agency (Robinson & Garnier, 1986).

The majority of education and sociology scholars examine cultural and social capital in relation to schools and students’ academic success. For instance, DiMaggio (1982) investigates the relationship between high school students’ cultural capital in the form of what he calls students’ “status culture” and their academic grades (p. 189). Controlling for students’ ability and family background, DiMaggio’s findings indicate that students’ cultural capital did have a significant effect on their grades. Lareau (1987, 1989) conducted a qualitative study in which she

Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999; Portes, 2000; Kingston, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001. For an extensive review of the education and sociology literature that focus on cultural and social capital, see Deil-Amen & López Turley (2007).
examines the different cultural capital resources available to white students from lower-class and middle class communities. Her findings suggest that the social and cultural resources that students acquire from their parents influence the types of relationships that parents have with teachers, which affects the quality of education students receive and their overall academic success. Similarly, Kingston (2001) examines the role that cultural capital theory plays in terms of achieving social privilege and academic success. He argues that “[t]o the extent that cultural capital theorists are correct, educational attainment is not an individual achievement in any meaningful sense of the word, and schools are not transmitters of opportunities but active agents of social reproduction” (p. 88). For Kingston (2001) schools are agents that reinforce the cultural capital of students with higher socio-economic backgrounds which essentially perpetuates inequalities among students.

Other scholars have also focused only on the role that social capital has on student academic success (Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Portes, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch (1995) define social capital as the institutional social networks that are expected to assist students in terms of their success in school. They examined if a relationship existed between a number of Mexican high school students’ grades and school/career goals, and the information provided from social networks within the boundaries of the school (the main social agent dispensing educational support to these students). The authors reported that some connections existed between student grades and school/career aspirations and the school’s social capital network. However, their findings showed that bilingual students were more likely to gain social capital support from schools which in turn influenced their overall academic success. Teachman, Paasch & Carver’s (1996) also analyze the impact that social capital has on student
choice to drop-out of a Catholic school between grades eight and ten. While controlling for socio-economic status and human capital characteristics, the authors note that they were not able to completely account for family structure on student departure from school. However, they contend that if key aspects of social capital, such as extent of parental interaction and degree of student mobility across schools are taken into account, then predictions can be made that consider all effects associated with remaining in a Catholic school.

The studies cited above apply Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital theories to highlight inequalities among students in the U.S. education system, while others have directly explored the impact that socio-cultural background has on student academic achievement. These studies provide substantial insight on the role that cultural and social factors play in K-12 student outcomes. However, very few of the studies integrate cultural and social capital concepts to theoretically explain students’ cultural identity formation. Furthermore, much of the research that draws upon Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural and social capital does not fully examine how cultural background influences social interaction practices within a higher education setting, especially the behavior patterns of students that contribute in shaping their sense of cultural identity. Thus, while college student academic success is undoubtedly an important area of research, applying Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital theories to student cultural identity development is also crucial, as they can help explain how a student’s cultural background factors into academic and social success.

In addition, a number of scholars who use Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital concepts suggest that there are individuals in society who hold dominant forms of cultural and social capital (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lareau, 1987, 1989; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Mehan, 1992;
McDonough, 1997; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lin, 1999; Portes, 2000; Kingston, 2001). In the context of a college environment, students from specific socio-economic backgrounds enter college with particular forms of cultural and social capital (Braxton, 2000; also see Newcomb 1966, Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Clark, Heist, McConnell, Trow & Yonge, 1972; Weidman, 1989; Astin, 1993; Milem, 1998). In this context, Bourdieu (1973) and other scholars contend that schools are social reproducers of the class structures that exists in our larger society.

Moreover, similar to my earlier critique of the theories of social interaction within higher education contexts (Section II), some scholars that incorporate Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital theories also make an assumption or imply that students who are not part of the dominant group must assimilate/acculturate as part of the institutional culture if they are to succeed academically and socially. Essentially, the general assumption is that subculture communities such as minorities and international students (i.e., the structural minority groups with little influence over the institution’s culture) must accept the dominant socio-cultural norms and values that are representative of the dominant student body and the institution as a whole.

Braxton (2000) states that “similarity of shared backgrounds, aspirations, and attitudes among students who constitute the dominant majority on campus probably makes it easier for these students to adapt to campus life, and adaptation is likely more difficult for those who come from very different backgrounds” (p. 107). He suggests that within a college environment, the students who represent a dominant group are able to adjust much easier to an institution that shares similar cultural norms and values to the students. Those marginalized student groups who are not able or unwilling to integrate into the habitus of the dominant student body, or what

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17 These individuals also hold higher levels of economic (financial) capital which contributes in building their cultural and social capital.

18 Economic capital can also be held by the structural minority group. The cultural and social capital held by the marginalized group, while not capable of being spread across the institutional setting, should not be dismissed or assumed to be disregarded and replaced with the structurally dominant group’s cultural norms and values.
Bourdieu calls an embodied form of cultural capital, are therefore assumed to experience difficulty in their academic and social success at an institution of higher learning (Pervin, 1967; Stern, 1970; Holland, 1985; Banning, 1989).

Furthermore, Braxton (2000) comments that “those students who are fully congruent with the organizational habitus might be thought of as fully integrated into the academic and social subsystems of a campus. However, those students who lack the requisite cultural capital may have a hard time or be unable to fully integrate because their frame of reference is just too different from the organizational habitus and the habitus of the dominant peer group on campus” (p. 108). Braxton (2000) suggests that the organizational habitus of an institution results from “the similarity of shared backgrounds, aspirations, and attitudes among students who constitute the dominant majority on campus” (p. 107). This shared habitus often becomes embedded over time in the structure of U.S. higher education institutions to the extent that it can influence the overall academic and social routines of the institution. The current study draws upon Braxton’s (2000) definition of organizational habitus, and expands it to include embodied perceptions, expectations, norms and standards characteristic of White American culture, which is also embedded as part of the institutional structure of most U.S. higher education institutions that compose of predominantly White American populations. In his discussion of organizational habitus in relation to cultural capital, Braxton (2000) suggests that students who do not possess, or who are unable to acquire, forms of cultural capital characteristics of the dominant group of students on a college campus are unlikely to become “fully integrate” and able to successfully function academically and socially at an institution.

Other scholars such as Lamont & Lareau (1988), who have sought to redefine Bourdieu’s cultural capital concept, also maintain that lower-income individuals’ cultural capital “cannot be
equated with the legitimate culture,” and that only upper-class individuals with “high status cultural signals” constitutes a “legitimate culture” (p. 157). While it might not have been their intent to imply that superior forms of cultural capital are linked mainly to individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds, the rhetoric that they use still suggest that in order to be included as part of the “legitimate culture,” members of the lower class must strive to assimilate/acculturate into the dominant group’s culture.

Nan Lin’s (1999) in-depth analysis of Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory similarly raises important questions concerning students in the context of a contemporary educational setting having to assimilate/acculturate into a dominant groups’ cultural norms and values. In his discussion of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, Lin (1999) maintains that “the investment, in this theory, is in the pedagogic actions of the reproduction process, such as education, the purpose of which is to indoctrinate the masses to internalize the values of these symbols and meanings. Cultural capital theory also acknowledges that the masses (the dominated class) can invest and acquire these symbols and meanings, even if they misrecognize them as their own” (p. 29). The suggestion here is that the dominated class (the masses) will seek to obtain the cultural symbols of the dominant class. It is expected that the masses will want to have the same cultural and social capital that the dominant group constructs as valuable. In this context, Lin’s (1999) idea of a dominant group refers to only a few elite individuals who are capable of spreading their conceptions of what constitutes symbols of high class cultural and social capital. Broadly speaking, in relation to the larger society, the elites (dominant group) are those few individuals in society who hold significant economic, cultural and social capital resources.

Prior research and theorization put forth by scholars which suggests that rewards are only attainable from acquiring dominant forms of cultural capital is problematic. In relation to higher
education settings, such studies fail to explore the possibility that alternative forms of cultural and social capital might be held by marginalized groups of students who can also accrue rewards, even within an organizational setting dominated by a majority group. Furthermore, it is important to explore the concepts of cultural and social capital through the lens of marginalized student groups because social and cultural capital negotiation, exchange and investments can become a much more complicated process within the context of a university setting, particularly among international students.

International graduate students, many of which may represent elite segments of their home countries, are generally perceived as a structural minority within the context of higher education institutions in the United States. Lin’s (1999) discussion of cultural capital assumes an assimilation/acculturation model in which minority student groups (including international graduate students) are presumed to be willing to assimilate into a dominant elite group’s cultural and social norms. If international graduate students do not adopt the cultural symbols and values of the dominant elite class, so the argument goes, then they cannot move up the social hierarchy. It is crucial, however, to consider that international graduate students come to a U.S. higher education setting with their own forms of cultural and social capital. Moreover, while their cultural and social capital may not be the dominant culture at a U.S. higher education institution, it should not be neglected in terms of examining its impact on these students’ cultural identity formation.

The current study challenges such assumptions of assimilation by recognizing the complexities of a marginalized group’s social practices vis-à-vis the organizational habitus. On the one hand, structurally marginalized student groups may seek the cultural capital associated with scholarly training and the academic credential, yet at the same time, they may not embrace
the social practices of the dominant White American culture at the institution. However, to the extent that segregation actually becomes part of the social routine of the institution, then it could be argued that marginalized groups reinforce the organizational habitus, thereby further marginalizing themselves in the process. Within this context, the marginalized group may adopt its own notion of what constitutes “legitimate culture,” which consists of different forms of social and cultural capital from that of the dominant group.

A final critique put forth by a number of sociologists of education involves the practices of inclusion and exclusion that are associated with Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital theories (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Portes, 1998; Lin, 1999; Kingston, 2001). In discussing educational inequity, these scholars describe how Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital concepts are used to highlight ways in which individuals within the education system create and reinforce patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Kingston (2001) examines the role that cultural capital theory plays in terms of achieving social privilege and academic success. Kingston suggests that exclusionary practices are carried out by students from elite backgrounds who possess high-class forms of cultural capital. Teachers often reinforce these practices when they recognize and reward the cultural capital of these students. He contends that the idea of cultural capital being held and rewarded only to elite students in schools is an exclusionary process which perpetuates social reproduction within the education system.

A number of other scholars discuss the idea of social capital in relation to inclusion and exclusion practices (Portes, 1998; Lin, 1999). Similar to Kingston (2001) and Lamont & Lareau (1988), Lin (1999) calls attention to the debates surrounding the formation of collective groups that share similarities in social capital. The establishment of collective groups often entails “closure or density in social relations and social networks” (1999, p. 34). Furthermore, Lin
interprets Bourdieu (1983/1986) as suggesting that enclosed groups often conceptualize social capital as “the investment of the members in the dominant class (as a group or network) engaging in mutual recognition and acknowledgment so as to maintain and reproduce group solidarity and preserve the group’s dominant position. Membership in the group is based on a clear demarcation (e.g., nobility, title, family) excluding outsiders” (p. 34). While Lin (1999) makes note of the dominant group as the principal actor involved in exclusionary practices, he also maintains that “bridges in networks” (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992) need to be established in order to allow for the flow of resources. It is important to move beyond a closed network which only supports the group’s self interests to an open network whereby information can flow and be shared across groups, which allows one to build upon or extend their capital resources.

In contrast to Lin (1999), Portes (1998) introduces Bourdieu’s social capital theory in relation to subculture groups who also engage in practices of inclusion and exclusion. He not only discusses the advantages associated with investing in social network relationships, but also critically examines some of the disadvantages of forming “bounded solidarity” groups (1998, p. 8). A “bounded solidarity” group is one in which members invest resources into an organization to the extent that only members belonging to that group can access its resources. Portes (1998) explores the limitations of this idea in connection to ethnic groups who tend to form “ethnic business enclaves and ethnic niches” (p. 13). In his review of various studies that examine the social networks and connections formed by ethnic groups, especially immigrants, Portes (1998) identifies four main problems with investing social capital into the membership of a bounded group which includes the “exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward leveling norms” (p. 15). Specifically, the practice of including certain members into ethnic niches and excluding others who are perceived as
“outsiders” explains how social capital investments can be used by some individuals/groups to the extent that they engage in self-segregating practices through the exclusion of others from whom there is an expectation that there will be no capital returns (1998, p. 15). In the educational context, Bourdieu’s cultural and social capital theories are useful to illustrate how international graduate students renegotiate and reinforce their cultural background when engaging in social interaction with host nationals, co-nationals and other international students.

In relation to Lin’s (1999) and Portes’ (1998) studies, international graduate students represent a subculture group that also engage in inclusionary and exclusionary social practices within the context of a university setting. Similar to other subculture groups, international students might be motivated to establish social relations with some groups of students and not others. As foreigners in a culturally unfamiliar educational setting, these students might be more inclined to develop social connections and friendships with other international students that share ethnic, cultural or national similarities. They may want to invest in social relationships which they perceive to offer the most valuable forms of capital. Thus, similar to other subculture groups, international students might also form “bounded solidarity” groups and ethnic niches with other internationals, and in the process engage in practices of inclusion and exclusion within the context of an educational setting.

IV. Said’s Theory of “the Other”

While Bourdieu’s theories of social and cultural capital provide important insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of education, the work of cultural critic Edward Said has been instrumental in motivating discussions relating to the dialectics of sameness and difference, the construction of the Self and the Other, and in explaining acts of exclusion which are linked to processes of identity development. In his classic study, Orientalism (1978), Said analyzes the
discourses and historical narratives that were produced during the era of European colonialism in which the exoticized natives were often depicted as “the inferior Other” (p. 210). He suggests that Europeans, who at the time held a great deal of power and influence in various colonies, constructed such a discourse while in the process defining themselves by “othering” the natives. The construction of European identities resulted in the exclusion of outsiders who were perceived as not possessing similar qualities. As Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (1996) contend:

> Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the ‘positive’ meaning of any term—and thus its ‘identity’—can be constructed….Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render ‘outside’, abjected. Every identity has at its ‘margin’, an excess, something more (p. 4-5; also, see Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993).

The act of constructing cultural identity is therefore inescapable from a process of othering. Cultural identity development without question is a power relationship involving the construction of one’s sense of self, while at the same time engaging in a process of exclusion. Moreover, it involves identifying similar qualities which allow the establishment of a collective enclosed group that excludes outsiders who possess different characteristics. Various scholars in the fields of Anthropology and Sociology have traditionally discussed cultural identity issues by studying native cultures and immigrant populations in terms of exploring the role that culture plays in defining an individual or group identity (Mead, 1928; Benedict, 1934; Gans, 1962; Radcliffe-Brown, 1964; Geertz, 1973; Spindler, 1978; Malinowski, 1984; Basch, 1987; Boas & Stocking, 1989; Bacon, 1996; Goldring, 1998; Waters, 1999; Vickerman, 1999). However, Hall & Du Gay’s (1996) definition of cultural identity is utilized for the purpose of this study because I have found it the most relevant in explaining international graduate students’ social interaction
practices and the process of othering they engage in within the context of a U.S. higher education institution with respect to defining their own sense of self.

Said’s (1978, 1993) theory of Orientalism has had considerable impact across disciplines in terms of calling attention to European power and influence in constructing their own identities through a discourse of inferior representations of the natives. Thus, in critiquing him, one should be cautious to consider his work in the context of the aims of his discussion. Nonetheless, similar to some of the education and sociology scholars cited earlier who emphasize a dominant group engaging in exclusion, Said’s (1978, 1993) critique of colonialism also suggests that European identities are reinforced by constructing an exclusionary lens of defining the “Other” (p. 210).  

Said’s theory assumes a hierarchy in which the process of “othering” is chiefly constructed by the dominant group (i.e., the Europeans). Sax (1998) points out that critics of Said, such as van der Veer (1993), suggest that “in order to show the power of Orientalism, Said denies autonomy, agency, and even thought to the Orientals. He even denies them the possibility of resisting their colonial oppressors, which flies in the face of historical fact” (p. 293). In other words, Said does not emphasize the fact that the exoticized Other can conceive of Europeans under an “Other” as well. The idea that the Other also constructs opposing views of Europeans is generally referred to as Occidentalism (Carrier, 1992, 1995; Coronil, 1996; Buruma & Margalit, 2004).

In general, critics of Said’s Orientalist theory define Occidentalism as the set of discourses constructed in the “East” concerning the otherness of the “West.” Carrier (1992) summarizes Said’s (1978, 1993) discussion as the Orientalists (i.e., Western scholars) primarily

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19 The Other in this context refers primarily to individuals from the East. Feminist scholars have criticized Said (1978, 1993) for not discussing the gendered aspects of describing the Orient. They argue that “the Other” has not fully been examined from the perspective of women as Orientals (see Lewis, 1996; Paechter, 1998).

20 The West in this context includes Europeans and Americans. The term “Orient” also refers to the East as opposed to the West.
“stress[ing] the Orient’s radical separation from and opposition to the West” (p. 195). For Carrier (1992), Said (1978, 1993) only emphasizes Western portrayals of how much the Orient is different and opposing in character to the West, without exploring how the Orient might also conceptualize the Westerner as different from the Orient.

More recently, especially in the years following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, social constructions by the Orient of Westerners (in particular Americans) have gained increasing attention. In an age of terrorism, violence and strong perceptions of difference between the East and the West, the ways in which people from the “Orient” (the historically perceived exoticized Other) perceive Americans is an important area of research for scholars. Mooney & Young’s (2005) study, *Imagining Terrorism*, examines how people from the so-called “East” constructs negative ideas of the “West,” and in doing so reinforce their sense of identity while othering Westerners. In their critique of Buruma & Margalit’s (2004) study, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*, Mooney & Young (2005) maintain that, “They [referring to Japanese Kamikaze pilots] were not distant from Western culture, but immersed in it. But it was this immersion that led to the rejection of the West as individualistic, decadent, corrupt, soft—all of the attributes of Occidentalism. So, as the West creates a discourse of Orientalism to depict the other, those othered create an Occidentalist discourse to reject that which denigrates and humiliates them” (p. 6). It has become increasingly evident that Easterners too can engage in an othering process as they seek to develop their own identities.

Other critics such as Sax (1998) argue that Said (1978, 1993) primarily discusses constructions of “the Other” as being inferior. In the field of Anthropology, Sax (1998) cites a number of scholars such as Margaret Mead, Mircea Eliade, William Jones and Warren Hastings as having portrayed the native or exotic Other not as inferior, but rather as “worthy of emulation”
(p. 293). While such positive descriptions of “the Other” were still being constructed by Europeans who held powerful positions over the natives, it does raise some important questions concerning the characterization of “the Other” primarily through negative connotations without equally considering the positive suggestions associated with the idea.

In relation to Bourdieu’s (1983/1986) cultural and social capital theories, Said (1978, 1993) fails to consider that the group characterized as the “Other” might construct valuable forms of cultural capital which allow them to conceptualize the constructed dominant group as the “Other.” In Said’s critique of the colonial mentality, he suggests that European identities and the cultural resources that they classified as valuable were reinforced through the practice of viewing and stigmatizing the exoticized Orient as the “Other.” In effect, by constructing perceptions of the natives and their culture as inferior, the Europeans capitalized in terms of building their own self-identity. In doing so, the cultural capital held by the dominant group motivates social interactions with certain individuals while excluding some as the “Other” (p. 210).

In the microcosm that is the University, it is important to explain and understand how cultural capital is constructed and exchanged in a college setting to the extent that it facilitates certain types of social practices by international graduate students who build upon and seek to capitalize on social capital resources from other students. A theoretical discussion of this process, along with empirical data that provide evidence for these students’ social interaction practices, is necessary for making sense of how some students in the process of their cultural identity development engage in the “othering” of American students. In constructing their cultural identity, the tendency among certain international students to socially interact with co-nationals and internationals, while excluding host Americans, is discussed as both a social
advantage and a limitation to their accumulation of cultural and social capital. It is also argued that international graduate students who had a tendency to socially interact with multiple students from diverse nationality groups maximized potential cultural and social capital.

V. Conceptual Model on Social Interaction & Cultural Identity Development

Bourdieu’s (1983/1986) cultural and social capital theories as well as the othering process described by Said (1978, 1993) are essential for explaining segregation patterns among structurally marginalized or subculture groups studying at a U.S. higher education institution. In particular, the model constructed below (see Figure 3.1) illustrates the relationship between international graduate students’ social interaction and the construction of cultural identity as they relate to such theories. The conceptual model is illustrative of a cultural identity-social interaction feedback loop. It is used to theorize the social interaction and identity development processes which take place among international graduate students. These theories are examined based on the perspective of the international graduate students attending Mid-Atlantic University in order to discuss the dynamics associated with social interaction and cultural identity development. In particular, using this conceptual model, I argue that a positive feedback loop is created whereby one’s cultural capital influences one’s cultural identity which is reinforced through positive and negative social interactions between different groups.

As Figure 3.1 shows, when social interactions are positive (+), this leads to a growth in social capital which results in the formation of social networks that reshape an individual’s cultural identity. However, when social interaction is negative (-), or lacking altogether (0), the cultural identity of the international graduate student is still reinforced through non-interaction. If
Figure 3.1: Cultural Heritage-Social Interaction Feedback Loop
international students do not mix socially with students from different nationality groups, then they are only exposed to their own cultural background which reinforces their sense of self. They develop an “essentialized” cultural identity which means that they hold a strong attachment to a sense of culture which is perceived as unchanging, fixed, and defined in direct opposition to other “external” cultures. While developing an essentialized cultural identity, some international graduate students begins to “other” individuals that are nationally and culturally different from themselves. Through a process of “othering” they construct negative perceptions of those students with whom they have negative or limited social interactions. When individuals from multiple groups socially interact, this has the potential to result in the development of hybrid/pan-national identities (Lieberson & Silverman, 1965; Spilerman, 1970, 1971; Young, 1976; Nagata, 1981; Padilla, 1985; Spivak, 1988; Nnoli, 1989; Espiritu, 1992; Gilroy, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Waters, 1994, 1999; Nagel, 1995; Hall & Du Gay, 1996). The idea of forming hybrid identities is primarily linked to scholars of postcolonial and critical race studies.

A simple definition of hybrid identities as used in the context of this study refers to the development of an identity that is constantly changing based on a continuous process of mixing and incorporation of social and cultural characteristics from multiple national and cultural groups. A hybrid cultural identity holds a greater deal of flexibility in terms of being open to different cultures. Additionally, while the idea of pan-national identities has often been used by scholars to describe different ethnic groups coming together and forming solidarities to accomplish a specific goal (Lieberson & Silverman, 1965; Spilerman, 1970; Padilla, 1985; Espiritu, 1992; Nagel, 1995; Waters, 1994, 1999), it is related to the formation of hybrid identities in this study, because it similarly involves the mixing of multiple cultural groups. The establishment of pan-national identities, like hybrid identities, involves different groups
collectively coming together under a broad transnational identity that includes racial, ethnic, cultural and national connections. As some international graduate students develop hybrid cultural identities, they too engage in a process of “othering” students by constructing either negative or positive perceptions of those students.

The coming-together of two national or cultural groups can also lead to the construction of a “bicultural” identity (Valentine, 1971, p. 133; also, see Polgar, 1960; de Anda, 1984; Braxton, 2000). Biculturalism refers to a process by which an individual can become integrated culturally and socially into two distinct cultures at the same time (Valentine, 1971). The concept of biculturalism has been applied in the context of minority students being able to “step in and out of the repertoires of two cultures,” especially their ability to move in between a minority and majority culture. International graduate students who develop bi-cultural identities also participate in an “othering” process, constructing negative and positive perceptions of students. Thus, the cultural identity-social interaction feedback loop is useful for explaining both the self-segregation process occurring among some international graduate students and the non-self-segregation practices followed by other international graduate students within the context of higher education institutions.

The model is used to examine four different social grouping tendencies that international graduate students were identified as following at Mid-Atlantic University. In Chapters 5 and 6, cultural and social capital theories, along with the othering process, are discussed in more extensive detail in relation to international graduate students’ social interaction and cultural identity development. Chapter 5 is focused on international graduate students who engage in segregated social practices that are referred to as: Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers.

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21 Diane de Anda (1984) extended Valentine’s (1971) biculturalism concept to include six elements that affect biculturalism.
The Self-Segregators are defined as those international graduate students who expressed having a strong inclination to socially interact only with co-nationals and tend to exclude all other students from their non-work related social interactions. Exclusive Global Mixers, on the other hand, are internationals who described their social practices in terms of having a propensity to segregate by engaging in social relations and developing friendships only with co-nationals and international students more generally, while excluding Americans.

Chapter 6 is focused on international graduate students who choose to include host Americans in their social practices that are described as: Inclusive Global Mixers and Host Interactors. Inclusive Global Mixers are internationals who had tendency to participate in a mixture of social interactions with co-nationals, other internationals and Americans. The Host Interactors described their social interactions as primarily involving Americans and a few co-nationals. The types of social interactions that international graduate students engage in are embedded within an institutional context. Thus, the two key agents involved in motivating certain types of social practices among international graduate students are the institution and the students’ own personal cultural and national backgrounds (empirical results associated with both agents will be discussed in Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8).

In summary, the theoretical framework presented in this chapter using the cultural identity-social interaction feedback loop conceptual model provides a foundation that relates cultural capital, social capital and the process of othering together to better explain the sociological underpinnings of the international graduate student experience. The subsequent chapters (Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8) provide empirical evidence from interviews, interaction charts focus groups and participation-observation data collected from international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University to substantiate the theoretical claims put forth in this chapter. Chapters 5
and 6, in particular, link the theoretical framework with concrete evidence which further supports
the theory with rich data collected from international graduate students themselves.
I. Introduction

A qualitative research design was applied in conducting this study, because such methods are most appropriate for understanding the interpretive meanings that international graduate students ascribe to their social interactions. A combination of interviews, social interaction charts, focus groups, and participant-observations were used to collect data. The data were then analyzed in connection to existing theories of social and cultural capital and the process of “othering,” as discussed in the previous chapter. Additionally, the research process initially began with a pilot study that was conducted in the Spring of 2005. The pilot study followed a qualitative approach, in which interviews were conducted with international graduate students. In Section II, I provide an overview of the field site selected for both the pilot study and the actual study for this dissertation project. Section III then explains the choice of selected participants for this study. An explanation of the sampling strategy, data collection, and analysis is given in Sections IV, V, and VI. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the preliminary results of the pilot study as well as the limitations associated with conducting this study.

II. Site of the Study

Mid-Atlantic University was selected as the case study site, because it met specific demographic characteristics associated with the design of the study and the proposed research questions. In particular, it is a large public university consisting of over 40,000 students at its main campus location. In terms of the racial/ethnic background of the student population at the main campus, over 80 percent of the undergraduate student body is white, and between 30 to 40
percent of the graduate student body are internationals. Demographically, the white student population represents the largest percentage of the student body at the institution. Minority college students also compose smaller percentages of the student population at Mid-Atlantic University. The most recent student demographic profile published in the Mid-Atlantic University Demographic Information (2006) indicate that altogether (i.e., African-American, Asian American, Hispanic American and Native American), the minority undergraduate student population represents just over 10 percent of the undergraduate student body, and the minority graduate population is just under 10 percent of total graduate student enrollments. Within the undergraduate minority student population, Asian Americans constitute the largest minority group at the University, followed by African Americans, Hispanic Americans and lastly Native Americans. At the graduate level, African Americans are leading, then Asian Americans, Hispanics and Native American students.22

Mid-Atlantic University was also selected as the case study for this research project because it is among one of the top 25 higher education institutions in the United States hosting a large number of international students. Furthermore, based on data presented in the Mid-Atlantic University International Student Demographics (2006) by the International Students Office, the University is reported as hosting well over 3,000 international students from over 120 countries at its main campus location in 2006.23

In sum, Mid-Atlantic University is a large higher education institution with a predominantly white student body and a large international graduate student population, which made it a prime candidate as a case study for this dissertation. Additionally, from a more

---

22 The information from the Mid-Atlantic University Demographic Information (2006) is cited here using the pseudonym for the university.
23 The information from the Mid-Atlantic University International Student Demographics (2006) is also cited using the pseudonym for the university.
practical perspective, the location of the university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the country was ideal for my research purposes when considering limitations of financial resources to conduct the study.

III. Participants

Since 1954, undergraduate international students represented the largest number of international students on U.S. campuses (see Table 4.1) (Chin, 2005). However, as of 2001, international graduate students composed 12.1 percent of the total U.S. graduate student population in comparison to international undergraduates who make up only 2.3 percent of the total undergraduate population (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1) (Chin & Bhandari, 2006). While international students as a whole represent a small portion of the U.S. higher education student population, they are nevertheless a growing segment of the student body on many college and university campuses that deserve attention, especially since these students are becoming an “increasingly relevant and important source of diversity” in American higher education (Zhao, Kuh & Carini, 2005, p. 210). Since international graduate students now outnumber international undergraduates both nationally and at the field site, this study focuses on the social experiences of the international graduate student population at Mid-Atlantic University in relation to their cultural identity formation.

The international graduate students who voluntarily participated in this study came from the Mid-Atlantic University nationality clubs/associations, a number of international student gatekeepers and were recruited using a volunteer request flyer, which was posted on information boards across the main campus. In total, 60 international graduate students from a variety of different departments volunteered to share information on their social interaction practices and
Table 4.1: International Students by Academic Level, Selected Years 1954/55-2002/2003

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<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</thead>
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<td>35,096</td>
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<td>63,296</td>
<td>59,112</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975/76</td>
<td>95,949</td>
<td>83,395</td>
<td>18,073</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979/80</td>
<td>172,378</td>
<td>94,207</td>
<td>19,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984/85</td>
<td>197,741</td>
<td>122,476</td>
<td>21,895</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987/88</td>
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<td>156,366</td>
<td>23,152</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988/89</td>
<td>172,551</td>
<td>165,590</td>
<td>28,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>32,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990/91</td>
<td>189,900</td>
<td>182,130</td>
<td>35,500</td>
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<td>191,330</td>
<td>31,190</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992/93</td>
<td>210,080</td>
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<td>35,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993/94</td>
<td>213,610</td>
<td>201,030</td>
<td>35,110</td>
</tr>
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<td>1999/00</td>
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<td>2000/01</td>
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<td>2001/02</td>
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<td>2002/03</td>
<td>260,103</td>
<td>267,876</td>
<td>58,344</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Level</th>
<th>International Students</th>
<th>% of International Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<td>Bachelor's</td>
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<td>2,454,740</td>
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<td>Associate's</td>
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<td>2,145,940</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>5,644,766</td>
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<td>14,528,728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Includes first professional degrees

***Includes intensive English programs, and non-degree certificates participating in Optional Practical Training**

Since 2000, graduate international students have outnumbered undergraduate international students.

Figure 4.1: Growth in the Number of International Graduate Students at U.S. Colleges and Universities

perceptions of Mid-Atlantic University. Each of the participants took part in a one-hour long semi-structured interview session with myself, the principal investigator of the study. Each participant also filled out an interaction chart in which they kept a log of the different individuals that they interacted with over the course of one week. Among the 60 international graduate students, 11 participated in two focus group sessions in the weeks following their interview session.

IV. Sampling Strategy

A purposeful sampling strategy was utilized in conducting this study because this approach allowed for the collection of “information-rich cases worthy of in-depth study” (Patton, 1990). A set of international graduate students was purposefully sampled because they represent cases that deserved further exploration considering that their overall population has been increasing in recent years. Furthermore, international graduate students represented the ideal candidates for addressing the specific research questions and qualitative research design of the study.

Additionally, the study was designed following a grounded-theory, case study approach in order to construct new theories or explanations for international students’ social interaction patterns at Mid-Atlantic University (Corbin & Strauss, 1999). Thus, a purposeful sampling strategy was useful in terms of allowing me to generate new theories that explain “how” and “why” some international graduate students self-segregate and others do not while attending a large predominantly white university campus. Drawing upon prior literature and the information gathered from purposefully sampling international graduate students, I was able to develop a new way of conceptualizing Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural and social capital in terms of there

Following a purposeful sampling approach, and using data from the *International Student Demographics* (2006), international graduate students were selected from countries that are listed under the seven major regions from which international students come to attend Mid-Atlantic University, which include: Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe, Latin America, North America, and Oceania. At Mid-Atlantic University, including all branch campus locations, the majority of international students came from Asian countries, although there were also students from all of the other major world regions. For the purposes of this study, the Asian region was sub-categorized into East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, which is consistent with most geographic classifications (Hobbs & Salter, 2006; de Blij & Muller, 2006).24 Thus, the study consisted of nine different regions (See Figure 4.2).

International graduate students were selected from countries with both a large and small number of students attending the university in order to take into account possible variations in the students’ choices of social interaction (See Figure 4.2 for overview of international students admitted to the University in 2006). Altogether, 60 international graduate students from a variety of countries within the different regions were interviewed (See Figure 4.3). Demographically, 31 female and 29 male international graduate students were sampled, and they ranged in age from 21-46 years old. About 62 percent of the students were between the ages of 21-29 years, 33 percent were between 30-39 years and 5 percent were between 40-46 years old.

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24 Central Asia was not included as one of the sub-categories because it had an extremely small population at the University. Also, I was not able to interview anyone from countries within this region, thus it was not included in the sample. The Caribbean region was also not included in the sample because again only a small number of students attended the University from countries in this region and no participants volunteered to take part in the study from this region.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Countries</th>
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<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>India, China, Malaysia, Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>Thailand, Philippines, Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>United Kingdom, France, Germany, Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>Mexico, Argentina, Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>Nigeria, South Africa, South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Nigeria, South Africa, South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>China, Japan, South Korea, Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>Canada, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Asia</td>
<td>China, Japan, South Korea, Korea</td>
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</table>

**Note:** Central Asia and the Caribbean have extremely small populations and are not included in the study from these regions for these reasons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year at University</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th># of Countries Traveled</th>
<th># Marital Status of Kids</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Degree</th>
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<td>More than 5</td>
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Source: Created by author. Copyright © 2000.
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<th>Degree</th>
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<th>Religion</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th># of Kids</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Residence</th>
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</thead>
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Additionally, 77 percent of the participants were single. Only 13 students were married, 1 was divorced, and 3 students had between 1-3 children. The majority of the students were pursuing Ph.D. degrees in a variety of different departments, with the exception of 5 students who were finishing up a Master’s degree. Lastly, most students described their religious background under one of the following categories: Islam, Hinduism, Russian Orthodox, Judaism, Catholic, Christian, Buddhism, Agnostic and Atheist. The Muslim students expressed strong connections to their religion and social practices, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Other students stated a religion, but also mentioned that they were not strict or actively practicing their religion with the exception of the one student who came from a Jewish background.

V. Data Collection

The data for the study were collected over the course of one year (Fall 2006 and Spring 2007) at the Mid-Atlantic University main campus location. First, after reviewing the websites of different nationality clubs, along with contacting a few principal international gatekeepers at the University, a pilot study was conducted to gather some preliminary data on these students’ social interaction practices. In particular, data collected from interviewing 14 international graduate students contributed in making revisions to the research questions and the methodological processes associated with the design of this study. The preliminary themes that were constructed from the pilot study are discussed more extensively after the data analysis section of this chapter. Revisions were made to the methodology after conducting the pilot study such that data was collected from four principal sources for the final study: interviews, focus groups, interaction charts and participant-observations. These four data collection approaches were carried out in order to validate and support each section of the data gathered for this study.
The presidents/vice presidents of the different nationality clubs were contacted and asked for their assistance in finding a few international graduate students who were pursuing either a Master’s or Ph.D. degree, had attended Mid-Atlantic University at least one year, and were from one of the nine geographic regions. Additionally, with the help of a few colleagues at the University, gatekeepers—some of whom were members of different nationality groups—were asked to help find graduate students interested in participating in the study. Lastly, a few students also contacted me after seeing the volunteer flyer posted around the campus. The majority of the students who participated in the study were contacted with the help of the nationality clubs and the international gatekeepers. It is important to note here that many of the international graduate students who volunteered for the study as a result of help from the presidents/vice presidents of the nationality clubs also stated at the interview session that they were not active members of any specific nationality clubs. Many stated that they had helped out or attended one or two events put together by the members of the nationality clubs, but they did not consider themselves to be active members.

Interviews were conducted with 60 international graduate students who volunteered to take part in the study. Each interviewee attended an interview session, which lasted approximately one hour long, following a semi-structured, open-ended conversation type format (Kvale, 1996; Bodgan and Biklen, 2003). The students were interviewed using a sample list of 43 interview questions (See Appendix A). Each of the participants agreed to fill-out an interaction chart over the course of one week. Both forms of data collection were acquired by obtaining signed consent forms from each participant as required by ORP standards (Office of Research Protections). The students were also assured that the information they provided was
confidential and that their identity would be protected through the use of pseudonyms if any information was used in my dissertation.

For the week-long interaction chart, the students were asked to keep track of everyone they interacted with over one week. They were also asked to list the time spent with each individual, what nationality group they belonged to (i.e. the country of the individual or whether they were white American, African-American, Hispanic, Asian American, etc.) and to briefly describe the type of interaction (social, academic, informal) they had with each individual. The week-long interaction chart was a useful source of data in terms of assessing which groups of individuals the students were spending more of their social time with over the week. The interaction chart allowed me to critically evaluate what each international graduate student described in terms of who they actually interacted with based on the information they provided on the chart.

After sorting and analyzing the interview data and the information collected from the week-long interaction chart, the final phase of the data collection process involved conducting two focus group sessions. The topics and ideas addressed during each focus group were based on similar themes that were found to exist among different international graduate students at the interview sessions. These individuals were selected for the focus groups because they shared similarities in terms of the types of social experiences and interactions that they engage in at Mid-Atlantic University (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990; Templeton, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Both focus groups were video and audio recorded with signed consent from each participant.

The first focus group was conducted with five international graduate students from four countries (two students from Nigeria, and one from Bangladesh, Turkey, and Mexico). These
students were among a number of students who based on their interviews and interaction charts generally engaged in social interactions with co-nationals and other international students. This set of students was selected to participate in a focus group because they were also conveniently able to meet at a specific day and time that was agreeable with other students as well. The second focus group consisted of six international graduate students (two students from Turkey, and one from India, Morocco, Costa Rica and Taiwan). These students were selected to participate in a focus group together because they engaged in social interactions and developed close friendships with co-nationals, international and American students. They were also able to meet on an agreed upon day and time that was convenient to other individuals. No focus groups were conducted with international graduate students who were determined to only socially interact with co-nationals and internationals or those who interacted with American students and co-nationals because an agreed upon time could not be determined by these students. Therefore, the information provided from their interviews and week-long interaction charts were considered sufficient data to discuss the social interaction practices of these particular groups of students.

VI. Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews and the week-long interaction chart were analyzed first in order to identify key themes and patterns of social interaction among the international graduate students. To begin with, all four data sources were analyzed using a grounded theory case study approach since the main goal was to generate new theories to explain patterns of international graduate student segregation tendencies (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Corbin & Strauss, 1999). Therefore, each interview was transcribed and entered into the NVivo qualitative software system. Following Corbin & Strauss’ (1999) single-case study analysis using mainly an open and axial coding process, codes were created using a line by line analysis approach in order
to identify key concepts. Free and tree codes were created and then analyzed to identify themes derived from the transcripts. The software allowed me to code my data systematically and to do my analysis more efficiently through an organized process. The interview data was synthesized through writing short paragraphs to incorporate the codes and key concepts with propositions. The students were then characterized as engaging in specific social tendencies based upon an analysis of the synthesized concepts. Based on my analysis of the 60 transcripts, similarities and differences in terms of the students’ rationales behind their social interaction were assessed and divided into the four types of social tendencies mentioned earlier (Chapter 3).

Along with the interview transcripts, the week-long interaction chart was analyzed to determine whether international graduate students mainly spent their social or leisure time with other internationals, American students or a combination of both. Each interaction chart was reviewed to examine the types of social exchanges that these students conducted. The information provided on the interaction chart included the nationality of the individual that the student interacted with, their gender, occupational status, their description of the type of meeting, the location of their encounter and the time spent with each individual (See Appendix B). The interaction charts were analyzed by highlighting and separating the types of activities that the international graduate students listed as “social” in contrast to other activities that they described using headings as formal, academic or work-related. The amount of time spent with individuals of different nationalities, and the location of their social interactions, were also used to interpret which groups of people they were clearly establishing close friendships with and where they often met to engage in these social encounters. The social interaction charts were essential supporting data that for the most part confirmed the interview data. There were a few instances in which the students’ social tendencies described in the charts contradicted their interview data.
These students were either traveling out of town to conferences or did not follow their regular social routine the week that they filled-out the chart. In such cases, the interview data was relied upon more heavily to assess the students’ social tendencies, especially since the charts were based on only one week of interactions.

The final stage of my analysis involved the focus groups. The focus group sessions were transcribed in order to search for categorical codes and to discover specific themes that affirmed the types of social interaction practices that these students described in their interviews and interaction chart (Merton et al., 1990; Templeton, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Krueger & Casey, 2000). The focus group discussions were also analyzed using a variety of initial codes to critically evaluate agreements and disagreements on specific themes among the international graduate students who participated in the session. Finally, focused codes were created by eliminating and combining codes and concepts that appeared to be reoccurring themes among the students. The focused codes allowed me to assess the students social tendencies based on key reoccurring or repeated themes that emerged from the specific topics that were put forth and raised for discussion among the students.

On a final note, a series of memos were also written after each interview and the focus groups which contributed to the analysis stages. In addition to the memos, participant-observations were conducted over the course of one year by attending various social events organized by different nationality clubs and from volunteering at the international student office. Notes were taken during or sometimes after the events. The memos and participant-observation notes were reviewed and critically evaluated when writing up the analysis in order to pull out key ideas and themes that were recognized and recorded throughout the data collection process.
VII. Pilot Study

The pilot study results were based on interviews conducted with a total of 14 international graduate students who were sampled from the nationality clubs at Mid-Atlantic University. The sample of international graduate students included: 2 European students, 2 Chinese students, 4 Indian students, 2 Middle-Eastern students, 3 African students, and 1 student from the Latin American region. In the next segments of this section, I provide some details on the most prominent themes that resulted from my analysis of the interview data from the pilot study.

Three Tiers of International Socialization

The results of the pilot study illustrated that international graduate students tend to socially interact at three different levels at Mid-Atlantic University. The initial analysis revealed that international graduate students’ social interaction involved students socializing with people from their own countries (intra-group relations), then with other international students (inter-group relations) and finally with American students (American-group relations). International graduate students maintained three levels of social interaction based on the types of activities they were involved with on a daily basis. Their lives were primarily divided between internal departmental interactions and external leisure activities outside their work setting, with the latter mainly involving contact with other international students. Therefore, the students self-segregated in terms of spending less leisure time with Americans, only briefly socially interacting with them in their departmental/working activities.

Some participants maintained that they engaged in a balance of department and leisure activities, meaning they socially interacted with different individuals both within and outside the department equally, yet their description of who they interacted with and the frequency of
attendance at external socio-cultural international events still highlighted self-segregation patterns in their social practices. Other participants emphasized that they did not socially interact with members of their department at all. They commented that they viewed their departmental social interactions as completely separate, and further stated that they prioritize activities in terms of academic work relations and leisure time. Here again, the students maintained that they got along well with their American colleagues in their department, but their main social activities were with people from their own countries or other internationals.

The relationships that participants engaged in within the department also appeared to be mainly work-related. One participant even described her interactions as “surface-level” and “inauthentic” interactions. The international students’ social practices within and outside of the department indicated that these students were making connections with other international students more so than with Americans. In effect, they described building what a few participants called a “circle of international friendships.” Students engaged in social activities with other international students, and the international community as a whole, which resulted in an international social network at the University. The international students’ social activities led them to socially interact with co-nationals and other international students which set them into segregated groups that excluded Americans.

**Self-Segregation Resulting from Cultural Barriers**

A major hindrance to social interaction involved cultural barriers. In particular, international graduate students who experienced language problems often found it very difficult to communicate with other groups who were proficient in the English language. As a result of different cultural backgrounds, some international graduate students expressed not feeling
welcome or even comfortable interacting with American students. Their cultural differences created a wall between them and Americans.

Their inability to effectively communicate with American students in many respects prevented them from attempting to interact outside of the work environment. Cultural barriers deterred these internationals from socially interacting with American students, while at the same time it led them to seek out other students similar to themselves in terms of nationality and culture, thereby reinforcing their own cultural identity. They were able to establish cultural connections with other internationals with whom they began to construct hybrid or pan-national identities.

**Sharing International Commonalities**

International students claimed to share commonalities with other international students which allowed them to construct strong transnational solidarities with each other, but at the same time it also separated them from American students. Throughout the pilot study interview process, participants repeatedly mentioned connections that linked them to other international students. For instance, some pointed out that they shared similar roots, background and regional connectedness. They also pointed out that their similarities are what make it easier for them to communicate with each other. Specifically, among similar groups (e.g., Indian to Indian), one participant noted that he shared the same lingo, or slang, with his Indian friends (Indian Graduate Student: 03/16/05).

International students’ connections, which also established patterns of self-segregation, became more evident through the social networks that they formed. For instance, they organized social events that were open to everyone; however, the majority of people that attended these events were individuals similar to them. My observation of the people that attended a European-
sponsored party highlighted this fact. Most of the party-goers were not from the same country but composed of internationals from the same European region as well as a few other internationals. While there were a few American students there, the majority of the attendants were internationals. The international student patterns of intercultural commonalities fostered collective group connections that were strong support networks for these students. Yet, at the same time, these social networks also constructed patterns of self-segregation by not socializing with American students.

*Multicultural Social/Cultural Events are Catered Only for International Students*

Most of the participants interviewed maintained that they thought Mid-Atlantic University had indeed made efforts to bring diversity-related initiatives to the campus. Each participant mentioned social activities such as the multicultural activities at the student union. Other efforts included exchange and study abroad programs, as well as international inclusion in events such as the homecoming parade. The international students’ perceptions suggested that Mid-Atlantic University acted as a facilitator of mixing. However, the students also expressed concerns that social/cultural activities put together by the University facilitated social interaction between international students without participation by the American student body. Some students recalled attending social activities at the student union in which they observed international students and rarely white or minority American students participating in international social/cultural activities sponsored by the University. International students perceived the diversity efforts made by the University as being catered only to social interactions among international students at large, and this in effect also reinforced self-segregation among these students.
Inaccessibility and Quantity of Information about Social Events

The participants recognized that the University had made some effort with regard to improving the structural aspect of diversity, i.e., the number of international and minority students attending the university. However, they also mentioned that they felt they did not receive emails about other social and cultural events (primarily student union events such as movie nite and other cultural celebrations put together by one of the nationality associations) going on at the University. Most maintained that all the social and cultural events that they had attended at the student union in the past occurred by word-of-mouth from one international friend who heard about it from another friend. Some of the students emphasized that Mid-Atlantic University could do more to increase the quantity of information that promotes diversity and other social/cultural events.

A lack of access to information about certain events prevented international students and American students from engaging in social activities together. Without sufficient dispersal of information, international and American students were not given a fair opportunity to make a decision about whether to attend a social/cultural event. The role that the University plays with regard to providing access to information is important in order to encourage social interaction among students. International students’ comments about the lack of publicity about social events suggest that students might have chosen to socially interact with groups that were familiar to them because they were unaware of events that encourage social interactions between different groups. Some participants mentioned that they received occasional emails about social activities and others also stated directly that they thought the University rarely emphasized diversity. If the University is not providing international and American students with adequate information about social/cultural events and activities, then there appears to be a disconnection in information
diffusion that might be hindering the formation of social connections among different groups of students.

**American Inflexibility/Provincialism to Social Interaction with Internationals**

International students’ segregation is also related to their perceptions of American culture. A few of the participants commented that they saw Americans as “inflexible” and “not open to international differences.” This perception was derived from their own observations that there is a lack of American students attending the cultural events put together by the University and the nationality clubs. Furthermore, they maintained that those Americans who were open to internationals usually had spent some time abroad; in other words, they have previously had an international experience. They noted that the few Americans that they saw attending the international cultural events were people from the larger local community, rather than the students.

Internationals’ perceptions of American provincialism were a factor hindering their social interaction. The international students’ belief that American students are unwilling to adjust to their accents or cultural differences seemed to be a factor causing international students to shy away from Americans. Additionally, international students seemed to have limited expectations from Americans because they had constructed ideas about Americans’ inflexibility to adjust to international differences. They did not expect American students to want to interact with them, so they do not make an effort to socially interact with Americans.

**International Flexibility/Openness**

Self-segregation among the international graduate student population at Mid-Atlantic University was also linked to international students’ perceptions of their own flexibility and
openness to different groups. While holding on to socially constructed ideas of American inflexibility, the international students from the pilot study commented that their own nationality groups, and international students in general, seemed to be more open to socially interacting with other groups. For instance, one European student pointed out that the European-Club was more of a “loose structure.” He suggested that the club was open to everyone, not just Europeans, and he even mentioned a few members who were not from the European region (European Graduate Student, 02/19/05). All the participants also expressed an ability to mix internationally and a willingness to involve other groups in their social activities. This might be partly due to international commonalities that they shared such as accents and cultural similarities. Additional examples that suggest international students perceived themselves as more open to socializing with other groups included the transnational friendship ties that they claimed to maintain with other international students. While some of the international students that I interviewed pointed out that they had a few American friends, they emphasized friendships with other international students not belonging to their own nationality groups with whom they socially interacted more frequently.

**International Resistance/Isolation from Americans**

Many groups hold ethnocentric views about their own country when comparing it to the United States. Some participants spoke more generally, and commented that they thought some international students tend to socialize more frequently with people from their own group and with other internationals, and rarely with Americans, because they did not feel a sense of closeness to Americans. One participant even emphasized that she felt like the minority and they

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25 Keep in mind that while the international students perceived themselves as being more open to socializing, their perceptions are not taken at face value in this study. Their statements represent their own perceptions, however variations in opinions are likely from American students who might perceive themselves as more socialable.
(meaning Americans in her department) were the majority. Furthermore, she resisted social interactions with American students because she did not have anything to share with them and she did not really feel close or very excited to have meetings with them (Chinese Graduate Student, 03/03/05).

The infrequent attempts by international students to engage in social interactions with Americans perpetuated self-segregation on the campus. Since they were here only for academic advancement, they did not feel any necessity to interact with Americans. An Indian graduate student pointed out that he was only here for two years, and he also mentioned that “it is easy to go and interact with any people, any race, any culture.” However, he further stated that it was not that difficult to socialize with other groups, yet he preferred to socialize with “my friends” meaning mainly his Indian friends (Indian Graduate Student, 03/16/05). Since some international students came to the Mid-Atlantic University only for the purpose of schooling and scholarly achievement, returning home to their countries in a few short years, they were hesitant to socially interact and make friends with Americans. Therefore, international student preferences and goals also motivated their social interactions.

VIII. Limitations of the Study

A few limitations are associated with the qualitative research design of this study. First of all, the results of this study are not generalizable to all U.S. higher education institutions that host international graduate students. A single institution was used as a case study site for this study and considering that higher education settings vary across the country, the results of this study are restricted only to Mid-Atlantic University. I would argue though that the characteristics associated with Mid-Atlantic University such as its size, the racial/ethnic breakdown of the student body and composition of the international graduate student population, are consistent
with other universities across the U.S. and therefore the results of this study may be applicable elsewhere.

The second limitation of this study is that the results are exclusive only to the 60 international graduate students who voluntarily participated in the study. Considering that the participants were purposefully, not randomly sampled, again I cannot with full certainty adequately generalize the results to all international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University. A random sampling approach though was not the most appropriate strategy for this study, especially since with a random sample I might have acquired too many or too few international graduate students from one or two regions, when I specifically wanted to get the opinions of multiple international graduate students from the nine different geographic regions described earlier. I would also argue that since data were collected from international graduate students in nine different regions, this prevented broad generalizations to be made about a specific nationality group, since there are distinctions at the individual level that exist among persons from the same country or region. National and cultural distinctions among individuals from the same country provided valuable insight into variations in social interaction practices that exist at the individual level between persons from the same country or region.

Another limitation has to do with the number of focus groups conducted for the study. Follow-up sessions with each focus group would have enhanced the quality of the data collected as it would have allowed for more time to assess issues raised at a session which I could have raised or probed further at a follow-up meeting. Conducting follow-up focus group sessions would have also contributed in refining my own qualitative research skills with respect to organizing topics and moderating the focus group discussions. Only two focus groups were conducted in large part due to time constraints associated with completing the majority of the
data collection for the study in a timely manner. Ideally, I would have liked to have conducted multiple focus group sessions that included a mix of international graduate students from several different regions; however, the recruitment process and organizing a convenient date and time that was agreeable to multiple international graduate students turned out to be a bit more difficult than I had initially anticipated. The two focus group sessions, however, did provide rich qualitative data that contributed to and supported prior statements and ideas expressed by the students during their interview sessions.

Lastly, my own nationality status could have also been a limitation to this study. In some respects, I consider myself an “insider” among the international community because I am an immigrant to the United States and to some extent I share similarities with them in terms of not being a native-born American. However, I am also an “outsider” among the international community because I am now a naturalized U.S. citizen who has grown up in the United States. The students were informed at the beginning of the study during the preliminary question session that I was from the country of Trinidad and that I was now a U.S. citizen. Depending on how they interpreted my comment they could have considered me more of an outsider to the international community and therefore limited their responses. However, my physical appearance as someone of South Asian descent may have played some role in their acceptance of me as part of the international community. My quasi-insider status worked to my advantage, especially since the students were generally open and willing to share their views concerning social interaction and diversity at Mid-Atlantic University. This allowed me to build rapport with the students which contributed significantly to the results of this study.
5. SELF-SEGREGATION & EXCLUSIVE GLOBAL MIXING AT MID-ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

I. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the empirical evidence gathered from international graduate students regarding their social interaction patterns at Mid-Atlantic University. The data analyzed from the interviews, focus groups, interaction charts and participant-observations are used to describe these students’ social practices and the formation of their cultural identity. More specifically, Bourdieu’s theories of cultural and social capital as well as Said’s theorization of the othering process, explained in Chapter 3, are discussed in relation to the qualitative data in order to illustrate their connection to the students’ social interaction tendencies and cultural identity development. By relating the empirical data to the theories, explanations are presented about how and why some international graduate students at the University were more inclined to engage in social segregation.

Analysis of the qualitative data revealed that international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University had a tendency to engage in four types of social group practices (see Table 5.1). As noted in Chapter 3, the Self-Segregators represent international graduate students who were identified as purposefully choosing to socially interact only with co-nationals; that is, they were more inclined to spend their social time with internationals from their home country, while excluding Americans and all other international graduate students. The Exclusive Global Mixers consist of internationals who tended to participate in social interactions primarily with co-nationals and other internationals but generally excluded Americans from their social activities.
Table 5.1: Four Tendencies of Social Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Self-Segregators</strong></th>
<th>Socially interact only with co-nationals, exclude host Americans and all other internationals</th>
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</table>
| **Exclusive Global Mixers** | **Ethnic Global Mixers** socially interact with co-nationals and ethnically similar internationals, exclude host Americans and ethnically dissimilar internationals  
**International Global Mixers** socially interact with co-nationals and a range of other internationals, exclude host Americans |
| **Inclusive Global Mixers** | Socially interact with a mix of host Americans, co-nationals and other internationals, no exclusionary practices |
| **Host Interactions** | Socially interact with host Americans and a few co-nationals, exclude East and South Asian internationals |

Two group tendencies were observed among Exclusive Global Mixers based on the data that was collected, *Ethnic Global Mixing* and *International Global Mixing*. The former includes those who chose to engage in social interactions only with co-nationals and ethnically similar internationals that were from countries within the same geographic region as their own home countries. The latter tendency, on the other hand, refers to those international graduate students who socially interacted with co-nationals and a diverse array of other internationals, yet not with American students.

The *Inclusive Global Mixers* are international graduate students who generally chose to socially interact with a mix of host Americans, co-nationals and other internationals without purposefully excluding any nationality group. Lastly, the *Host Interactors* are those international graduate students who were identified as having a propensity to engage in social interactions with host Americans and a few other co-nationals, purposefully excluding mainly East and South Asian internationals. This chapter will focus on the social tendencies observed among the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers who participated in social segregation on the campus. The next chapter will examine the group dynamics of the Inclusive Global Mixers and the Host Interactors who specifically chose to include host Americans as part of their social interaction practices.
Each social grouping pattern exemplifies a type of social interaction tendency followed by the structurally marginalized group of international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University. How these students socially interact and why they choose to spend their social/leisure time with specific students is discussed more extensively in the next sections of the chapter. The students’ explanations for participating in socially segregated activities are considered in relation to their cultural background in order to draw attention to the role that culture plays in motivating students’ social actions and cultural identity development. Participation in limited or negative social interactions with Americans and some international groups is also examined in terms of its impact on the accumulation of social and cultural capital resources. The primary focus of the current chapter is to illustrate the important role that the students’ cultural background plays in their social interaction patterns and in their cultural identity development. International graduate students’ cultural background is shown to be essential in motivating their social actions and cultural identity within the context of the university setting.

Based on the qualitative data, for the most part, the international graduate students that are discussed in this chapter were evaluated as generally demonstrating a strong tendency to engage in social segregation on the campus. However, while most of their social practices included only co-nationals or a combination of co-nationals and other international graduate students, some of these internationals noted that once in a while they socially interacted with students from nationality groups outside their regular social network. Such slight variations in these internationals’ social practices are discussed as counter-cases or examples of “breaks” in the students’ Self-Segregation and Exclusive Global Mixing social tendencies. Lastly, the social tendencies of the Self-Segregators and the Exclusive Global Mixers are critically discussed in terms of the broader ramifications they have on international graduate students’ accumulation of
cultural and social capital. In particular, the question of whether establishing small group relations with co-nationals and/or other internationals limits or deepens one’s cultural and social capital is addressed at the end of the chapter.

II. Self-Segregators: International Graduate Students Who Socially Interact Only With Co-Nationals

Results

Of the 60 interviews conducted with international graduate students, the tendency of Self-Segregation was observed among approximately 27 percent (16 out of 60) of the students. For this group, social activities and close friendships were generally shared solely with international students of the same nationality. These internationals also expressed strong attachments to their own cultural background. In terms of demographic characteristics, the Self-Segregators were from the following countries: China, Taiwan, Korea, India, and Turkey. These countries were listed as the top five largest international graduate student populations at Mid-Atlantic University in 2006. The students were between the ages of 23 to 36 years old and most were single with the exception of two Korean students and one Turkish student who were married but had no children at the time. Out of the 16 international graduate students in this category, six were male and ten were female. The students identified their religious background as Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian. Six out of the 16 internationals stated they had no religious affiliation. The students were pursuing degrees in various departments on campus. Most were pursuing doctoral degrees, with the exception of two students who were completing a Master’s degree. They also varied between one-and-a-half to five years spent at the University.
Key Characteristics of the Self-Segregators

While many of the students listed a religious affiliation, they maintained that they were not actively practicing their religions. Only the Muslim graduate students pointed out that they were practicing the codes of Islam, thus they were restricted from participating in some social activities, such as going to bars and drinking alcohol. Marital status was also identified as an important factor responsible for the internationals’ self-segregation practices. The three Self-Segregators who were married restricted much of their social time to be spent with their wife or husband. All three internationals also emphasized that their social time was spent with other couples and families who were of the same nationality and cultural background. Additionally, most Self-Segregators had very limited travel experience before coming to the University. Only six of them had spent short vacation time primarily in European and Asian countries. Limited cross-cultural experience partially explains why some of these internationals were not easily able to socially connect with host Americans.

In comparison to other international graduate students who participated in the study, the Self-Segregators were more direct in stating that they identified strongly with aspects of their own cultural background. In general, they described having strong attachments to their own culture and considered this cultural resource as exceptionally valuable. They were also more explicit in stating that they felt culturally distinct from the general American student population on campus. Moreover, the statements that they made during their interviews, and the tone of voice in which they spoke, suggest that they had a tendency to hold a stronger attachment and preference for their own culture over all other cultures represented at the University.

The few interactions that they described having with American and other international graduate students were primarily work-related. These activities included brief encounters in the
classroom or working on projects and assignments relating to their academic roles. Their work-related interactions with Americans were meaningful in the sense that they benefited academically by increasing their knowledge and research skills in their respective disciplines. However, they stated that they could not connect socially with Americans and other internationals, although they generally felt closer to internationals than to Americans because they shared the experience of being foreigners at a U.S. institution.

The Self-Segregators were often more inclined to highlight encountering negative experiences with Americans and to a lesser extent with other internationals at the University, which often involved a language barrier or communication issue. This was prominent mainly among the East Asian international students. The language barriers they encountered with other nationality groups had an impact on them socially in terms of pushing them to spend more of their leisure time with co-nationals. For the most part, they maintained that they generally socially interacted with co-nationals because they simply felt more comfortable with them. The Self-Segregators often commented that they found communication much easier with people from their own country, because they did not have to repeat or explain things over and over again during a conversation. The East Asian graduate students in particular expressed English language difficulties in terms of their verbal communication, writing and reading skills. They had a tendency to describe their abilities in these areas between fair to good. They often pointed out that in comparison to other graduate students they had to spend a lot of time translating the English language into their native language in order to better understand certain texts and reading assignments. Their social time was cut short as a result of having to spend more time translating between languages.
These students also had a tendency to articulate very strong connections with their own cultural background. The Self-Segregators passionately stated that they wanted to speak their native language with co-nationals who could better understand references to their own culture. Other cultural preferences that they identified as essential to their cultural identity included following traditional social practices associated with their culture, continuing to engage in small group or community-oriented social activities, cooking cultural cuisines and practicing religious codes. Such cultural identifiers encouraged them to voluntarily socially interact with co-nationals. A combination of holding strong cultural attachments, along with having negative experiences involving a language barrier with American and other international graduate students, led them to participate in self-segregated social interactions.

Negative experiences encountered at the University especially pushed the Self-Segregators to become even more closely attached to their own national and cultural backgrounds. Wen-Chun, a Taiwanese graduate student, explained during her interview how she was treated poorly because of her limited English skills. As she explains:

There’s one time I have trouble with my computer and there’s a guy from the other lab. He came and tried to teach me how to, you know, start, restart a computer or something. And he said, “capital X.” And then I didn’t realize what capital X is. So I was hold there like five seconds and he just grabbed the keyboard and typed it. And you know I sometimes he just don’t want to talk to you. Yeah. That’s the feeling I get. And I think that’s because I didn’t speak English and I can’t understand him very, very well (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 09/28/06).

Another Taiwanese student named Yen-hsin also described a similar situation with an American classmate. She stated:

I still have one negative experience from an American classmate. She talked to me something but I couldn’t get to her point. She talk about “box” but I misunderstood that box and she spoke very fast. And I ask her to speak slowly and she responded to me, “you are here to learn so you just need to adjust to our speaking.” I told her I was an international student so my language was not very good. So if you could speak slowly something like that and she say, “I didn’t want to offend you so I didn’t want to speak
slowly on purpose to let you feel oh you treat me different.” I think her reason is fine, you know. But, it just made me feel uncomfortable (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/25/06).

In both cases, the students’ limited English language skills resulted in miscommunications and negative experiences with American graduate students. The negative experiences they described took place during their first year at the University. Wen-Chun had spent four years, and Yen-hsin two years, at the University at the time of their interview, yet these experiences remained embedded in their memory. This suggests that their experiences had enough of an impact to affect their social choices and behaviors.

Some of the negative experiences described by the international graduate students were not as direct as the two cases cited above. For instance, some internationals communicated having general cultural clashes or cultural miscommunications with American graduate students, which made them feel different. Most often the inability to understand Americans’ sense of humor was an important communication barrier for them. They all emphasized that they were involved in situations either in a classroom or in a social setting in which a joke was made and they did not laugh because they did not comprehend the context of the joke. For example, Tejal, an Indian graduate student, described such a situation with one of her White American colleagues. She noted that:

I don’t get the jokes still at all actually. So the other day [XXXX] was making a joke about the Indian thing, I stare at him and I thought he meant some Indian thing. But then he explained that it was the American Indians and it’s a very derogatory thing to say…I mean so I don’t get those things at all. I guess you know if you’re born in a certain place you just don’t, you’re not aware of them (Indian Graduate Student, 10/04/06).

The experience of not understanding Americans’ jokes is another example which internationals identified that made them feel culturally divided from American students.
The Indian student cited above chose to socially interact with co-nationals because she felt culturally alienated from the predominantly White American faculty and students in her department. She maintained that her predominantly white, male American department was culturally insensitive to international students and that they did not care to interact with internationals in general. Therefore, she and other internationals did not feel inclined to socially interact with them either. Tejal maintained that:

[T]hey couldn’t give a damn like whether you interact with them or not….You know it’s a completely male dominated place. And most of them are Americans. There are a few Chinese who nobody thinks are human beings anyway so you know even if there is a party or something they never show up….And so you know all the men talk about baseball and football and of course you know if you come to parties you either have to know about it or you just stand there like an ignorant person. So yeah I mean if I really was hung up on interacting with them, I would definitely have to know about it (Indian Graduate Student, 10/4/06).

This statement exemplifies the experience of isolation and cultural difference encountered in her department which pushed her away from wanting to socially interact with her American colleagues.

Such experiences with American graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University are important to consider in relation to what motivated these international students to participate in group dynamics which involved socially interacting only with students of the same nationality. As a result of these experiences, they develop a tendency while at the University to seek out co-nationals who they perceived as being much easier to communicate with and who they did not have to invest a lot of time with to establish a communication link. Negative experiences with White Americans stimulated self-segregation social tendencies whereby internationals felt a necessity to seek out comfort among students of the same cultural background.
Self-Segregators: Cultural & Social Capital Accumulation

By engaging in self-segregation, internationals capitalized culturally from socially interacting only with individuals that share the same nationality and cultural background. The Self-Segregators gained cultural capital in terms of reinforcement of their own cultural background due to a combination of negative experiences on the campus and from holding strong attachments to the cultural practices of their home country. They also identified more with their own culture in terms of following social traditions passed down from their parents or from their general social upbringing. The students gained and reinforced “embodied” forms of cultural capital by associating themselves with cultural characteristics of their own culture that distinguished them from Americans.

For instance, Anil, an Indian graduate student, maintained that he continued to uphold his family’s cultural traditions about not drinking alcohol and saving money for children because he respected their advice. Therefore, even while attending the University, he restricted himself from drinking alcohol even if he did not fully agree with his parents’ advice. As Anil put it:

My mom would tell me don’t drink. Don’t drink alcohol you know it’s a bad thing. And when I was young maybe I would think yeah that’s a bad thing. I won’t drink. But then you know by the time you are say 18 or 20 you just pick up whether you’re in India or the U.S. you don’t think the same way. And this applies to a lot of things. I mean even if you say what if your attitude towards say money. In India our parents would say, you have to save. You know you have to save money for the next generation. The whole point of you existing, living, earning is for your children...At one point of time you would accept it and believe it....Even though we are obedient, it’s out of respect...So knowing those respects Indians may be different from Americans....I may not believe in the Indian way of doing that, all right. But I would still end up doing it because how do you put it, respect (Indian Graduate Student, 10/19/06).

Anil capitalized from his own culture by continuing to maintain the socio-cultural traditions given to him by his parents. He followed the advice of his parents as part of his cultural upbringing which allowed him to build “embodied” forms of cultural capital. Thus, Anil had a
tendency to engage in social activities only with other Indian students who were not consuming alcohol for social entertainment and who generally shared a similar social upbringing.

Many of the East Asian students also held strong attachments to their own cultural traditions. They often exemplified strong attachments to their culture through various statements which were made to distinguish themselves socially and culturally from Americans. Their statements demonstrated a predisposition to align themselves with their own culture. In particular, the Chinese graduate students made it clear that their culture did not involve drinking alcohol. Rather, Chinese students’ social activities often involved having get-togethers at someone’s home for potluck dinners and playing specific Chinese card games. Social “habits” and “lifestyle preferences” associated with drinking alcohol were identified as part of American culture, not Chinese culture. Hua, a Chinese graduate student commented that “if you observe what those American students do in their free time, they always go to the bar, drink beer, or have parties. We don’t think those things are very interesting” (Chinese Graduate Student, 11/06/06). Yuan-Cheng, a Taiwanese graduate student also stated, “we kind of thought drinking wine is not a symbol of being a good student” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/25/06). By socially and culturally describing themselves as distinct in terms of following different social acts from Americans, they were reinforcing ideas about the status and value they have of their own culture. These East Asian international graduate students capitalized from maintaining their own culture through socially and culturally “othering” American graduate students.

A few of the Chinese graduate students maintained that speaking their native language was a salient aspect of their culture. They maintained that it was easier to communicate with people of the same nationality. At the same time, speaking the Chinese language was also an important resource in maintaining one’s cultural heritage. As Chung, a Chinese graduate student,
stated, “I think just having pure Chinese is much easier because everybody is talking in the native language; everybody is coming from the same background and having the same experience. So, I would say having a group of Chinese is much lower maintenance than having much more cultures” (Chinese Graduate Student, 10/12/06). Preferring to communicate in one’s native language with co-nationals is illustrative of the fact that speaking one’s native tongue is an important form of cultural preservation. By speaking one’s native language the internationals accumulated cultural capital through linguistically maintaining their culture.

The Self-Segregators also held strong attachments to specific cultural practices such as engaging in close-knit community-oriented social activities. For example, several of the Chinese graduate students pointed out that part of their culture was bringing a “Lunch Box” to school or work. They brought their own bowl of cultural cuisine from their homes for lunch, and it was a general custom for them to sit together as a group to eat lunch. Similarly, the Korean graduate students expressed the strongest attachment to a “lifestyle preference” involving a close-knit community consisting of other Korean students. They maintained this aspect of their culture through their friendships and social activities with other Koreans. As Kwan, a Korean graduate students, explained, “I spend my time with you know in respect of friendship, I usually spend my time with Koreans. Korean community is very strong you know….So we are almost as a family, that are your friends” (Korean Graduate Student, 01/26/07). Yong, another Korean graduate student, pointed out that he often attended a church in which there was a strong Korean presence. By attaching more value to operating as a community, these students profited through the reinforcement of their own cultural identity (Korean Graduate Student, 10/30/06).

The East Asian and South Asian graduate students generally held strong beliefs about cooking and eating traditional cultural cuisines. Hua, a Chinese graduate student, noted that “we
cook a lot of stir-fries….food is very important in Chinese culture…my roommate is a very good
cook….So like after she cooks something we will always eat together” (Chinese Graduate
Student, 11/06/06). Jun, another Chinese student, also commented, “I will still eat Chinese food
probably for the rest of my life” (Chinese Graduate Student, 11/03/06). Likewise, Anil, the
Indian graduate student pointed out that “we have this ability for craving Indian food. That is
something which we can never stop talking about” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/19/06). By
holding such cultural elements to be important, the students were engaging in a process of
investing in their own culture in which they capitalized in terms of building upon their own sense
of self through acts of cultural maintenance.

The Turkish graduate students expressed strong attachments to their culture in terms of
identifying with their Muslim religious practices. In particular, they described themselves as
actively practicing the Muslim religious codes. These students self-segregated by socially
interacting with other traditional Turkish graduate students and their wives. Sarila, a Turkish
graduate student, stated upfront at her interview session that she was a practicing Muslim and
that she followed the codes of Islam. She also dressed in a traditional Islamic style in which her
head was covered with a hijab and she wore a long gown. For Sarila, the ways of “dressing,
acting, thinking, or of representing oneself” as a Muslim set her apart from other students.

She remarked that “I am a practicing Muslim so I do not go to bars. That is one of the
things which is a barrier because if an American wants to have fun generally they want to go to
the bars. So if you do not go to the bars, then you do not increase the connection” (Turkish
Graduate Student, 09/25/06). Her cultural identification with her religion prevented her from
socially connecting with American students who often engaged in social activities by going to a
bar. At the same time, Sarila capitalized from practicing her religion because she gained a
stronger sense of her cultural identity as a Muslim woman by engaging in activities such as going
to the mosque and reading the Koran with her Muslims friends.

The international graduate students who articulated having deep attachments to specific
aspects of their culture and negative language experiences with Americans were generally more
inclined to engage in social activities and develop close friendships only with co-nationals. The
students acquired social capital from socially interacting with co-nationals through the
establishment of social networks from which they obtained social support and access to
informational resources. For example, Chyou, a Chinese graduate student, described a “Chinese
Only” social event that took place each year in her department. A social network was created by
the Chinese graduate students in her department in order to answer questions that new incoming
Chinese students might have about how to function at the University. Chyou commented that:

There is sort of like another different social network for Chinese people….You know you
don’t always post those parties….so there is sort of a very small mail list just for Chinese
people…It’s very informal, it’s like a potluck party. You just bring food there and talk to
the students you know catch up with old friends…The whole summer just passed by and
you want to talk to people about what has been going on. And also meet new
faces….They [referring to new incoming Chinese students] had a lot of questions like
how to actively participate in class discussion. I think that’s a big challenge for a lot of
Chinese students….The English education back in China is so different. You learn a lot
about maybe writing or even grammar a lot more than speaking. And, also it’s just a
whole new social environment. You need to have some time to get adjusted to the new
language you’re learning. And also they wanted to know those rules you know (Chinese
Graduate Student, 10/27/06).

The formation of closed social networks is an important form of social capital because it
provides social “assets” in terms of acting as a social support system for these students. At the
same time, the students obtained social capital in the form of access to “information” by using
the network to gather information that can help them succeed academically at the University.

For Tejal, the Indian graduate student cited earlier in this chapter, social capital in the
form of a social support system was gained from socially interacting with Indian co-nationals.
She considered her Indian social network a social “asset” because she profited in terms of acquiring social support from them. Tejal compared her social interactions with her friends in India to that of Americans by stating that:

When I’ve seen Americans interact with each other it seems like you know they meet, they’ll talk and then they’ll go their own way. I mean it’s not like you know you hang around with somebody all the time whereas in India like especially for women it’s like all you have, you have a constant buddy with you all the time. And you know you will do the bathroom with her you know, you go to the canteen with her and you go to the library with her….So you always have a buddy and you know you’re always having somebody to hang out with (Indian Graduate Student, 10/04/06).

She accumulated social capital from interacting with close Indian friends, who were also her roommates. The co-national relationships she formed at the University were a cultural asset in the sense that she was able to maintain the same cultural buddy system type of social relationship while attending the University.

Other international graduate students acquired social capital from a “co-national only” social network in the form of cultural reinforcement and support. Lian, a Chinese graduate student, maintained that she socially interacted and invested her time in building relationships with a circle of Chinese friends as opposed to Americans, because the Chinese students were an important source of support for her. As she put it, “when I socialize with American students the only thing I can talk about is school….With Chinese students we can talk about China, we can talk about family, we can talk about other friends, other Chinese students” (Chinese Graduate Student, 10/18/06). In Lian’s case, she benefited by developing socio-cultural “reinforcement” from her Chinese friends. Wen-Chun, the Taiwanese graduate student, also gained social capital in the form of a support system and access to “information” about how to deal with undergraduate students. Wen-Chun remarked that:

My Taiwanese friend we have you know just generally everything is in common, right. We know the hometown of each other, we basically know the university they go to as an
undergraduate and maybe we know some common friends. And in here we can share some experience you know in class, with advisors, even in teaching. You know they have probably some of my friends have been teaching assistants before….I can ask from them oh you know what kind of response to give to students or what kind of problems you are going to get into when you’re a teaching assistant (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 09/28/06).

Wen-Chun’s tendency to socially interact with other Taiwanese graduate students allowed her to accumulate resources in the form of information about how to respond to students as a teaching assistant. She profited from her social interactions with her Taiwanese friends, because she could ask their advice about how to respond to students’ questions and concerns in the classroom. The social capital acquired from co-national networks are significant factors that motivate internationals self-segregating social behaviors.

**Discussion**

The practice of self-segregating, or voluntarily choosing to socially interact only with co-nationals, resulted in two key processes: (1) the reinforcement of a pre-defined essentialized cultural identity and (2) a process of othering Americans. First, the Self-Segregators capitalized from identifying more with their own culture, and they acquired social resources by gaining membership in closed, exclusive social networks linked to their own nationality groups. Strongly identifying with their own culture motivated social behaviors that increased their social and cultural capital, which in turn reinforced a pre-defined, essentialized cultural identity which is understood to be fixed and impenetrable from external social influences. The international students’ experiences at the University, especially with Americans, along with the types of social actions they took part in with co-nationals, were crucial factors that helped shape their sense of cultural identity.
Second, while constructing an essentialized cultural identity within the University environment, the Self-Segregators engaged in a process of othering the general American student population on the campus. As noted in a few of the quotes cited above, the students clearly wanted to culturally distinguish themselves from American students. Their statements about being socially and culturally different from Americans suggest that they did not want to assimilate into the dominant White American culture at the University. As Anita, an Indian graduate student bluntly stated, “I’m not consciously making any effort to westernize myself” (Indian Graduate Student, 09/27/06). These internationals’ tendencies to socially interact with only co-nationals actually challenged existing assumptions that as a member of a marginalized group they had to, and were willing to, assimilate into the dominant White institutional culture that characterized Mid-Atlantic University. Instead, the students that engaged in self-segregated social practices identified strongly with their own cultural background.

Moreover, those internationals who had limited or no social interactions with Americans developed views of Americans in general as a culturally distinct “Other.” In the process of culturally differentiating themselves from Americans, the Self-Segregators noted that some Americans were nice and open to international students. However, they also made comments such as, “we are much more friendlier people than Americans are” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/04/06) or “Americans are independent…They don’t rely on their friends to solve problems” (Chinese Graduate Student, 11/03/06) or “Unless they are really interested in the culture or in the people or what happens in Taiwan, they will not ask me about anything in Taiwan” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/25/06). Such statements suggest that while reinforcing their own cultural identity, limited or no social interactions with American students led the Self-Segregators to
construct negative ideas about Americans that set them apart even further. It also prevented them from making a stronger effort to socially interact with American graduate students.

Some of the internationals who were identified as participating in self-segregation blamed themselves for not actively making an effort to socially interact with American students. Thus, while defining their own cultural identity and othering Americans in the process, a number of them hinted that they thought it was up to them to make an effort to socially interact with Americans, especially since they were guests in their country. Yet, at the same time they also insisted that their top priority was to pursue their academic degree, not build social relations. They basically maintained that they were here for the U.S. credential, not to develop friendships with Americans. As Wen-Chun candidly stated, “Socially, well I don’t really pay attention to that. I don’t really expect to learn or to see, yeah. Actually most of my concern is you know academic writing, learning, kind of professional stuff” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 09/28/06). Another Korean graduate student, Kwan, stated, “my top priority of staying here is for getting the degree and getting good outcome, not like the friendship. I mean friendship is important. I know that. But between two, I chose the degree first” (Korean Graduate Student, 01/26/07). Cultural capital in the form of getting the credential from a U.S. institution was the most important goal for these students.

The only other forms of cultural and social capital that concerned them were associated with their own culture. Essentially, the U.S. credential gave them status since their degree would be seen as prestigious in their home countries. Many of them pointed out that a Ph.D. from the U.S., and especially from a good University, was a resource in terms of getting good jobs either in the U.S. or in their home countries. The U.S. credential would give them access to top positions, especially in their own country, which in turn provided greater access to increasing
social status and financial wealth. In comparison to other internationals who participated in the study, the Self-Segregators were the ones that proclaimed that they wanted to go back home directly after completing their degrees or work for a few years in the U.S. and then eventually go back to their home countries.

In relation to the theoretical model, the Self-Segregators’ social interaction patterns and cultural identity development can be thought of as a cycle or a feedback loop. Engaging in positive social interactions with co-nationals as a result of negative experiences with Americans led these internationals to reinforce their pre-defined cultural identity. As they began to have a stronger sense of their own culture, they increased their social interactions with co-nationals with whom they had positive experiences. Social interactions with co-nationals increased their social capital in the form of social networks that provided socio-cultural support and access to information about the University. A continuous cycle of positive social interactions with co-nationals led them to accumulate social and cultural resources, which in turn reinforced their essentialized cultural identity.

III. Exclusive Global Mixers: International Graduate Students Who Socially Interact Only With Co-Nationals & Other Internationals

Results

Based on an analysis of the interviews, interactions charts and focus groups, approximately 38 percent (23 out of 60) of the international graduate students were identified as Exclusive Global Mixers. The description of their social practices during the interview revealed that they generally had a tendency to engage in segregation by socially interacting with co-nationals and other international graduate students, or in a few cases only with other
internationals. Similar to the Self-Segregators, these internationals did not spend their social time with host Americans. However, important variations were identified in the social practices carried out by the Exclusive Global Mixers. Therefore, as noted earlier, two forms of social tendencies were identified among the Exclusive Global Mixers: Ethnic Global Mixing and the International Global Mixing. Each is discussed separately in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Approximately eight out of 23 students followed the pattern of Ethnic Global Mixers, since they had a tendency to participate in social activities and develop close friendships with people of the same nationality and with internationals that were closely related ethnically (e.g., one Taiwanese student socially interacted only with other Taiwanese and other internationals from China, Korea and Japan). They generally followed a social pattern that excluded Americans and all other internationals that were not of a similar ethnic background. The majority of the Ethnic Global Mixers were from East and South Asia. However, this pattern was not solely isolated to Asian students. Several other international students from Switzerland, Mexico and Palestine also engaged in co-national and ethnic international social segregation. The remaining 15 out of 23 students fit the profile of the International Global Mixers, because they usually were more inclined to engage in social interactions with co-nationals and a broad range of other international graduate students that were of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, yet excluded Americans from their social activities and close friendship circles.

The Exclusive Global Mixers came from a variety of different countries. They also ranged in age from 23 to 42 years old and 16 out of the 23 students in this category were single. Only five students were married and one out the five had a young child. In total, 13 of the students were male and 10 were female. These students belonged to various departments on
campus, and they varied from one-and-a-half years to five years spent at Mid-Atlantic University. Moreover, with the exception of one person who was pursuing a Master’s degree, everyone else was working on a Ph.D. This group also stated that they were affiliated with one of the following religions: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Russian Orthodox. Seven out of the 23 students did not have any religious affiliation.

**Key Characteristics of the Exclusive Global Mixers**

Similar to the Self-Segregators, marital status was identified as important for the Exclusive Global Mixers’ social choices. Most of the internationals were single so they had more free time to socially interact with different nationality groups. The few internationals, who were married, however, explained that their social time was restricted to spending time with their marital partner. They also spent their social time with other co-national and international married couples. Additionally, religion was only important for the Muslim international graduate students’ social interactions. All other internationals who had a tendency to socially interact with co-nationals and other internationals stated that they did not actively practice their religions or at least they did not see it as interfering with their social interactions. In term of language, each of the Exclusive Global Mixers described their English speaking, writing and reading skills as good to excellent. During the interview, each of them spoke with an accent, but they spoke English very well. Language was not a major social barrier for these internationals.

As a whole, the Exclusive Global Mixers held strong attachments to their own national and cultural backgrounds. However, this group of internationals is unique because they generally expressed more of an interest and willingness to socially interact with other international students, but not with host Americans. Around 70 percent (16 out of 23) of these students also pointed out that before coming to the U.S., they had traveled outside their own national
boundaries to at least two or more countries. Unlike the Self-Segregators, most of these internationals had spent more than vacation time in a variety of different countries. Additionally, many had pursued a Master’s degree at a university outside of their home country before coming to Mid-Atlantic University. The students’ cross-cultural experiences initiated their interest in establishing closer friendships with students of different nationalities. Therefore, upon arriving to Mid-Atlantic University, for most of these students it was easier to develop a connection with other internationals who they met either in their department, through formal organizations at the university (e.g., nationality clubs and the international students services orientation) and informal social networks (e.g., meeting college friends already attending the University, living with international roommates, living in apartment complexes with other international students, and attending social gatherings with internationals).

In comparison to the Self-Segregators for whom negative experiences with Americans was a significant push factor in identifying more closely with their own cultural background, for the majority of Exclusive Global Mixers prior cross-cultural experiences with different cultures was a strong pull factor in their social interaction choices. At the University, the Exclusive Global Mixers socially interacted with co-nationals and internationals from whom they gained social and cultural resources.

**Ethnic Global Mixers: Cultural & Social Capital Accumulation**

The Ethnic Global Mixers consisted mainly of East and South Asian international students. These internationals often stated that their social time was spent with co-nationals and other ethnically-related internationals from countries within the same region. They described their interactions with American students and other internationals in general as “work related,” “academic,” and “professional.” They distinguished themselves culturally from Americans and
identified culturally with co-nationals and ethnic internationals whose culture was fairly close to their own socio-cultural background. The Ethnic Global Mixers identified culturally with co-nationals and ethnic internationals which facilitated a social attraction to these groups. These students gained cultural capital from culturally identifying with co-nationals and ethnic internationals which motivated their social interactions and the accumulation of social and cultural capital. This contributed in reshaping their cultural identity into an essentialized cultural identity, inclusive of their own culture and a mixture of ethnically similar cultures.

The Ethnic Global Mixers described their interactions with Americans as work-related, and they suggested that most of their social interactions were with co-nationals and ethnic internationals. For instance, Jafar, a Pakistani graduate student, stated that:

The time I spend during the week is mainly with my professional colleagues. So advisor, committee members of course, but also my colleagues and peers who give me feedback on different research aspects and of course I go out to lunch with them as well, sure. But I wouldn’t consider that at the level of socially interacting as I do with let’s say friends from PSA (Pakistan Student Association). So it’s a very different type of interaction I would say….Well it’s more professional. The other is completely non-professional, it’s personal (Pakistani Graduate Student, 10/02/06).

He professionally interacted with Americans and other internationals in his department, while his social interactions were with a mixture of internationals students from Pakistan (co-nationals) as well as India and Bangladesh (ethnic internationals). The professional relationships he had with his American colleagues and a few other internationals were meaningful because he acquired knowledge and research skills from them. Thus, his professional interactions with Americans allowed him to accumulate cultural capital in the form of working towards the U.S. credential.

Jafar also explicitly described himself as culturally different from Americans. As Jafar ardently explained:

It’s just different on multiple dimensions. I mean language is one. Family structure is obviously different. The way they’ve been brought up is completely different. The
activities are different. Sports are different. I mean I think every dimension of life is really just different. I wouldn’t say opposite. They’re just different (Pakistani Graduate Student, 10/02/06).

He had a tendency to spend his social time on the weekends, which took place outside of the department, with his Pakistani or “Desi” (countrymen) friends who were mostly undergraduates. At Mid-Atlantic University, the Pakistani undergraduate population is much larger than its graduate student counterpart, and according to Jafar, he generally found more connections with the Pakistani undergraduates because they were more fun and outgoing. He pointed out that the Pakistani graduate students, and all graduate students in his opinion, had a tendency to hang out only with other graduate students. It is noteworthy that while he made sure to emphasize that the graduate students formed segregated social networks, he also tended to engage in segregated social interactions with Pakistani undergraduate students and ethnic internationals, excluding American students and all other internationals not from a similar ethnic background.

Both culturally and socially, he found more in common with students from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh than with Americans and other internationals who did not share a close ethnic similarity. He especially held strong attachments to his Pakistani cultural background, and he described culturally identifying with Indian and Bangladeshi ethnic internationals. According to Jafar, “I am bonded to my country and I want to be back there. And of course my family is there but even if they were here, like I said, I prefer to be back there. It’s just the environment I guess….people can make you feel at home but they’re only part of it, right. It’s for me, I think it’s more the cultural milieu of the whole situation actually” (Pakistani Graduate Student, 10/02/06). He also expressed strong feelings about wanting to speak his native Urdu language. Jafar pointed out that, “It’s clearly the language cause I am fluent in Urdu. I want to speak it…I get tired of speaking English all the time” (Pakistani Graduate Student, 10/02/06). Such
statements suggest that he held strong pride and attachment to his own cultural assets, particularly with respect to language. This reinforced his cultural identity which motivated him to spend more social time with Pakistani undergraduate students. From socially interacting with co-nationals, Jafar also gained social capital in the form of establishing close friendships with co-nationals. Such friendships were an important resource which supported and reinforced his Pakistani cultural identity.

Additionally, Jafar recognized cultural similarities particularly with northern Indians and Bangladeshi international graduate students from the Indian subcontinent. At the University, he found northern Indian graduate students who could speak the Urdu language and a few Bangladeshi graduate students who knew how to speak a similar dialect. He culturally identified with them because they played cricket, which is a popular sport and cultural past-time in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Since he could culturally identify with these ethnic internationals, Jafar was more inclined and motivated to engage in social interactions with them. He socially invested time with co-nationals and ethnic internationals because he profited by expanding his social network through establishing cross-national ethnic friendships.

Tse-Chuan, a Taiwanese graduate student, also described socially interacting with co-nationals and ethnically similar internationals. He explained that his social activities mainly involved other Taiwanese friends (co-nationals) and primarily other East Asian internationals from China, Korea and Japan (ethnic internationals). Tse-Chuan pointed out that his department consisted mainly of White Americans and African Americans, and only a few other East Asian international graduate students. Similar to the Pakistani graduate student mentioned above, he described his interactions with Americans as an academic relationship. As Tse-Chuan put it, “We just don’t disturb you know each other and we have like a balance, okay…I’m doing my job,
you’re doing your job. Okay, if I did a team project, we discuss, okay. That’s it!” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/19/06). He engaged in limited interactions with Americans in his department, and the few interactions that did take place occurred in the context of a classroom setting.

He also viewed his Taiwanese culture as very distinct from American culture. When asked to compare Taiwanese culture to American culture, he stated that:

I would say Taiwanese people more social and not really so intimidated…Here I can find you know every time the class is done, end of the class everybody just disappear…We don’t have much time to interact or you know have even a good conversation. But, I think in Taiwan after the class we go somewhere or we have the conversation. I think we are more social person (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/19/06).

His characterization of Americans as less social people and Taiwanese as more social creates a cultural separation between him and American students which pushed him to identify strongly with Taiwanese graduate students and other East Asians. As he put it, “I’m not really you know like fit in this culture [American culture] or do I want to change my original culture, my style….This is cultural, I respect you, but I have my own culture” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/19/06). He clearly identified with his own cultural background and gained a stronger sense of self through identifying with his Taiwanese culture.

Moreover, Tse-Chuan maintained that since he was married and had one young child, he found more cultural connections with other East Asian internationals that also had families. He culturally identified with other Chinese, Korean and Japanese families because he connected with them in terms of having similar topics to talk about regarding their kids. With the Korean and Japanese families, he pointed out that they did not speak the same language, but he still felt a social connection to them because he shared similar limitations in speaking the English language.
He was drawn to other East Asian internationals who had families because he was closer to them ethnically in comparison to other internationals. According to Tse-Chuan, “I feel more comfortable to talk with the Asian people…I see the Asian people, I feel more like connection or maybe because we have more similar cultural connection” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/19/06). Tse-Chuan’s social interactions were stimulated through culturally identifying with ethnic internationals. Like Jafar, he accumulated social capital through the formation of an enclosed social network which provided cultural support to him. The acquisition of socio-cultural resources, such as advice from other East Asians about raising children, speaking one’s native language with Chinese internationals and becoming familiar with other Asian cultures, were important stimulants in the reinforcement of Tse-Chuan’s ethnic identity.

By culturally identifying with ethnic internationals, cultural distinctions that would normally separate different nationalities diminished or subsided within the context of Mid-Atlantic University. Cultural connections were found to be strong social stimulants that attracted Ethnic Global Mixers to socially interact only with co-nationals and ethnic internationals. This ethnic form of global mixing was especially prominent among East Asian and South Asian internationals. However, as noted earlier a few other students from Switzerland, Palestine and Mexico also followed this type of social interaction pattern. For instance, Alena, a Palestinian graduate student, maintained that she did not engage in much social interactions on campus, but she pointed that she spent some social time, especially during the month of Ramadan, with a few friends who were also of Middle Eastern background. Alena commented that,

It was during the month of Ramadan, which is the worship month and, you know, that was the time I used to go to the local mosque. You know I would participate in their prayers and, you know, during the evenings…I was socializing because you know it is good to be part of collective prayer…I had very few friends during the time and during the first two years I guess I had about two or three just basically graduate student friends…I happened to meet actually across campus who are part of the Mid Eastern
The few social activities that Alena participated in were with other graduate students from the Middle East that were also Muslim. She connected with other Middle Eastern graduate students because they shared a similar religious background.

Similarly, Benita, a Mexican graduate student, who at the time of the interview was dating a Japanese graduate student, maintained that most of her close friendships were with internationals from Latin American countries such as Columbia, Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela. A few of them graduated, but she still remained in contact with them while at the University. She also bluntly noted that Latin Americans, such as herself, had a tendency to hang out only with other Latin Americans. As Benita put it:

A lot of my friends have already left because you know I have been here for so long. Well not so long, but some years. But I used to go out a lot with a Columbian girlfriend and my girlfriend from Costa Rica. The Colombian one is gone…So I just hang out with the Costa Rican one a lot….The Latin Americans, we kind of hang out Latin Americans, all together and sometimes we don’t care about some other internationals coming into our group (Mexican Graduate Student, 11/17/06).

Benita explicitly emphasized that most of her social time was spent with Latin American graduate students because they shared a similar ethnic background. These international graduate students, like many Asian internationals, culturally identified with co-nationals and ethnically similar internationals. However, their social patterns were not as visible on the campus in comparison to the Asian graduate students who represented the largest percentage of international graduate students at the University.

**International Global Mixers: Cultural & Social Capital Accumulation**

The International Global Mixers had a tendency to socially interact with co-nationals and a broad range of international graduate students from multiple countries, yet nevertheless
excluded Americans. A few of the internationals socially interacted only with other internationals because there were too few co-nationals at the University. A structural imbalance in the number of international graduate students from different countries at the University partially explains why these internationals chose to socially interact only with other internationals. The International Global Mixers also found more cultural commonalities with internationals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds than to host American graduate students. Unlike the Ethnic Global Mixers, who consisted primarily of East and South Asian internationals, the International Global Mixers were composed of a mix of international graduate students. These internationals expressed feeling culturally distinct from Americans and culturally connected to co-nationals and internationals.

Similar to the Ethnic Global Mixers, many of the International Global Mixers described their interactions with Americans as work-related and their interactions with co-nationals and a variety of other internationals to be social. For instance, Alojz, a Slovakian international graduate student, described his interactions with internationals as warm and the interactions with his American colleagues as generally professional. As Alojz noted:

The relationships are much warmer with the international students. The American students, it’s always stays on the surface. It’s like they very nice. They would smile and then they would greet you. But that’s it…They are not really interested in how are you doing. What are you doing. There is a sense also…little bit of the sense of the competition that people are not willing to share their professional knowledge…They are afraid that somebody else would steal their idea and use it (Slovakian Graduate Student, 10/04/06).

Alojz who was married to a White American woman pointed out that he and his wife established closer bonds and friendships with other international graduate students rather than other Americans. Their close friendships were with a mixed Nepalese-Indian family who lived close to them as well as a Jewish couple from Uruguay.
In comparing the type of interactions he had with Americans and his close international friends, Alojz mentioned that Americans “are much more closed, much more private. They guard their privacy…They are kind of chatty when you meet them outside. But that’s it. It’s five minutes politeness…and you go and each of you in your own world and different cultures” (Slovakian Graduate Student, 10/04/06). In comparison, he described his international friends in the following way:

They are more open. They are less individualistic…They, by their nature, they are willing to share their lives, to open their apartments. We had, for example, last year we had our Nepalese neighbors and it came to the point where they were entering our apartment without knocking…and we were able to enter their apartment. So it was really like a communal living. It was very nice. I can’t imagine that the American students would do something like that (Slovakian Graduate Student, 10/04/06).

He felt culturally connected to other internationals who shared a similar cultural upbringing about operating as a close community. According to Alojz, Slovakian culture is very open and “Slovaks are more community-minded and I would associate it with the cultural tradition. But also forty-five years of communism, or forty years of communism where we were taught that any individual thinking, everything that is done on as individual is wrong” (Slovakian Graduate Student, 10/04/06). His upbringing in a communist country was an important part of his cultural background. Being raised in a culture that was heavily based on a system of collective thinking and community interactions, Alojz culturally identified with internationals who shared similar community-oriented values.

Alojz’s interactions with co-nationals were limited because there were few Slovakian graduate students at the University. He accumulated cultural capital from having strong attachments to specific community-oriented values associated with his social upbringing. Alojz was able to expand his social network and profited by accumulating social resources such as cross-cultural friendships. Socially interacting with the Nepalese-Indian family and the Jewish
Uruguayan couple led Alojz to find socio-cultural commonalities which contributed to the creation of a “hybrid” cultural identity, inclusive of Slovakian culture and the international cultures from which he gained socio-cultural resources at the University. Unlike an essentialized cultural identity, a hybrid cultural identity is one that is open to mixing. It incorporates multiple different socio-cultural factors as part of constructing one’s sense of self.

A similar social pattern was carried out by a Costa Rican graduate student named Carmelita. Carmelita noted that her boyfriend was African American, but with the exception of him she did not socially interact with other Americans, especially White Americans. She also explained that her department was predominantly composed of White Americans, and she often felt socially and culturally disconnected from them and attended few social gatherings with Americans. As Carmelita put it:

> Everybody in my department is white...there used to be a couple Hispanic students and I think there’s a new one now...and all the professors are white American. So I don’t really interact with anybody in my department...I like all my colleagues. Like they’re nice people and stuff and when I first came here for grad school I would go out with them. But I was very bored because their idea of having fun was just go out and sit at a really loud bar like a sports bar drinking beer. And you couldn’t talk. And that’s not you know like my Latin American friends would go out dancing or it was different...but I make an effort to go out at least once a semester to like to go have a beer or something with them. Like tomorrow we have a little reception for the students that defended their dissertations or something so like I try to come to the department just to be professional...But with the students outside the department, like I try to go once in a while to show them that it’s not like I hate them. But I really, I’m just kidding you know and I get a little bored (Costa Rican Graduate Student, 11/30/06).

She explained not participating in extensive social interactions with Americans in terms of simply feeling bored with their types of social activities. Yet, her statement also suggests that she did not culturally identify with her American colleagues. Additionally, there were few Costa Rican graduate students at the University, so Carmelita developed good friendships with other
Latin American graduate students who shared socio-cultural similarities as well as with other racially and ethnically diverse internationals.

Her tendency to socially interact with Latin Americans and other internationals allowed her to accumulate social capital in the form of a social support system. Her Latin American friends were a social “asset” because they were the ones she turned to for support and whom she felt understood her the most. Carmelita was also critical of Costa Rican culture, but for the most part she expressed strong cultural attachments to aspects of her culture. She valued the fact that in Costa Rican culture people were more humble and did not place a high value on material possessions. She gained cultural capital by holding aspects of her culture in high esteem. This allowed her to maintain her own culture and to gain a strong sense of cultural identity.

Over the course of four years spent at the University, Carmelita socially interacted with African, Arab, Greek and Indian international graduate students. Carmelita was motivated to socially interact with different nationality groups because her own research involved studying different cultures. She stated, “I’ve always been interested in different cultures otherwise I wouldn’t have picked this major…I mean I just find it fascinating” (Costa Rican Graduate Student, 11/30/06). She gained from socially interacting with different nationalities in terms of obtaining informational resources from them about their own cultural backgrounds. For example, her international interactions led her to develop an interest in different types of international music such as African music and Bangla, an Indian type of music. From socially interacting with a range of internationals, Carmelita’s cultural identity became “hybridized,” incorporating aspects of a variety of international cultures.

Likewise, several Nigerian graduate students that were interviewed engaged in social interactions and established good friendships with co-nationals and a range of other international
graduate students. For instance, Adekola, a graduate student from Nigeria, noted that most of his social time was spent with a few Nigerian co-nationals and the rest of his close friendships were with students from Thailand. With the Nigerians, Adekola was culturally connected to them in terms of religion. At the time of our interview, Adekola explained that he was fasting during the day (abstaining from all meals) because it was the month of Ramadan, which is an important practice associated with Islam. He was a practicing Muslim and attended the local mosque regularly with his Nigerian friends. In doing so, Adekola reinforced his cultural background through practicing his religion with other Nigerians. Having ties to the Islamic religion encouraged him to socially interact with Nigerians, and he capitalizes socially and culturally from them by gaining membership in a supportive Nigerian Muslim social network at the University.

Additionally, Adekola pointed out that some of his good friendships were with students from Thailand. He explained that he felt a strong connection to them because they shared similar social problems as Nigerians in their own country. He also found Thai people to be culturally similar to Nigerians in their socio-cultural upbringing. Adekola noted that:

I understand like we have some difficulties, political problems that are alike. The country itself we joke about both the countries, the economy of the countries, difficulties of things in the countries, the social groups in the country, like how the country is divided… I definitely see that like there are a lot of similarities. They’re like generally they’re like a very humble people like Nigerians. The Thai’s are friendlier and more humble (Nigerian Graduate Student, 10/16/06).

He capitalized culturally by identifying with internationals that had a similar “humble” way of culturally “acting.” The recognition of such a cultural commonality led him to socially interact with the Thai students who he profited from socially by acquiring access to information and knowledge about Thai culture and socio-political conditions. His tendency to socially interact
with Thai graduate students also provided him with a social network from which he gained friendship and support.

Adekola’s other social and professional interactions were mostly with the Chinese and Indian internationals in his department. He profited from learning new information from them by working on different projects together, and he gained access to resources in the form of information about the different ways in which other cultures live. Through socially interacting with Thai, Chinese and Indian international students, he developed a hybrid cultural identity inclusive of a mixture of cultures.

Discussion

All of the International Global Mixers that expressed a general tendency to socially interact with co-nationals and a range of internationals gained cultural capital by identifying with aspects of their own cultural background and with that of other international students. Recognizing cultural commonalities with other nationality groups encouraged them to seek out and build social relationships with internationals that they identified the most with culturally. Social capital was accumulated in terms of establishing cross-cultural friendships, acquiring access to information about different cultures and gaining a social support system. Acquiring such resources led to the redevelopment of their cultural identity into a hybrid cultural identity which incorporated a mix of different cultures.

Like the Self-Segregators, most of the Exclusive Global Mixers maintained that getting the U.S. credential from Mid-Atlantic University was important, because it was seen as prestigious in their home countries and would likely provide them access to future social and economic status. However, the fact that they chose to exclude Americans from their social interactions suggests that in comparison to the U.S. credential, other forms of social and cultural
capital were not perceived as equally valuable. For some internationals, cultural connections were easily found among ethnic internationals (Ethnic Global Mixers), while for other students, cultural similarities were identified among racially and ethnically diverse internationals (International Global Mixers).

In relation to the theoretical model, the Ethnic Global Mixers followed a similar feedback loop process as the Self-Segregators in which their social interaction practices reinforced their pre-existing cultural identity. While they retained their cultural capital and accumulated social capital from interacting with co-nationals and ethnically-similar internationals, the potential accumulation of social and cultural capital was limited due to the lack of social contact with other internationals as well as Americans. Similar to the Self-Segregators, the Ethnic Global Mixers engaged in a process of negatively othering Americans and internationals not from a similar ethnic background.

The International Global Mixers also followed a similar feedback loop process. Through positive social interactions with internationals that differed from them racially and ethnically, they accumulated social and cultural capital which contributed in constructing hybrid cultural identities. The chief difference between the International Global Mixers and the Ethnic Global Mixers is they gained a wider range of socio-cultural resources by interacting with a diverse array of internationals. Their hybridized cultural identities tended to be more open to exploring diverse cultures. However, these internationals also engaged in limited or negative social interaction with Americans. The cultural distinctions made about American culture suggest that they also engaged in a process of othering host Americans at the University.
IV. “Breaks” in the Social Tendencies of Self-Segregators & Exclusive Global Mixers

Based on the students’ responses, the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers were identified as having a general tendency to engage in two types of social segregation patterns on the campus. However, their social practices should be understood as social interaction “tendencies,” rather than fixed categories that one can assign to specific groups of international graduate students. While for the most part the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers engaged in social interactions either with co-nationals only, or with a combination of co-nationals and other internationals, it is important to point out that “breaks” or variations were also identified in the social patterns followed by some of these internationals.

In the case of the Self-Segregators who generally socially interacted with co-nationals, a few of them made statements about either having one good American or international friend with whom they occasionally spent some social time. Some of the Exclusive Global Mixers also mentioned having one or two good American graduate student friends. So, while they generally excluded most Americans from their social interactions, there were some “breaks” in their social tendencies. For example, Hua, a Chinese graduate student, pointed out that she often socially interacted with eight Chinese graduate students and one American. Hua stated, “Well, we have been friends since 2000 right after I came here. So we’ve been together for a long time and she’s an American girl. I think she’s more like a Chinese girl…starting here, she knows what she needs to do and she’s responsible. She’s not like very, you know, a lot of American, I don’t know which word I should use. Not outgoing” (Chinese Graduate Student, 11/06/06). Most of Hua’s social interactions were with other Chinese graduate students, with the exception of one American, who she characterized as being similar to a “Chinese girl” in terms of personality.
“Breaks” or variations in social patterns were also identified among a few other international graduate students that were cited earlier. For instance, Benita, the Mexican graduate student, who for the most part socially interacted with other Latin American graduate students, noted that she also spent her social time with her Japanese boyfriend. Similarly, Carmelita, the Costa Rican graduate students, who socially interacted mostly with internationals from a variety of different national and cultural backgrounds also socially interacted with her African American boyfriend. Likewise, Alojz, the Slovakian graduate student who noted that he felt more comfortable socially interacting with other international students did socially interact with his wife who was a White American. Although the international students described engaging in social interactions mostly with co-nationals and internationals, there was some divergence in their social practices. Such “breaks” makes it imperative to distinguish their social practices as social tendencies rather than fixed categories.

Within the context of Mid-Atlantic University, social forces associated with the students’ cultural background and the organizational habitus characteristic of the institution contributed in facilitating variations in the Self-Segregators’ and Exclusive Global Mixers’ regular social tendencies. Some international students, like Hua, were able to break away to a small degree and socially interact with one American whom she associated as being socially similar to a Chinese girl. The broad organizational system of admitting internationals and Americans into different departments at the University allowed these internationals to have contact with each other, which facilitated the “breaks” in their social patterns as well. Finding some social and cultural traits in common, along with the general organizational routine of the institution, are social forces responsible for initiating such divergence in some internationals’ social tendencies.
V. Critical Analysis of Internationals’ Social Segregation Tendencies

The Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers capitalized culturally and socially from socially interacting with co-nationals alone or a combination of co-nationals and other internationals. Undoubtedly, the internationals’ social tendencies to limit their social networks to smaller groups and to include specific nationality groups can be perceived as a social advantage with respect to forming more meaningful social relationships. The international graduate students themselves would likely agree that engaging in a process of self-limiting one’s social network allowed them to develop more quality social interactions and friendships. Their social tendencies suggest that they value quality as opposed to quantity of social relationships. By constricting their social networks both in size and with specific nationality groups, the internationals indeed deepened their overall quality of cultural and social capital. They were able to better connect culturally and socially with co-nationals and internationals.

However, this tendency to engage in social segregation on the campus also limited their accumulation of cultural and social capital. While the Self-Segregators benefited from their co-national support systems, the lack of social interaction with Americans and other internationals restricted the potential cultural and social capital that could be accumulated from engaging in cross-cultural social interactions. The only form of cultural capital that Self-Segregators found valuable from their American hosts was the U.S. credential. Social capital in the form of membership to a broad social network was not sought after by these internationals. Thus, they did not profit in terms of expanding social resources, especially in relation to building close friendships with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. From forming tightly knit closed or “bounded” social networks only with co-
nationals, these internationals limited the pool of “potential” cultural and social capital available from Americans and other internationals.

Similarly, the Exclusive Global Mixers were able to acquire a greater amount of cultural and social capital from socially interacting with other internationals in addition to co-nationals. Yet, by excluding host Americans from their social practices, they too limited themselves from acquiring the fullest potential of cultural and social capital. From a cosmopolitan standpoint, internationals who tend to engage in self-segregation and segregation more broadly fail to acquire the maximum cultural and social capital that is attainable from attending a U.S. higher education institution. Even if internationals form small social networks, why not attempt to include a range of internationals and host Americans?

A U.S. university setting is the ideal location for engaging in diverse social interaction with multiple nationality groups. It is the place in which international and American students can capitalize in terms of cross-cultural exchanges, create social networks and develop friendships with individuals from other nations. Therefore, even though the international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University may see little to be gained from socially interacting with an array of internationals and host Americans, the social tendency of excluding other internationals and Americans limits their ability to maximize their cultural and social capital. Acquiring cultural capital only in the form of the U.S. credential might be perceived by internationals as their top priority. Yet, they can also use the University environment to break down barriers and work on building social relationships not just with other internationals, but with Americans as well. If they continue to follow social segregation tendencies, then they limit themselves from moving beyond stereotypes, and thus from fostering global solidarities.
VI. Conclusion

The Self-Segregators and the Exclusive Global Mixers together composed 65 percent of the international graduate students interviewed as part of this study at Mid-Atlantic University. The most intensive social segregation was among internationals that chose to self-segregate by only socially interacting with co-nationals and excluding all other groups. These students, the Self-Segregators, had a tendency to construct closed tight-knit social networks, inclusive of only other internationals from the same country.

The other type of social segregation observed among international graduate students was a bit more inclusive in that some internationals expanded their social network to include both co-nationals and other internationals. The students who engaged in this type of social interaction were described as Exclusive Global Mixers. Two types of Exclusive Global Mixers (Ethnic Global Mixers and International Global Mixers) were identified at the University. Some internationals had a tendency to include co-nationals and ethnic internationals in their social activities, while they excluded Americans and internationals that were not from a similar ethnic background. The other group socially interacted with co-nationals and a range of internationals, while excluding Americans. Within the context of the University, these internationals accumulated social and cultural resources which contributed in reinforcing the Self-Segregators’ and Ethnic Global Mixers’ essentialized cultural identity and in developing a “hybrid” cultural identity among the International Global Mixers.

In contrast to the Self-Segregators and the Exclusive Global Mixers, the social interaction patterns of the remaining 35 percent of internationals tended to include Americans in their social activities. In the next chapter, the social practices of these internationals are described in relation to Bourdieu’s theories of cultural and social capital and the process of othering described by
Said. The international graduate students who did not exclude host Americans from their social interactions were unique because they represented a smaller percentage of internationals that attempted to maximize their accumulation of potential academic and social capital resources while attending the University. Hence, specific attention is given to the characteristics that distinguish these students from internationals that engaged in social segregation.
6. INCLUSIVE GLOBAL MIXING & HOST INTERACTIONS AT MID-ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

I. Introduction

Americans were not socially excluded by all international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University. The data sources revealed that 21 out of the 60 international graduate students who participated in the study actually established cross-cultural connections with Americans, co-nationals and other international graduate students. In comparison to the internationals that were classified as Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers in Chapter 5, some internationals voluntarily chose to socially interact with a mixture of nationalities as well as with Americans. Others, however, interacted primarily with Americans and co-nationals, but not with other East and South Asian international graduate students.

More specifically, two types of social interaction tendencies were identified among the remaining internationals. Some internationals, referred to here as the Inclusive Global Mixers, consisted of approximately 28 percent (17 out of 60) of internationals that described a tendency to socially interact, and established close friendships, with Americans, co-nationals and other internationals. Similar to the Exclusive Global Mixers in Chapter 5, the Inclusive Global Mixers’ social interactions involved some variation. About half of them maintained that they socially interacted with all three groups separately, while the other half engaged in social interactions with a mixture of Americans, co-nationals and other internationals simultaneously. The remaining seven percent (four out of 60) of internationals are described here as Host Interactors, because the majority of them had a tendency to socially interact with host Americans and a few
other co-nationals. These students specifically excluded East Asian and South Asian internationals from their social practices.

In the next section, the characteristics associated with the Inclusive Global Mixers are discussed in order to highlight traits that make them distinct from the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers. The characteristics of the Inclusive Global Mixers are discussed in terms of how and why some international graduate students chose to socially interact with Americans, co-nationals and other internationals. Next, the ways in which these students capitalize, both culturally and socially, from making connections with individuals of diverse nationalities are illustrated by discussing two international student cases that followed this type of social practice. Extensive details on the two cases are presented in order to demonstrate how the students acquired social and cultural resources from engaging in social interactions with multiple nationality groups. The theoretical framework and the feedback loop presented in Chapter 3 are used to analyze how the students’ repeated positive social interactions with Americans, co-nationals and other internationals resulted in the formation of a hybrid/pan-national cultural identity. A “positive” form of othering American and international graduate students carried out by the Inclusive Global Mixers is also discussed as part of their cultural identity development process.

Subsequently, the characteristics of the Host Interactors are highlighted followed by a discussion of how they capitalize culturally and socially from engaging in social interactions with host Americans and a few co-nationals. Next, a discussion is presented using the theoretical framework from Chapter 3 to explain how the Host Interactors’ social interaction tendencies contribute in reconstructing their cultural identity into a bi-cultural identity. At the same time, the Host Interactors also participate in a form of “positive othering” of American graduate students.
and “negative othering” of East and South Asian internationals. The chapter concludes by providing a broad discussion on the implications of Inclusive Global Mixing and Host Interaction social tendencies. Taking a cosmopolitan stance, I argue that internationals who tend to socially interact with host Americans, co-nationals and other internationals represent the ideal model of social interaction that students should engage in within the context of a university milieu.

II. Inclusive Global Mixers: International Graduate Students Who Socially Interact With Americans, Co-Nationals & Other Internationals

Results

As noted above, based on the data collected, the Inclusive Global Mixers were assessed as having a tendency to engage in social interactions with Americans, co-nationals and other international graduate students. The inclusive nature of such social practices represents the ideal type of interaction in which internationals actively seek to engage in cross-cultural education through multiple diverse social interactions. They established meaningful work-related and social interactions across nationalities. The internationals that chose to establish social relationships with members of different nationality groups were from a variety of different countries, yet few were from East Asian countries. At the interview session, all of these students had a very mild accent, but they all spoke very good English. They did not have any type of cultural barrier relating to language which might have prevented them from socially interacting with Americans or other internationals.

In total, only five out of the 17 students were married. One student in her early thirties had a young child and another in her mid-forties had three children. With respect to the married
students, only the ones that had children expressed that spending more social time with their families took precedence over other social interactions. The students were between the ages of 23 to 46 years old. Most of them were pursuing doctoral degrees in a variety of disciplines with the exception of two who were completing their Master’s degree at the time of the interview. Out of 17 international students who participated in social interactions with a range of nationality groups, eight were male and nine were female.

They also came from a variety of religious backgrounds, including Islam, Hinduism, Russian Orthodox, Judaism, Agnosticism, Atheism and no religious affiliation. Religion was a barrier to social interaction only for a few of the internationals who declared that they were practicing Muslims. While the other internationals listed a religion, they maintained that their religious background was not a factor in their social interaction because they did not actively practice their religions. One international student described herself as a practicing Jew; however, no major issues were identified to suggest that her religion restricted her social interaction. At the time of the interview over half of the students had already spent more than two years at the University. Additionally, more than half of the 17 students had traveled to at least two or more countries before coming to study at Mid-Atlantic University. Most of them had also spent a significant amount of time on vacation in different parts of the world. Others had lived for a number of years in some countries while completing another degree. They had clearly learned survival skills to cope with and function in a culturally different environment.

**Constructing Friendships with Specific Types of Americans**

The Inclusive Global Mixers described being predisposed to socially interact with specific types of American graduate students. Their American friends had already had some type of international experience, such as living abroad, studying in another country or spending some
vacation time in a foreign country. The Inclusive Global Mixers found cultural connections with specific Americans who had experience with other cultures. For instance, Kate, a Canadian graduate student, noted that one of her closest friends was an American woman from her department who lived in Japan for six years and France for five years. She further stated that, “I tend to look for Americans that are maybe more well-traveled, have an idea of what it’s like to be from a different country cause I know quite a lot of people…that haven’t even left [the Mid-Atlantic area]…So, I look for that and similar-minded probably just in what’s important to them in social interactions” (Canadian Graduate Student, 10/17/06). She developed a social attraction to “cosmopolitan” Americans, and she was able to better connect socially and culturally with Americans who were exposed to other cultures.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Ali, a Moroccan graduate student, who pointed out that his closest friends were an American couple that he met at the University. He emphasized that it was a real friendship by stating:

I definitely have a friendship with the couple…I would call it a friendship. It’s a real friendship. We traveled with them when they went…the previous summer they went back home—they’re from South Dakota. They went back home for a week and we went with them. I mean it’s a real friendship. I mean they’re friends and I can count on them on very personal things and I’m sure they know they can do the same (Moroccan Graduate Student, 09/30/06).

The friendships that Kate and Ali formed went beyond work-related interaction. Both explained that they had established close bonds with their American friends. Ali’s American friends had also traveled outside the United States to a number of different countries. For most of these international graduate students, travel experience outside the U.S. and a general awareness of different cultures was important in terms of the types of Americans they chose to socially interact with on a regular basis.
Second, a few of the internationals explained that they often tended to socially interact with Americans from the local community, not American students at the University. These Americans were older and they generally lived off-campus. The students noted that their good friendships with Americans from the community were established through an international program at the University which brings international students and Americans from the local community together. Some developed friendships with their American landlords who owned the apartment or room they were renting. They described engaging in cross-cultural exchanges with these Americans through conversations and attending social activities together. The students pointed out that they found social interactions with Americans in the community to be very meaningful to their experience in the U.S. Their American friends from the community also had foreign experiences from traveling outside the U.S., especially when they were younger. These students connected with specific types of Americans with whom they felt they could share international cultural experiences and engage in cross-cultural exchanges.

In addition to building good friendships with Americans who had travel-abroad experiences, or were from the local community, the majority of Inclusive Global Mixers also socially interacted with co-nationals and other internationals. Out of the 17 students, only three noted that they tended to socially interact with Americans and other internationals, yet not with many co-nationals, largely because there were simply too few co-nationals at the University. However, they were still included as Inclusive Global Mixers because they stated that they would also spend their social time with co-nationals if there were more of them at the University. Along with having too few co-nationals, age was also an important factor in these internationals social choices. For Ali, the Moroccan graduate student, there were too few Moroccans at the University and the only other Moroccan student he met was an undergraduate student who he
described as much younger and was unable to socially connect with him. Similarly, with the other two graduate students there were only a few co-nationals, plus they were both older, one in her thirties and the other in her mid-forties so they described feeling less connected to younger Americans at the University. Age did not completely hinder their social interactions with Americans. Instead, they stated that it was easier for them to connect with older Americans from the community. Age was not identified as a problem for the rest of the students.

When asked to describe the nationality of their close friends, many Inclusive Global Mixers made statements such as, “Well they’re all over the place actually. Some of them are Americans, some of them are Indians, Asians, so yeah it’s a fairly diverse group…Some of them are Europeans” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06) or “It doesn’t matter to me if you’re Indian, Chinese, Asian, Australian, whatever…you’d be surprised about the diverse friends I have. I have a lot of friends” (Nigerian Graduate Student, 12/05/06). Such statements highlight the mixture of friendships that these students created while attending the University. The social interactions that they described engaging in were inclusive of Americans, co-nationals and other internationals. It is important to note, however, that their close social connections with Americans were established with cosmopolitan Americans who had prior international experiences.

**Connecting Specifically with African American Students**

A few of the Inclusive Global Mixers (three out of 17) stated that they socially interacted with co-nationals, other internationals and African American students on campus. Most of the other internationals maintained that their social interactions were often with co-nationals, other internationals and White Americans. These internationals pointed out that they socially interacted with White Americans because there were not many minorities, especially African Americans, at the University. Essentially, they did not have access to many minority students
with whom to socially interact. The few students who stated that they developed close friendships with African Americans met them in their departments.

A few internationals, who were also students of color, acknowledged sharing racial connections with African American graduate students. It is important to keep in mind that this social tendency was not identified across all international graduate students of color. Out of 17 internationals who tended to socially interact with host Americans, co-nationals and other internationals, eight were international students of color. Only three of the eight pointed out that they racially identified with African American graduate students at the University. An Indian graduate student and two Nigerian graduate students established close friendships with African Americans, along with co-nationals and other internationals. They connected based on the fact that they were students of color and a minority group on campus.

Nisha, an Indian graduate student, maintained that a good friend of hers was one of the few African American students in her department. She stated that, “my other good friend [XXXX] who’s also African American, I think bonds with me because we are, you know, the only people of color in a sea of white. And you know we experience sometimes...when you walk downtown people you know say racist things” (Indian Graduate Student, 12/01/06). Race was definitely a link between some international students of color and African American graduate students. Nisha explicitly described racial incidents that she and her African American friend experienced while attending the University. For instance, Nisha mentioned one specific negative encounter as follows:

I think they’re directing it at her. But I think they also direct it at me because they don’t see me as being South Asian...if they see her and they see me, we’re almost the same color. She’s a fairly fair African American. And so you know they see the hair and they say something. We’ve gone to restaurants in this town where people have said when you’re sitting at a table people have said something and passed on, moved on. [For example]...so we went to [XXXX], which I’ll never go to again. And we were waiting
for a table and...there was a small bar and there was a guy there with a group of men there. We were waiting and they were quite drunk and they kept saying brown sugar comments...you know all kinds of just really nasty things. And his friends tried to shut him up...But they were directed at us because we were three African American women, two South Asian women, and one Nepali who looks Asian...[and a] white woman [who] was a lesbian...he was one of those business people you know with dress like in a suit...The other times was someone yelled something with the N word at us when we were walking down [XXXX] Avenue on Saturday night (Indian Graduate Student, 12/01/06).

Such experiences of racism created a bond between Nisha and her African American friend. It also motivated them to socially interact more often because they connected with each other in terms of sharing a racial similarity. The racial connection which bonded Nisha to her African American friend also led her to develop a stronger inclination to socially interact with her. Her tendency to continuously socially interact with her African American friend allowed her to capitalize culturally and socially from learning more about African American culture and norms of social interaction.

Oguafu and Nzewu, two of the Nigerian graduate students, also explained that they socially interacted more with African Americans as opposed to White Americans. Both of them described experiences with White Americans which pushed them to socially interact more with African Americans, co-nationals and racially similar internationals. They described being offended by comments made by White Americans such as asking uneducated questions like “Is Africa a country or a continent?” (Nigerian Graduate Student, 12/05/06) or “Why do the people don’t wear clothes?” (Nigerian Graduate Student, 09/28/06). Such questions often upset both internationals and it made them think White Americans were ignorant and unwilling to be better informed about other cultures.

Both Oguafu and Nzewu noted that they tended to socially interact with African Americans, because they felt a strong racial and cultural connection to them. During the focus
group session, Oguafu explained even further that he connected racially and culturally with specific African Americans. He stated that he found more cultural commonalities to African Americans from the South rather than with African Americans from cities. Oguafu maintained that his African American friends from the South held similar cultural values to Nigerians. In addition to his African American and Nigerian friends, he often socially interacted with other internationals from Africa and a few Caribbean islanders who also shared similar racial and cultural characteristics (Nigerian Graduate Student, 02/10/07).

The issue of race in relation to international graduate students’ social interaction is significant in that it cannot solely be attached to a specific nationality group. However, a clear racial connection did in fact exist between some international graduate students of color and African American graduate students. As evident in the statements made by the Indian graduate student and the two Nigerian graduate students, different international graduate students, not just students from Africa, identified with each other based on race. The scale at which racial connections are made is also important, since international graduate students of color do not racially identify with all African Americans. Both race and cultural connections are crucial to international students of color, especially when they seek to develop close friendships with Americans and other internationals. Race can be an essential factor that motivates some internationals’ social practices with Americans and other internationals, and it can also facilitate an increase in the students’ accumulation of cultural and social capital from different nationality groups.

**Actively Participating in Specific Social Activities**

The Inclusive Global Mixers also developed close friendships with a mixture of nationalities, because they were more outgoing and had a tendency to participate in specific
social activities, such as attending a number of sport events and drinking at the local bars. From participating in these two social activities, the Inclusive Global Mixers met and socially interacted with Americans, co-nationals and a variety of other international students. It was quite apparent from their interview session that these students had extroverted personalities which made them more willing to take part in sports and bar socials. Additionally, they did not have any language problems or religious restrictions that prevented them from participating in these social activities.

For example, Kate, a Canadian graduate student, noted that she was on two volleyball teams and a flag football team so she met a lot of Americans and was good friends with a Mexican graduate student who also participated in these activities. Once a week she socially interacted with members of the Canadian club which consisted of a combination of Canadians, Australians and internationals from the French commonwealth. She also spent a significant amount of time with students in her department which she described as “quite mixed” with Americans and international graduate students. As Kate put it, “I think just by the representation of the different, you know cultures and nationalities within our department, it’s hard to be social with people in our department without it being a mixed group” (Canadian Graduate Student, 10/17/06). She also went out almost every Saturday night to various social events in which she met multiple other graduate students from diverse nationalities. Kate had a very outgoing personality which motivated her to participate in social activities with a variety of students.

Similarly, Salim, a Turkish graduate student described having a very active social life. He played soccer regularly with a team composed of a mixture of Americans from the community and a variety of other international students. According to Salim, the team consisted of a majority of White Americans and a number of international students from Iran, Armenia and
Latin America. In addition to participating in sport activities, he spent some of his social time with a few Turkish friends who he met once a week to sing and play Turkish music. Some of his social time was spent with a few Latin American friends who he met through American girlfriends.

Salim stated that in comparison to other Turkish graduate students he was more outgoing and willing to try different social activities. He pointed out that other Turkish graduate students, who were practicing Muslims and were often married, had a tendency to be more conservative in their social interactions. Their social activities were limited to their family and a “stable lifestyle.” Salim was not very strict in practicing his Muslim religious background; therefore, he was not restricted in his social activities. He also stated that most of his Turkish friends often socially interacted only with other Turkish graduate students and their social practices became even more exclusive once they got a Turkish girlfriend. He bluntly noted that he did not really want to have a Turkish girlfriend because he did not want to fall into the same pattern as his friends. His single status, sociable personality and willingness to separate himself a little from his own culture were essential in motivating him to socially interact with a variety of students.

The majority of Inclusive Global Mixers declared that going to bars and drinking alcohol was not generally part of their social culture. However, in comparison to the other internationals students, these students generally were still willing to go to bars with Americans, co-nationals and other internationals. While most of them commented that it was often difficult to talk or really socially interact at a bar, they were not completely against attending social events at a bar. Ajay, an Indian graduate student, stated that drinking alcohol was not part of his culture. He also made it clear that even though he was from a Hindu religious background, he did not feel restricted from drinking alcohol. He still went to the local bars downtown with his American,
Chinese and Indian friends. Likewise, Sujatmi, an Indonesian graduate student, noted that drinking alcohol was not necessarily a regular social activity in her culture, but she went to social events at the bars with a mixture of American and international friends. According to Sujatmi, “I went to bar which serves only alcohol, I don’t drink. I just watching someone go crazy. And then the last time, I’m the only one awake” (Indonesian Graduate Student, 09/27/06). In these situations, Sujatmi explained that she did not feel different or alienated from her friends and in fact they often walked her home at the end of the night. Since the social experiences that she had with her friends at the bars were not isolating or strange, she felt fairly comfortable attending social gatherings at local bars.

**Bold Personalities & a Willingness to Challenge One’s Own Culture**

Another important characteristic of the Inclusive Global Mixers is that they generally had very bold and outgoing personalities. They were definitely more inclined than others to challenge socially constructed stereotypes. Such boldness made them open to different nationalities other than their own co-nationals. For instance, Nisha, an Indian graduate student, boldly identified herself as a “feminist” and maintained that:

Among my South Asian peers that is a bad word. That means a man hater. That means a man you know family destroyer because when I first told these men who are controlling that I’m a feminist that I identify myself as feminist...[one] said don’t go on boasting about it. And I thought to myself why the hell not? Now I have no qualms about it. My mother is a feminist. My father is a feminist. I mean they might not use those words. But they’re every bit a feminist as I am, I mean they, I think gave me these values. So I’m no different than any other man. A big thing I think that changed me in terms of…my relationship with the international people here was their definition of what a woman’s body should do. And I think for me that was a very central thing (Indian Graduate Student, 12/01/06).

Her statement is a powerful representation of her social upbringing and it is an important symbol of her willingness to challenge socially constructed notions of what it means to be an Indian
woman. Nisha’s social background as a strong Indian woman and her interests in feminist social issues shaped her cultural identity in that it motivated her to seek out social interactions with other women who cared about such issues.

Having such a bold personality and a willingness to challenge ideas about the role of an Indian woman did not lead Nisha to completely disassociate with Indian co-nationals. For the most part she still socially interacted with Indian women and men. However, in relation to gender, although she pointed out that she was friends with a few men, her core group of friends were mainly other Indian, American and international women. Her bold personality and feminist upbringing motivated her to establish close friendships and engage in social interactions primarily with two female African American friends, a White American Lesbian, a female Nepalese friend and a couple of South Asian women. She also described socially interacting with a variety of internationals from Africa, South America, Europe and South Asia.

Ajda, a Turkish graduate student, also had a bold personality and a willingness to challenge traditional ideas about how a Turkish woman should act. She explained that most Turkish graduate students came to Mid-Atlantic University primarily to acquire a U.S. credential, so they had a tendency to socially interact only with other Turkish graduate students at the University. The social aspect of coming to graduate school to engage in cross-cultural exchanges with other nationality groups was not perceived as highly important to other Turkish graduate students. Ajda, however, deviated from the common social exclusionary practices followed by other Turkish graduate students. In fact, she often socially interacted with American and international students from her department. Some of her good friends were White Americans as well as Chinese, Mexican, Romanian and Australian graduate students. She also had close Turkish friends with whom she felt a cultural connection. Ajda noted that approximately half of
her social time was spent with Turkish students and the other half with Americans and other internationals.

She was confident in stating that she engaged in social actions that were very different from most Turkish graduate students. Ajda boldly admitted that she had a tendency to be more sociable than other Turkish graduate students, and she was not bothered when her Turkish friends called her “Americanized.” She pointed out that, “They [her Turkish friends] sometimes tell me I’m being Americanized…like having a facade that smiles all the time, not sharing your down times whenever you’re sad, you’re hiding in your cave. You don’t let anybody see that. But yeah, I might be Americanized a bit” (Turkish Graduate Student, 12/08/06). Ajda resisted following a socio-cultural practice of sharing her feelings with other Turkish friends and relying on them as her only support system. By not socially acting like other Turks, Ajda demonstrated her boldness to challenge the social norms followed by other Turkish graduate students. Her audacity and willingness to challenge Turkish cultural practices is an important factor that motivated her social interactions with diverse nationalities. Both Ajda and Nisha were able to separate themselves to some extent from their own cultural backgrounds and open themselves up to socially interacting with a broad range of graduate students.

Minimize Cross-National Cultural Differences

The Inclusive Global Mixers were not actively seeking to separate themselves from their own culture or to exchange it for American culture. Yet, they did not view Americans as the cultural Other against which to construct their own sense of self, as was found with the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers. As noted earlier, these internationals generally established close friends with specific types of Americans. Most often their close American friends were set apart from other Americans, because they had international experiences outside
the United States. Therefore, since they were able to find cultural connections with cosmopolitan Americans, the generalized cultural distinctions they identified with Americans were often perceived as minor cultural differences. In particular, these internationals had a tendency to described cultural differences with Americans in a more nonchalant way and in a much softer tone of voice. They often explained cultural distinctions as very minor or not a major hindrance to their social interaction. Such statements were made in relation to their cosmopolitan American friends.

For example, Ajay, an Indian graduate student, could only identify a few minor cultural disconnections with his American friends. He stated that “some degrees of culture like some cultural things like television shows which came quite a few years earlier or some other somewhat lesser known aspects of culture, those references aren’t obvious to me” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/05/06). For Ajay the cultural dissimilarities he encountered were perceived as trivial, so it did not prevent him from socially interacting with his American graduate student friends. Other internationals like Ajda, who pointed out that most of her American friends had extensive travel experiences, also stated, “I know how to communicate with Americans. I learned it…and I’m enjoying it. I mean at first the differences that we had, I didn’t like them at first. But now it doesn’t bother me at all” (Turkish Graduate Student, 12/08/06). She recognized cultural distinctions with Americans; however, the differences were not perceived as hindering her social interactions. While they all expressed strong connections to their cosmopolitan American friends, it is also worth mentioning that even the Inclusive Global Mixers expressed stronger cultural connections to co-national and other internationals.
Cultural & Social Capital Accumulation

The characteristics that have been discussed are factors that stimulate the social interaction tendencies of the Inclusive Global Mixers. The internationals described as engaging in Inclusive Global Mixing held one or more of these characteristics. Two cases will now be considered in some detail in order to illustrate how these internationals accumulated social and cultural capital resources as a result of engaging in social interaction practices with a variety of Americans, co-nationals and other international graduate students. These international students found connections with students from different nationalities which allowed them to gained social and cultural capital. The accumulation of social and cultural resources from multiple groups of students from diverse nationalities had the effect of producing a cosmopolitan sense of cultural identity. Yet, at the same time that they found connections with students of different nationalities, they still identified themselves as being culturally distinct from those groups, especially American graduate students. In comparison to the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers in Chapter 5, however, these students engaged in a practice of othering American graduate students and other internationals in a “positive” sense—that is, by acknowledging the latter’s “Otherness” yet casting it in positive light.

For instance, Neela, an Indian graduate student pointed out that she socially interacted with Americans, co-nationals and other internationals. She accumulated social and cultural resources from engaging in social interactions with individuals from a variety of different nationalities. Neela stated during her interview that she had developed close friendships with a number of Indian co-nationals, a few White Americans, and various international graduate students from Turkey, Korea and Iran. Most of her American and international friends were in
the same department while most of her Indian friends were pursuing degrees in various other departments on campus.

Neela maintained that her relationship with these individuals were not simply work-related interactions. She actually participated in social activities such as shopping, watching movies, working out at the gym, going to the bars, cooking and eating Indian food with everyone. Her propensity to socially interact with diverse groups expanded her social network, and she profited in terms of gaining a social support system at the University. Neela described her relationship with Indian co-nationals as “familiar” and “cozy” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06). From her Indian co-nationals she gained social capital in the form of social support and cultural reinforcement. According to Neela, “I think with my Indian friends, sometimes we cultivate therapeutic exercises that comes with a lot of soul searching like in terms of, like you have more deep conversations” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06). Her Indian friends were also a social asset because they often provided her with information about current hot topic issues in India.

Her best friend at the University was a White American graduate student. According to Neela, “I don’t see her as being different actually. I just see her understanding me and me understanding her better. And we hang out together. We go to the gym together. We have the same activities, same interests, we study the same things…With her I have no guard up” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06). The friendship she developed with this American was a social asset because Neela felt comfortable enough with this woman to engage in various social activities. She profited from this friendship in terms of acquiring social support from her American friend who encouraged her to participate in different social activities on campus.
In addition to her Indian co-national and American friends, Neela socially interacted with a number of other international graduate students at the University. She stated, “I interact with all 30 percent of the Turkish and the Koreans in the department and probably another 30 percent of the Americans” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06). As Neela put it, “with the internationals, I think because we all have a certain level of curiosity or a certain level of like still learning or still educating ourselves...So that’s a common platform and other than that, I think just being an international student puts you in the same bracket” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06). With other internationals she shared a similar academic mindset and the label of being a foreigner on campus. Thus, her social interactions with them resulted in the acquisition of social capital in the form of an international social network from whom she gained social support and friendship. Along with attending different social gatherings with her international friends, she shared personal conversations with them about dating Americans. Neela capitalized socially by gaining information about the social practices associated with dating someone outsider her cultural background.

Social interactions with Indian co-nationals allowed her to engage in Indian social practices such as having potluck dinners at someone’s home and cooking/eating Indian food together. Additionally, by getting together with other Indian friends she could speak her native language with other Indians. She accumulated cultural capital by engaging in social practices associated with her social upbringing. She capitalized culturally from participating in Indian social practices at the University, because she was able to maintain aspects of her Indian culture. Neela was not only concerned with capturing cultural resources from the University in the form of the U.S. credential. As she stated, “the educational system I can definitely say, I think the American educational system is fantastic. Like I’m not saying this just as part of the interview,
but you know because I got my M.A. back home in India and it’s more about you know a one directional learning system. Here I think it’s far superior” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06). However, she recognized that other than simply getting the U.S. credential, there was more to be gained from engaging in social interactions with different nationality groups at the University. Thus, from socially interacting with Americans and other international graduate students, Neela gained cultural capital with respect to learning to think differently about issues. Neela noted that:

I seem to have grown differently than my friends who are back home….I think it’s because of that distance in terms of giving you that other perspective. You try to rationalize things in the sense that because you’re not closed and you’re not you know so affected by peer pressure or the pressure of your family. Your culture starts making sense only rationally. Like in the sense you start thinking through things much more. And I think when you think through things you start questioning much more (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06).

The distance away from India and the exposure to different nationality groups led her to develop a new “rational” way of thinking whereby she was able to critically think about different ideas without limitations. From socially interacting with diverse groups, she obtained cultural capital in the form of expanding her critical thinking skills. She capitalized from her social experiences with Americans and other internationals at the University with respect to learning how to “act” and “think” critically about different issues.

By participating in social interactions with multiple groups, Neela’s sense of cultural identity became more hybridized as she increasingly accumulated social and cultural resources from diverse nationality groups. It is important to keep in mind that Neela’s identification with diverse cultures did not lead her to engage in a process of assimilation or acculturation into one or more cultures. In fact, she still identified strongly with her own Indian cultural background and she recognized cultural distinctions with Americans and other internationals. However, she
engaged in a process of minimizing cultural difference between herself and other nationalities. In Neela’s words:

   Culturally, yes I am more traditional…I have traditional cultural values like in terms of certain ways of living or on certain issues like the question of marriage or the question of living with someone before marriage. I don’t see anything other than that, but maybe certain issues like that. But I don’t see that to be differences that can’t be worked through with or can’t be spoken about. We do talk about it and laugh at it and have a good time thinking about differences as well (Indian Graduate Student, 10/03/06).

By considering cultural differences to be insignificant, she felt that they did not hinder her social interactions. In fact, Neela developed positive views of Americans and other international cultures. They were positively conceptualized as an Other that was culturally different yet who possessed valuable social and cultural resources.

   Similarly, Ali, the Moroccan graduate student who was cited earlier, also profited from socially interacting with multiple diverse nationality groups. Since there were too few Moroccan co-nationals at the University, Ali noted that he tended to socially interact mainly with Americans and a broad range of international graduate students. First, he and his wife socially interacted primarily with an American couple. His friendship with this American couple was a social asset because he could depend on them for social support. From socially interacting with this American couple on a regular basis, Ali and his wife gained cultural capital in terms of learning more about different social and cultural aspects of American culture. Ali maintained that the American couple, who also had a young child, did not generally participate in social events at local bars. They often spent time at home as a family either watching movies or playing games. Ali and his wife regularly participated in these types of social activities with them. He gained cultural capital in terms of learning that Americans social activities are not always related to going to bars and drinking alcohol. There are different ways in which Americans “act” and “think” socially which he learned from socially interacting with them. Ali profited from learning
social aspects of American culture since the social practices of the American couple also became part of Ali and his wife’s social life at the University.

By socially interacting and working with Americans in his department he was also seeking to acquire cultural capital in the form of the U.S. credential from attending the University. Ali maintained that it was important for him to get his degree from a U.S. institution because he had access to more resources and he was getting an advantage at Mid-Atlantic University in terms of being better trained in his field of study. The informational resources he was acquiring at the institution made him more marketable in the future. As Ali put it:

The United States were the only people who would give me money. But yeah I’m coming here…I have to learn something. I want to go back home and I will be teaching if I go back home…probably in the English language department in some university. I’m going for an academic career. If I stay here I’ll be teaching African literature, that’s what my specialty is…But if I go back home they’re not going to give me African literature to teach all the time. They’re going to ask me to teach you know American civilization or American literature or some type of survey course in that. So I need to have some knowledge of that and I’m curious and I want to know….I’ll be more qualified than if I had just gotten my degree from Morocco in what I do….Here people have money. So I have resources and I can work better. In Morocco whatever you can find if you’re lucky will be good. It doesn’t mean that people that graduate from here are smarter. It just that I’ve gotten lucky. So I think I will be more competitive on the job market….I certainly feel I was better qualified, I was better trained here (Moroccan Graduate Student, 09/30/06).

He gained socio-cultural resources in multiple forms through socially interacting with Americans. Ali capitalized socially and academically, and he increased his knowledge of American culture.

He also benefited from socially interacting with a variety of other international graduate students in his department. Ali described his department as having a lot of international graduate students with whom he interacted and established friendships. They were his support system and he accumulated resources from them by learning about their different languages and cultures. As Ali put it, “the whole enterprise of [my department] is about global consciousness and awareness
of different languages, literatures, and different languages that come in from different cultures, civilizations, etc” (Moroccan Graduate Student, 09/30/06). Through socially interacting with a variety of internationals, he increased his knowledge about different cultures. He profited from surrounding himself with a range of students from different nationalities. Thus, the social and cultural capital he accumulated within the University context broadened his academic and social perspectives.

As a result of socially interacting with Americans and other internationals, Ali captured social and cultural resources which contributed in modifying his cultural identity into a hybrid cultural identity. He still identified strongly with his own culture, but he did not engage in a process of negatively othering Americans and other internationals while developing his cultural identity. For example, Ali acknowledged that his cultural background made him distinct from Americans, especially the religious aspect of his social upbringing. He was not a strict practicing Muslim; however, he followed certain aspects associated with his religion such as not eating pork and fasting for festivals like Ramadan. With respect to his religious background, he distinguished himself culturally from Americans, however he emphasized that such differences were not important enough to affect his social interactions with Americans. As Ali put it:

I’m not a maniac to go to the mosque every Friday…I don’t eat pork….I used to eat pork before when I was younger and then later I decided to stop. And I think it’s really good so every time you know…people on Easter they like to bake a ham. I will go along and we eat fish…so their ham smells so good so they make fun of me. And it’s always a source of making you know a good humor about that. For example, my wife does not know how pork tastes because she never really ate it. And sometimes she’ll eat it accidentally. It happens. We always do…I do it too and then I realize what it is and I spit it out. I quit eating it but she wouldn’t. She keeps eating it….I don’t drink. I mean I would drink every once in a while. I’m frank with them [meaning Americans]. I’ve been frank in their house. But I don’t drink a lot…and that’s mostly for religious purposes. Not only the pork thing is solely for religious purposes. But you know there’s no big deal. Like right now I’m fasting cause it’s Ramadan. So I don’t eat during the day and most of the people feel sympathy for me and compassion and wow good luck with that (Moroccan Graduate Student, 09/30/06).
For Ali and his wife, cultural differences did not prevent them from socially interacting with different nationalities. In fact, Ali’s statements suggest that their social tendencies allowed them to minimize cultural differences with other nationality groups. Americans were perceived as a cultural Other, but not negatively to the extent of resisting the accumulation of socio-cultural resources.

Discussion

The characteristics described earlier in this chapter are key identifiers that distinguished the social tendencies of the Inclusive Global Mixers in comparison to the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers in Chapter 5. The Inclusive Global Mixers socially connected with American graduate students based on the criteria that they had some sort of foreign experience outside the United States. Some of these international graduate students participated in social interactions with specific Americans and internationals who they shared a racial and cultural connection.

In general, the Inclusive Global Mixers were identified as having a tendency to connect with Americans, co-nationals and other internationals who shared a similar willingness to participate in various sport activities and social gatherings at local bars. Some of the Inclusive Global Mixers developed connections with diverse nationalities because they were bold and willing to challenge social practices ascribed to their cultures. Lastly, unlike other internationals who participated in this study, this group of internationals had a tendency to describe cultural differences between nationalities as minor. Essentially, they seemed more willing to find connections rather than differences among groups, which made them more inclined to socially construct positive conceptions of Americans and other internationals. These were the most
prominent traits identified across the 17 international graduate students who socially interacted with a mixture of graduate students from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

In relation to the theoretical framework, the two cases described earlier in this chapter draw attention to how these internationals accumulated social and cultural capital from socially interacting with Americans, co-nationals and other international graduate students. The cultural and social resources accumulated from diverse nationality groups contributed in reshaping their cultural identity by expanding it into a hybrid cultural identity. Participating in social interactions with Americans, co-nationals and other internationals produced cultural yields in terms of constructing a more inclusive cultural identity open to a mixture of different cultures. All of the international students who were identified as engaging in diverse social interaction tendencies emphasized that getting their degree from a U.S. institution was very important to them. Socially interacting and working with diverse graduate students in an academic setting allowed them to accumulate cultural capital in the form of the U.S. credential. Moreover, acquiring the U.S. credential assured them access to future forms of social and economic capital. However, they profited not only in terms of acquiring the U.S. credential, they also gained social and cultural capital from developing close friendships with multiple nationality groups that were important social assets which provided valuable social support.

The characteristics that motivated the Inclusive Global Mixers’ social interaction and cultural identity development also led them to engage in a process of positively othering American and other international graduate students. These students’ willingness to look beyond cultural differences, or to conceptualize them as diminutive, allowed them to construct positive views of these groups. They recognized cultural distinctions between their own culture and that of other nationality groups. However, the Inclusive Global Mixers characterized diverse
nationality groups as the Other through a *positive* lens. They viewed Americans and other international graduate students as culturally distinct and possessing important social and cultural resources which they saw as valuable for improving their own cultural identity.

The Inclusive Global Mixers’ social interaction tendencies and cultural identity development followed a cyclical process. They were often motivated to participate in social interactions with Americans, co-nationals and other internationals. From socially interacting with these diverse nationality groups, they accumulated social and cultural capital resources which redefined their cultural identity into a hybrid cultural identity. Through continued positive social interactions with different nationality groups, these students’ hybrid cultural identity was developed which led them to engage in repeated social interactions with diverse cultures. A continuous process of positive social interactions with Americans, co-nationals, and other internationals strengthened and expanded their hybrid cultural identity which in turn led the Inclusive Global Mixers to continue the practice of spending their social time with these groups, which further expanded their hybrid cultural identities.

III. Host Interactors: International Graduate Students Who Socially Interact With Americans & Co-Nationals

*Results*

The Host Interactors consisted of those internationals who were identified as tending to engaged in social interactions mostly with American graduate students and a few co-nationals. Approximately seven percent (four out of 60) of international graduate students followed this social practice. These four Host Interactors were from Brazil, Russia, Canada and Australia. They consisted of both male and female students and were between the ages of 25 to 32 years.
old. The students were all single and had no children. All of them had spent over one-and-a-half years at the University, and three out of four had traveled to more than three countries before coming to the United States. They were all Ph.D. students pursuing degrees in different departments on campus. Additionally, two of them listed their religious affiliation as non-practicing Catholic, one listed Russian Orthodox and one stated no religious membership. Each of these international students maintained that they were not actively practicing their religions so it was not a factor in their social choices. The four Host Interactors had minor accents and spoke English very well.

A number of key characteristics were identified that explain how and why the Host Interactors primarily socially interacted with Americans and a few co-national graduate students. In general, the social practices that they described engaging in suggest that they had limited social interactions and few close friendship with all other internationals. The characteristics associated with the Host Interactors are presented in order to highlight how and why the four international graduate students chose to socially interact with host Americans and co-nationals. This analysis sheds light on the students’ motivations for socially interacting with these two specific groups. The Host Interactors also capitalized socially and culturally from their social interactions with Americans and co-nationals. The social and cultural resources accumulated explain how these internationals’ cultural identities were reshaped into a bi-cultural identity while attending the University. The Host Interactors also tended to engage in a process of “positive” othering of Americans and the negative othering of East Asian and South Asian internationals.
Structural Imbalance in the International Graduate Student Population

A key characteristic of the Host Interactors is that there were only a small number of co-nationals with whom these internationals could socially interact with at the University. In comparison to the East Asian and South Asian international student population, the Host Interactors reported that there were few internationals of the same nationality. Additionally, three out of the four internationals pointed out that their departments composed of approximately 50 percent White Americans and the other 50 percent were a combination of East Asian and South Asian internationals. These students made direct comments about their departments such as, “In the genetics program, it is basically half Asian and half American” (Canadian Graduate Student, 09/25/06). Others stated that “most of the Americans would be Caucasian Americans. There are obviously East Asians and South Asian….I’m the odd Aussie” (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07), and “it’s mostly American, but the internationals, I would say probably Indian and Chinese” (Russian Graduate Student, 01/23/06).

Only one student stated that her department consisted of a mixture of Americans and a variety of other international students. She maintained that most of her social time was spent with host Americans rather than the international graduate students in her department. The internationals that had access to few co-nationals, and who stated that their departments were split in half between Americans and Asians, often socially interacted primarily with host Americans and several co-nationals. The structural imbalance in the international student population at the University and at the departmental level pushed the Host Interactors to socially interact more with their American hosts, rather than Asian internationals. The structural imbalance did not push them towards Asians because they explained that in comparison to American culture, they felt major cultural differences with East and South Asian cultures.
Therefore, they chose to socially interact with the nationality group with whom they felt a closer cultural connection.

**Connecting with Americans & Co-Nationals over Internationals**

The Host Interactors often connected more with White Americans for two reasons. First, there were few minorities for them to socially interact with on campus and in their department. They had more access to White Americans because they were the majority population at the University. Second, the Host Interactors were of a similar white racial background, or a white physical appearance, so they felt more racially and culturally similar to White Americans. As James, an Australian graduate student, noted:

I see a lot of similarities in what you might call an Anglo American culture having lived in a few representative places. I know the UK moderately well. I know Ireland pretty well, now I know the U.S. a bit and Australia. You could group those into an Anglo American group and they’re more similar than different. There are distinctions but there’s not that many differences between America and Australia….I don’t see a significant distinction between Australians and Americans in that way. I think there’s a familiarity if you’re from a culture that’s not distinctly different from yours. And again Australia is not that different. So I’ve never felt the need to you know see regular signs of where I’m from. If I were from a culture that’s distinctly different, I think I would feel that maybe more…I don’t look like an outsider immediately. I think if your skin is a different color you’re in a lot more trouble initially than me…I look like I’m from here (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07).

Sharing a similar “Anglo” culture with the White Americans on campus made it easier for James to connect socially with host Americans.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Sabrina, a Canadian graduate student, who stated that very few racial and cultural differences existed between Canadians and White Americans. Coming from a country that is racially and culturally similar to the U.S., the Host Interactors were able to racially and culturally identify with White American graduate students. The Australian and Canadian graduate students in particular expressed the strongest racial and
cultural connections to White Americans. Yet, at the same time, Sabrina, a Canadian graduate student, also pointed out that she did not connect with all Americans either. In particular, she stated that she was gay so she often felt disconnected from Americans who were not generally accepting of the gay community. In Sabrina’s case, her sexual orientation was an important factor defining her choice of social interactions with White Americans, along with racial and cultural connections.

The Russian and Brazilian international graduate students who were physically white in appearance were also more inclined to spend their social time with White Americans and a few other co-nationals. The Brazilian international student defined feeling more racially and culturally connected to White Americans by describing feeling disconnected to African American graduate students. Maria stated that “African Americans have their own values, they’re too much into their style and dress, they like to stick to themselves” (Brazilian Graduate Student, 10/20/06). In general, she did not culturally identify with African Americans. Her limited access to African Americans on campus might have been part of the reason she bought into stereotypical views of African Americans. Vladimir, the Russian graduate student, who was white in appearance, also declared that it was much easier for him to socially interact with White Americans because he shared similar values to them. He had limited contact with minorities on and off campus.

Additionally, the Host Interactors had a tendency to express feeling culturally disconnected to other international graduate students. Each of them maintained that language was an important barrier in socially interacting with other international graduate students. They felt more comfortable communicating with co-nationals and speaking English with host Americans. For instance, Maria, the Brazilian graduate student explicitly stated:
You have to understand that to socially interact with a third country is very challenging because of the language. So you have a person talking Portuguese, and a person talking, I don’t know Africanese, whatever you could call it, so both can translate their languages to English and you could have a third language, but it’s very hard. I had a lot of problems communicating with people from other countries because you kind of get English so you understand what Americans say because your professor is an American. Most of your interactions at least in the classroom, what you hear is American or English or American English and so when you have to talk to internationals you have not only the language barrier but you also have accents and it’s the same for them. But not with the Americans because that’s what you have on T.V., that’s what you have from you professor, so I mean you get it, you get the accent, you learn how to pick it up, but when you go to an international person maybe they don’t have the same language you have. The person interprets the words differently, the order they interpret is different, what they mean is different, so it’s harder to understand (Brazilian Graduate Student, 10/20/06).

Her statement highlights a clear linguistic cultural disconnection with internationals. She felt at ease speaking her native Portuguese language with co-nationals. It was also much easier to speak English with host Americans because this was the predominant language at the University. Each of the Host Interactors expressed similar sentiments about communicating with other internationals. In general, the Host Interactors identified more in common with White Americans than with other internationals.

**Strong Attraction to American Culture**

The Host Interactors also articulated having, a strong attraction to certain aspects of American culture. The Canadian, Australian and Russian graduate students maintained that American culture was very similar to their own culture. All four internationals declared strong attachments and desire to learn more about American social activities and culture. The attraction to American culture was an important stimulant that motivated their social interactions with host Americans.

The cultural connection and attraction to host Americans was so strong that the Host Interactors were even inclined to date Americans. They were all either dating or had dated.
Americans while pursuing their degrees at the University. The international graduate students from Canada, Australia and Russia also articulated having strong attachments to American sports. They watched American football with their White American friends and with a few co-nationals on a regular basis. Some actively participated in different sports activities on campus.

For instance, Sabrina, the Canadian graduate student, played racquetball, tennis and softball regularly with her American friends. James, the Australian graduate student, pointed out that he was a member of the Rugby team (similar to American football) on campus, and he often played mostly with White Americans and a few other internationals from Argentina, New Zealand and England who were also of a white racial background. Vladimir, the Russian graduate student, was also an avid football fan. As he noted:

I love American football and I met most of those people during the tailgate, I don’t know. I’m crazy about American football. I don’t know I’m just a big fan of dolphins and [the Mid-Atlantic]. Yeah, but I have a loyalty for any team, the first team I ever seen was the dolphins, and actually Dan Marino was quarterback then, so I like his games a lot so, I track his teams to see do they play well or bad. I just enjoy the game, and enjoy how it can be very nice, hard game, lots of fighting, lots of tempers, so much drama, and how people can keep loyal to it. I like it a lot (Russian Graduate Student, 01/23/06).

Vladimir’s passion for American football led him to attend various social events in which there were often a lot of White Americans who shared the same football fever.

Similarly, James also enjoyed American football and he learned a lot of terminologies about American football in order to communicate more with his White American friends. James pointed out that, “I’ve absorbed some of the terminology…So I ended up learning what terms we use here. And so it just makes it easier to converse with people. Cause if you didn’t do that, if you didn’t choose to like pick up the lingo of American football then you would have less of a conversation….You begin to watch some games, you listen, you observe and then if you have some interest you can discuss it” (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07). These students shared
a similar pattern of wanting to learn more about the culture of American football because it allowed them to socially interact much better with White Americans at the University.

Other students, such as Maria, the Brazilian graduate student, expressed their attraction to American culture in terms of wanting to learn the English language. Maria was drawn to American culture, because she wanted to learn how to better function and communicate with Americans at the University. She pointed out that learning the language helped her to better understand social habits and ways of behaving in the United States. Maria noted that she and her Brazilian friends also chose to live with Americans in order to learn the English language and American culture. As Maria put it:

I knew English was important, I knew I was going to suffer a lot because of language and I knew the sooner I got the language the better my life would be….I was able to grow, I opened my eyes and I say you know I’m here and I’m going to learn and understand what this place is all about, what is America, so like dive in and see what is at the bottom, so that is what I did, so I mean I learn. In the Brazilian case, in our case, we are talking about four women, they all had the same pattern. They are all living with Americans because of the language, to get the language. I mean we realize how important English is and we say you know what, I’m here, this is a very important experience and I’m going to learn the language and that’s what they’re doing…I mean so you can travel, you have freedom and you can be free, if you don’t speak the language you always depending on somebody and you can do what you want, you can take a bus, you can travel (Brazilian Graduate Student, 10/20/06).

Maria wanted to learn the English language in order to survive academically and socially at the University. The ability to communicate with host Americans was seen as a valuable part of her educational experience.

Observing Other International Graduate Students’ Segregation Patterns

The Host Interactors were very bold in stating that observing other East Asian and South Asian international graduate students socially segregating on the campus made them not want to follow a similar social practice. They described experiences during their international orientation
in which they felt isolated and culturally distinct from the majority East Asian and South Asian internationals. Their personal observations of Asian internationals engaging in segregation was a major push factor in motivating these students to socially interact with host Americans. These students wanted to be socially different from the East Asian and South Asian internationals.

The cultural distance, along with observing patterns of social segregation by these specific international groups, led the Host Interactors to culturally identify more with American graduate students and a few co-nationals. For example, Sabrina, the Canadian graduate student, bluntly stated:

I think my first experience at the international orientation really influenced me not to want to be a part of that. It was extremely negative for me. I felt like most of the people were Asian and they were speaking say Mandarin or Cantonese with each other and I was just kind of standing there. It was not even like I felt like I could approach anyone because they were not even speaking the same language….I felt very isolated because I felt like most of the other students were not speaking English and they seemed to sort of stay in their own particular groups and I did not know anyone (Canadian Graduate Student, 09/25/06).

Observing other Asian graduate students congregating together, and feeling less culturally connected in terms of a common language, influenced Sabrina to follow a different social practice. She did not want to socially interact with East and South Asian internationals who socially segregated and who she felt were unwilling to speak the English language with other groups. Most importantly, she did not want to be associated with or fall in the same social tendencies as the Asian international graduate students.

Similar observations of East and South Asian internationals segregating on campus were identified by James, the Australian graduate student. He noted that:

I find in the business school I see more of that. I see that the Indian students tend to socialize, not always, but this is a general tendency, with other Indian students, Chinese students with other Chinese. Those are the two largest nationality groups that we have…I mean in the 15 Ph.D. students in my department three or four are Chinese, four are Indians…there’s a fair bit. So I do see more of that in the business school, not just in our
department but also in other departments. I see that less in terms of others (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07).

He personally observed social segregation, especially among Indian and Chinese graduate students, on the campus. The segregated social practices carried out by these two groups of international graduate students on the campus were not isolated only to one department. It was identified by the Host Interactors as being exclusively carried out by the Indian and Chinese graduate students and it was perceived as a pattern that was widespread across departments on campus.

Maria went even further and pointed that she noticed a similar segregation tendencies not just on campus, but also in terms of where the East Asian and South Asian international graduate students chose to live. She pointed out that:

the Indian they’re usually together and the Chinese…if you want to find Chinese go to [name of apartment complex] they always there, if you want to find Indian people, you just go to [name of apartment complex], you could find all kinds of things and everything you want from India is there, so you know its diverse, you have all these group, but they don’t share the same taste. My sense is the values, it’s not like they hate others, it’s just like this is my world and I’m not going to change it (Brazilian Graduate Student, 10/20/06).

She noticed that, in general, Indian and Chinese graduate students had a tendency to stick together on and off campus. Such socially segregated interactions made her want to not follow the same social tendencies as the Indian and Chinese international students. Cultural distinctions with Asian internationals, therefore, motivated her to shift away from segregated social tendencies and to engage in social interactions more with host American graduate students.

**Cultural & Social Capital Accumulation**

International graduate students who for the most part socially interacted with White American graduate students and a few co-nationals accumulated social and cultural resources
which contributed in the development of a bi-cultural identity. They developed genuine friendships with Americans, which went beyond work-related interactions. Furthermore, they maintained that their American friends were people who they could depend on for social support.

As Vladimir, the Russian graduate student, noted:

We go mostly every game, about Thursday and Sunday, and I go out on Friday, or Saturday one of those days, one of those evenings we go and get dinner together or we go watch movie or make shopping with friends and talk…Yeah, I can call them friends, because I share things with them…I can ask their advice and they do the same with me…I have many friends here, which are very close, and I feel like it (Russian Graduate Student, 01/23/06).

The friendships that Vladimir and the other three Host Interactors developed with host Americans were close friendships in the sense that they felt a close bond and connection to their American friends.

The Host Interactors’ tendency to socially interact with host Americans and co-nationals allowed them to accumulate cultural and social capital in the form of social support and information about American culture. They accrued resources that stimulated a transformation of their cultural identity into a bi-cultural identity. These students profited from investing their social time with Americans and co-nationals in terms of acquiring socio-cultural resources that expanded their cultural identity to be inclusive of two cultures. For example, Vladimir gained social capital from socially interacting with his American friends by acquiring information about American culture. His American social network was a social asset because he acquired important information about American values and ways of life. Vladimir explained that:

Most of them [i.e., Americans] like to establish a family, if they don’t have a kid; they are looking forward to having a kid. All of them have a loyalty to other countries, other people, they love sports events, they are very open and the main factor is all of them are hard working, and each of them is good in their work. They are a real professional (Russian Graduate Student, 01/23/06).
By socially interacting with host Americans, he profited in terms of learning new information about American culture that went beyond stereotypes, such as the notion that all Americans are too individualistic or not caring about other cultures.

Vladimir also accumulated cultural capital from American graduate students in terms of appreciating and practicing a certain type of American “lifestyle preference.” As he pointed out, “I feel relax and I like people that live here, slow life, some kind of like village, everything is simple, in a few months you almost know everybody. When you go to the shops you’re coming with those people, you know what they are doing” (Russian Graduate Student, 01/23/06). His tendency to socially interact with host Americans allowed him to learn more about the small town American lifestyle, and he gained a strong preference for this aspect of American culture. He capitalized from incorporating this aspect of American culture into his own lifestyle preference.

Similarly, James, the Australian graduate student, garnered social capital by establishing a close network of American friends who he could depend on for social support. These individuals were the people he could turn to for help or advice when it was needed. James accumulated social capital in the form of information about American culture which allowed him to communicate better with American graduate students. As he noted:

I like some of the elements of American culture and so you just pick up things. Just pick up, you sort of sponge up the data and the relevant phrases, it’s all about being able to speak the language with somebody. Overall, I can speak English, but if you’re talking about a game you need to use the terms of the play so the contact people think that you’re not an idiot when it come to it (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07).

James made references about acquiring information regarding American football games, which allowed him to socially connect with Americans. The information was an important social asset to building better relationships with American graduate students at the University.
James recognized the importance of getting the U.S. credential at Mid-Atlantic University. The U.S. credential is a beneficial form of cultural capital which provides access to future social and economic resources. He was quite aware of the resources that he was accumulating by attending a U.S. institution. James stated that:

This is the center of the universe for academic business research. This is where all the leading lives of the field research for all the major journals are based. This is where all the data is and this is where the money is. And it’s just by doing twice as much that I’m going to earn twice as much when I get out of here than if I were doing the same thing in Australia. I would be quite a prize to an Australian school if I were to stay here for a while. Say I get tenure here, develop some research projects and published and get some grad students going. If I could do all that and go back to Australia they’d love to have me. So yeah there’s a real push in a lot of non-U.S. settings in business to try and replicate the U.S. model (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07).

The U.S. credential is one form of cultural capital that he was in the process of acquiring at the University. However, he recognized that other forms of cultural capital were also important that could be gained from engaging in social interactions with host Americans. In particular, learning more about the “habits,” “lifestyle preferences” and ways of “acting” were seen as important forms of cultural capital. As James put it:

I like a lot of the things that I have here that I don’t get at home, or that I wouldn’t get in Brisbane. So Wal-Mart is open 24 hours. So if you’re really stuck and you don’t mind all the other issues that’s attached to Wal-Mart, you can go and buy a hockey stick at 2:00 in the morning...You can’t do that in Australia. That just doesn’t exist. I like college football. We don’t have that in Australia. I like how all of the holidays here are built around whatever eating and the television (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07).

The ideas expressed in this statement highlight the cultural aspects of American culture that James enjoyed and had a tendency to adopt as part of his own cultural practice while in the United States. Like Vladimir and James, the remaining two Host Interactors also accumulated similar forms of social capital resources from socially interacting with host Americans.
Discussion

Socially interacting with host Americans and a few co-nationals, and excluding mainly East Asian and South Asian international graduate students, influenced the development of the Host Interactors’ cultural identity. These internationals’ tendency to emphasize that there were significant differences between their own cultural background and Asian cultures suggests that this was an important factor which pushed these students to seek out connections with Americans. The Host Interactors developed a bi-cultural identity which incorporated aspects of American culture and their own cultural background. The formation of a bi-cultural identity was easily recognized among these internationals through various statements that they made, which highlighted a dual-type of cultural identification.

The Host Interactors were also more inclined to express a desire to belong to their own culture as well as American culture. James, the Australian graduate student, maintained that he cultural identified with, and felt very comfortable being part of, Australian and American culture. As James put it:

There’s not a week that goes by where I don’t think it would be nice to be back home. But then again if I were back home I’d think I wonder where else I could be. I go back once a year for about three or four weeks around May. And when I’m back there it’s good because all my good friends are in Brisbane and so I catch up with them. But even before the month’s over I’m starting to think oh I want to get back to the States soon cause I like things better with the places that I have spent time. And so it’s natural I think to miss what you haven’t got (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07).

Vladimir, the Russian graduate student, expressed a similar sentiment by noting that:

I’m just happy, I don’t feel lonely. Before you come here people tell you about the culture shock, that kind of thing. I don’t feel anything like I’m alone, like I miss my house, I know it’s there. I do the same feelings when I come back to Russia. Well there is America, I miss it too, I have lots of friends there, lot of friends in Russia” (Russian Graduate Student, 01/23/06).
Likewise, Sabrina, the Canadian graduate student, explained that she easily identified with American culture and Canadian culture, because both countries have many commonalities. Maria also demonstrated that she was in the process of constructing a bi-cultural identity. As she stated, “I feel like I change a lot, now I feel like in-between. I feel like a bridge. I don’t know if the bridge is going to break from one side or the other side because you just change and you don’t realize it” (Brazilian Graduate Student, 10/20/06). All four internationals had a tendency to articulate feeling in-between two cultures. They culturally identified with both cultures and felt strongly connected to individuals of the same nationality and with host American friends.

The Host Interactors’ cultural identity was reshaped into a bi-cultural identity as a result of engaging in social interactions primarily with host Americans and a few co-national friends. These internationals’ genuine interest and willingness to learn more about the host American culture was crucial in reshaping their cultural identity into a bi-cultural identity. They constitute the only group of internationals who over a period of time might have a tendency to assimilate/acculturate into American culture. James, the Australian graduate student, even pointed out that he had already assimilated into American culture. As James put it, “coming here, I felt like I’ve assimilated and I now know the rules of college football and go to Mid-Atlantic games and I can sort of talk about American sport and that kind of thing. So yeah, I have assimilated…I haven’t consciously worked at it” (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07). In comparison to all other internationals that participated in the study, these students were the most likely to assimilate because they identified cultural similarities between their own cultural backgrounds and American culture.

The Host Interactors were also identified as having a general tendency to engage in a process of othering host Americans in a positive sense and negatively othering East Asian and
South Asian international graduate students. Even though these international students culturally identified strongly with Americans, they recognized minor cultural differences with Americans as well. The Host Interactors still viewed host Americans as an Other; however, they were more inclined to describe American graduate students positively. They engaged in a process of positively othering host Americans whereby they viewed them as culturally distinct, yet at the same time they conceptualized positive perceptions of host Americans. For example, James, the Australian graduate student, mentioned that:

There are distinctions but there’s not that many. Differences between America and Australia, one thing that I always feel is there’s a strong value in Australia around I think egalitarianism. Most Australians are pretty big on this. Meaning that no one is better than anyone else—socially or in any other way…I guess the sort of the underbelly of that is that there’s a thing called the tall poppy syndrome in Australia where if you do well you get cut down kind of like poppies do. So those who succeed in Australia learn pretty quickly to be very humble about their achievements (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07).

James was quite aware of cultural distinctions between Australians and Americans such as the “tall poppy syndrome.” In describing Australian culture as following an egalitarian system and American culture as not sharing this system, he identified host Americans as an Other. However, James went on to state that:

Americans are much more welcoming than people give them credit for. When I lived in Ireland I’d be lucky to get one Christmas invitation a year. There was always someone I’d have Christmas with but no one really thought to ask, do I want to spend time with them?….Over here every major holiday, Thanksgiving, Christmas you know I would have a dozen people from various groups say oh you know are you stuck for Christmas? Do you need to spend time with somebody? Do you want to come around?….I was very touched by that. So I like that….I’ve liked the Americans that I’ve met (Australian Graduate Student, 01/17/07).

The positive experiences James had with Americans who were welcoming and generous encouraged him to accumulate social and cultural resources from them which in turn resulted in the formation of a bi-cultural identity and positive perceptions of Americans.
The Host Interactors also were generally more inclined to engage in a process of negatively othering East Asian and South Asian internationals. Limited social interactions with Asians led them to culturally identify less with Asian international graduate students. Moreover, they did not accumulate much social and cultural capital from other internationals. A continuous pattern of limited social interactions with Asian international students led the Host Interactors to construct views of Chinese and Indian graduate students as segregators. While they maintained that language barriers were the main problem for East Asians, the tone of voice in which the Host Interactors spoke about Asian international students suggested that they held negative views towards them for voluntarily socially interacting only with co-nationals. The most common statements made about Asian internationals were that they refused to attend social gathering outside of the department setting. The Host Interactors maintained that whenever they invited Asian international graduate students to social events they did not refused the invitation, but they simply never came out with other graduate students. This generally led the Host Interactors to construct negative views of East and South Asian internationals purposefully isolating themselves from other nationality groups.

Based on the theoretical framework, the Host Interactors often engaged in a process of cultural identification with White American graduate students and co-nationals. The connections they constructed in relation to these two groups motivated them to engage in continuous social interactions with White Americans. From socially interacting with co-nationals and Americans, the Host Interactors accumulated social capital in terms of a social support system and access to cultural information. They also gained cultural capital in the form of learning and practicing aspects of American culture, especially “habits” and “lifestyle preferences.” Positive social interactions with Americans were especially beneficial with respect to expanding their cultural
identity to be inclusive of two cultures. The Host Interactors benefited by feeling more comfortable with host Americans as they were able to function much better socially at the University.

In relation to the feedback loop, as the Host Interactors continued to have positive experiences with co-nationals and Americans, they built up social and cultural capital which contributed in reshaping their cultural identity into a bi-cultural identity. Positive social interactions with Americans along with a recognition that some cultural differences existed between their own culture and American culture resulted in these internationals participating in a process of positively othering host Americans. Additionally, their tendency to engage in limited or no social interactions with Asians led them to negatively other Asian international graduate students at the University.

IV. Critical Analysis of Internationals’ Social Interactions with Americans

The international graduate students who had a general tendency to socially interact with host Americans, co-nationals and an array of other international students are unique in the sense that they carried out an ideal model of social interaction practices at the University. The Inclusive Global Mixers participated in social interactions with multiple nationality groups on the campus. They also seemed to be acquiring the maximum cultural and social capital resources attainable from interacting with students from diverse nationalities. These internationals not only valued the U.S. credential, but also recognized and sought to obtain other valuable forms of cultural and social capital such as cross-cultural exchanges, forming diverse social networks, and building friendships with a range of individuals of different nationalities.
Internationals that socially interacted with students from a variety of nationality groups on the campus did not give up or shift their own culture to the side and automatically assimilate/acculturate into the dominant White American organizational habitus that characterized Mid-Atlantic University. To some degree they adjusted in terms of becoming familiar with the academic routines of the institution’s culture in order to function and achieve their scholastic goals. However, the internationals that had a tendency to socially interact with diverse nationality groups on the campus seemed to challenge the segregated social practices that characterize the organizational habitus of the institution. Instead, they seem to follow the ideals of cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions that the University hoped to achieve, but did not necessarily actively promote or practice as part of its institutional culture (see Chapter 7 for more details).

In the case of those internationals who tended to socially interact with host Americans and co-nationals while excluding other Asian internationals, these students attained valuable forms of cultural and social capital from their hosts and individuals of the same nationality, which I would argue helped them to better function academically and socially at the University. The social networks that they establish with Americans, in particular, allowed them to create group solidarity with individuals who are from a country that is a dominant economic, political and social force across the globe. However, by excluding East and South Asian internationals from their social networks, they also limited the accumulation of social capital from these international graduate students. Considering that East Asians and South Asians are becoming economic competitors with Americans in the larger global society, it is crucial that within a U.S. higher education setting, students also actively engaged in cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions with individuals from these nations as well.
In contrast to the Inclusive Global Mixers, the Host Interactors actually reinforced the organizational habitus of the institution by following the academic and social routines that prevailed at the University. The Host Interactors’ personal interests and attraction to American culture, along with the segregated social culture facilitated at the University, resulted in these internationals accepting and following the routines that characterized the institution. As noted earlier, the social forces motivating these internationals’ social actions also made them more likely to assimilate/acculturate into the dominant White American culture embedded in the institution’s habitus. Socially interacting with co-nationals and host Americans only, while excluding especially East Asian and South Asian internationals, resulted in these internationals engaging in a form of segregation on the campus. Thus, they seemed to fall into the organizational habitus of the institution.

V. Conclusion

The Inclusive Global Mixers and the Host Interactors are unique cases in that they represent two distinct types of social interaction tendencies that were identified among the international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University. The social practices followed by these internationals are important because they draw attention to the characteristics associated with internationals that choose to socially interact with host Americans at the University. The first group of internationals participated in social activities and developed friendships with Americans, co-nationals and a range of other internationals. The other group engaged in social interactions primarily with host Americans and a few other co-nationals. A series of key characteristics were identified which explain how and why each group engaged in specific social tendencies on the campus. The characteristics identified were stimulants that motivated the internationals to socially interact with students of different nationalities.
The social and cultural resources acquired facilitated a change in the international students’ cultural identity. In the case of the Inclusive Global Mixers, a hybrid cultural identity developed from socially interacting with a range of Americans, co-nationals and other international students. The Host Interactors developed a bi-cultural identity which included their own culture and American culture. Each set of international graduate students was also involved in a process of positively or negatively othering Americans and other internationals.

In the next chapter, the international graduate students’ social interaction patterns are discussed in relation to the institution. In particular, characteristics of Mid-Atlantic University are critically examined in order to assess how the institution facilitated the different types of social interaction patterns discussed in Chapter 5 and 6. A variety of issues raised by the international graduate students who participated in this study are discussed in order to examine the extent to which diversity efforts are being effectively carried out at the University. Various positive and negative statements made by the international graduate students are presented in order to draw attention to different strengths and weaknesses associated with the University’s diversity efforts.
7. THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT ON
INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS’ SOCIAL
INTERACTIONS AT MID-ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

I. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explain what role the institution plays in facilitating and
reinforcing international graduate students’ social interaction patterns. In addition to pre-college
characteristics, such as a student’s cultural background, the institutional structure of Mid-
Atlantic University was identified as an important factor which directly influenced international
students’ social choices and behavior patterns on the campus. More specifically, the types of
social interactions followed by international students were partially due to the organizational
habitus of the University, especially the way in which diversity initiatives and efforts were
carried out at the institution. The international graduate students who participated in the study
identified a number of issues that raised questions about just how effective the University has
been in achieving diversity.

The majority of internationals that were interviewed maintained that they thought Mid-
Atlantic University was making an effort with respect to improving diversity on the campus.
Based on the interview data, approximately 68 percent (41 out of 60) of the international
graduate students stated that the University was making progress diversifying the campus. The
students’ opinions were based on a combination of their observations of different nationality
groups as well as various cultural programs and events taking place on campus. Of the 41
internationals, 63 percent (26 out of 41) were Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers.
The remaining 37 percent (15 out of 41) who thought that the University was making efforts to improve diversity were Inclusive Global Mixers and Host Interactors. It is ironic that the majority of internationals who engaged in social segregation were also the ones who expressed views about the University making efforts to improve diversity. In addition, 60 percent (36 out of 60) of all the students interviewed stated that they thought international and American graduate students were not engaging in social interactions and developing close friendships. About 75 percent (27 out of 36) of the internationals who held this view had a tendency to participate in segregated social patterns on the campus. The other 25 percent (nine out of 36) of internationals who shared this view socially interacted with a combination of host Americans, co-nationals and other internationals.

The international graduate students’ responses about the institution provided useful insight on how they viewed the University’s diversity efforts as facilitating their social interaction patterns. Information was gathered from the international students about different aspects of diversity which they declared needed to be improved if the University was to be truly successful in stimulating meaningful social interactions and cross-cultural exchanges between international and American graduate students. Thus, this chapter focuses on critically evaluating the three elements of diversity (structural diversity, diversity-related initiatives and diverse interactions) described in Chapter 2 in relation to Mid-Atlantic University and the international graduate students’ social practices. The chapter is divided into three major sections in order to draw attention to the strengths and weakness of each area of diversity at the University. Drawing upon the interviews, focus groups and participant-observation data, key themes are discussed regarding the impact that the institution has had on international graduate students’ social interaction. A detailed discussion is presented which highlights aspects of the University’s
diversity efforts that need to be reexamined in relation to addressing the social needs of the international graduate student population on the campus.

Subsequently, a critical discussion is presented on the broad ramifications of institutions such as Mid-Atlantic University not making active efforts to stimulate cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions among the student body. I argue that U.S. higher education institutions are an important social force which has the power to inhibit and promote cross-national social and knowledge exchanges among students of diverse nationalities (both international and American students). The organizational habitus that is embedded in a U.S. higher education institution’s culture influences the ways in which diversity efforts are carried out at universities, which also affects international graduate students’ social choices and acquisition of cultural and social capital.

II. Problems with the Size & Structure of the University

*Does the Size of the Institution Matter?*

Even though there were over 40,000 students at the institution and at least 13 different colleges with a variety of specialties, the majority of international graduate students who took part in the study maintained that the size of the institution did not have a direct impact on their social interaction. Over half of the international students (34 out of 60) emphasized that the spatial and demographic density of the institution had no major impact on who they chose to socially interact with at the University. Combined, the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers represent approximately 62 percent (21 out of 34) of internationals who claimed that the size of the institution did not influence their social practices. The Inclusive Global Mixers and the Host Interactors represent the other 38 percent (13 out of 34) of internationals who maintained that the size of the institution was not a factor in their social actions. Thus, the
majority of internationals who had a tendency to engage in segregated social activities were the ones who explicitly stated that the size of the University did not affect their social practices. These international graduate students explained that there were a number of other factors related to the structure of the institution, diversity-related initiatives and campus climate which influenced their social behaviors.

About 33 percent of internationals (20 out of 60) reported that the size of the institution influenced their social practices. The remaining six international students stated they were simply not sure if the size of the institution affected their social choices. The Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers together composed 10 out of the 20 internationals who stated that the size of the institution affected their social interaction patterns. It is not surprising that these internationals, who engaged in social segregation, had a tendency to view the University as simply too big and spread out. They maintained that the institution was so large that they spent most of their time in their respective departments. Unless they had to take a class outside the department, which was rarely the case, the size of the University was overwhelming enough to make them restrict themselves to their departments.

Tejal, an Indian graduate student, stated, “As a grad student, if I don’t take classes in any other department, then automatically I’m kind of stuck to my department. So that kind of limits my choices of interactions anyway. I mean not limits I would say, but I mean if you don’t have any reason to go to another department, why would you really go there?” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/04/06). Similarly, Wen-Chun, a Taiwanese graduate student, pointed out, “Well it’s a huge school yes. But the place you’re going to hang out or spend the most of time is actually quite small. So like most of the graduate students probably just stay in the lab all day long if they don’t have class or something” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 09/28/06). Since they viewed the
University as very large with everyone isolated to a particular department, these international graduate students generally limited their interactions primarily to their departments. The size of the institution forced them to narrow their social space and their choice of individuals to interact with on the campus.

Together, the Inclusive Global Mixers and the Host Interactors composed the other 10 out of 20 internationals who stated that the size of the institution affected their social interactions. These internationals typically viewed the size of the institution as positively stimulating their social interactions. They maintained that there was simply much more to do at a larger university. For example, Sonja, a Russian graduate student, commented that:

It’s huge yes. In comparison to if you know there was like one building and it was small and everybody knew each other…I feel very comfortable you know because I think thanks to the fact that the university is so huge they have this cute little town around the university…I love it, love it, love it because it’s cute, it’s comfortable, it’s peaceful and yet it’s small and it’s huge you know cause thanks to the fact the university is so big we have this you know great shows coming, Broadway shows coming in, big shows coming in you know, Russian shows coming in. At the end of this month there is an orchestra show and so it’s great. I mean if it’s just a small little arts college in the middle of nowhere, nobody will bother right? But, I think it is comfortable….I think it’s perfect. It’s huge and it’s small and I love it (Russian Graduate Student, 10/03/06).

Likewise, Ajda, a Turkish graduate student, stated that the large size of the University improved her social interactions with diverse groups of people. As Ajda put it, “I think the size improves it [i.e., social interactions]. I don’t think it limits it…It helps me to engage in different types of activities so that I can be exposed to different types of people” (Turkish Graduate student, 12/08/06). In general, the international graduate students who chose to socially interact with diverse nationalities often perceived the size of the institution as an advantage, because it increased their access and exposure to different groups.

For the majority of international graduate students who participated in the study, the size of Mid-Atlantic University did not affect their social practices. In fact, they generally did not see
any major connection between the size of the institution and their social interaction patterns. Some, however, perceived the size of the University as a social barrier, while others viewed it as a social advantage. The division in positive and negative perceptions expressed by some internationals concerning the institution’s size suggests that it is undoubtedly a factor that motivates specific types of international graduate students’ social practices.

A comparative quantitative study of Mid-Atlantic University and other similar universities, along with a larger sample size, would determine the effect that size of the institution plays in relation to internationals’ social interaction. However, with respect to Mid-Atlantic University, size of the institution was not identified as strong a factor in shaping the students’ social choices based on the qualitative data gathered for the current study. The social tendencies identified among international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University imply that the size of the institution might not be as important of a factor for some international graduate students’ social interaction as for others.

**Imbalances in Structural Diversity at the Institution**

The international graduate students’ reasons for their social interaction practices at Mid-Atlantic University also revealed problems concerning structural diversity at the institution. Structural imbalances in terms of the total number of minority and international graduate students were identified as important factors that influenced the students’ social choices and actions. To begin with, at the University and department level, all 60 internationals (100 percent) stated that there were very few minority students on the campus. Most pointed out that while attending the institution, they rarely came in contact with African American graduate students. African Americans were identified first and foremost as the principal minority group that was lacking at the University. A few internationals noted that they could not identify Hispanic
Americans, because they “looked” like White Americans. They also pointed out that Asian Americans blended in with the Asian international student population at the University. The Native American student population was not even mentioned as a minority group that existed on the campus. In general, it was difficult for most internationals to identify whether other minority groups, with the exception of African Americans, were present at Mid-Atlantic University.

The international graduate students described as Inclusive Global Mixers and Host Interactors in Chapter 6 maintained that a limited number of minorities at the University hindered their social interactions, especially with African American students. As noted in the previous chapter, they tended to socially interact, and develop close friendships, primarily with White Americans, co-nationals, and other internationals. This is not surprising considering that combined the African American, Asian American, Hispanic American and Native American minority graduate population only represents approximately 10 percent of total graduate student enrollments.

A few of the international graduate students rationalized the structural imbalance between the White and minority American population by pragmatically equating it to the general location of the institution. These students usually noted that the structural imbalance in terms of the diversity of the institution was due to the fact that the University was located in a state with a majority White population. Since the population surrounding Mid-Atlantic University was primarily composed of White Americans, some of the internationals assumed that it made sense for the University to consist of a predominantly White American student population. Other internationals, however, maintained that the structural imbalance at the University was simply a reflection of larger racial inequities in the United States. Adekola, a Nigerian graduate student, nicely articulated both sentiments by noting that:
I would say diversity is for them because I have already a mindset of like this place is [Mid-Atlantic State]. It’s a complete white neighborhood. You can do and say you are trying to make it more diverse. This is a state university and when you come to talking about finally educating people from here at [the Mid-Atlantic] institution and they have more whites here in [Mid-Atlantic State] than universities very close to them. It only makes economic or financial sense for them to come to where they are close. So for me as an international student maybe I have to pay more so that will affect the number of international students that will come here. So they can mess with diversity at this point. It’s all political, financial, and social gains. That’s the way I look at it. Of course, if this school was cheaper then you can make it more diverse because people can afford to come here. But if the school is located in a white neighborhood and is a state university, and they pay tuition and they are mostly white, of course, you expect that there will be almost a majority and for the few that would come as minority students are those, many who can afford to pay, which is the key thing—those who can afford to pay (Nigerian Graduate Student, 10/16/06).

Adekola’s statement suggests that it is difficult to improve structural diversity at Mid-Atlantic University, because the University is located in a predominantly White state with students who can financially afford to attend the institution. The minority and international graduate students improve structural diversity at the institution only because they can pay the high tuition rates. Adekola’s view about why such a structural imbalance existed at the University indicates that improvements need to be made to increase the minority American student population, especially if internationals are to engage in cross-cultural exchanges with minority American graduate students.

Moreover, the structural diversity of Mid-Atlantic University was identified as needing to be reevaluated in relation to the number of international students represented at the institution. In evaluating the international graduate students’ statements about their social interaction patterns, a series of questions were raised about whether Mid-Atlantic University was truly structurally diverse. As noted earlier in Chapter 2, the University hosted over 3,000 international students and it was ranked among one of the top 25 institutions that had a large international student population in 2006. By these standards, it would appear that Mid-Atlantic University is
structurally diverse in comparison to similar universities. However, this is only one way to measure structural diversity with respect to international students.

Additional ways of measuring structural diversity were identified in order to critically assess the impact that it has on international graduate students’ social interaction patterns. Along with measuring the number of international students present at the University, and comparing this figure to other institutions, it is also important to consider what percentage of the total student body is international students. This provides a useful metric of the proportion of international students in comparison to the entire student population at the institution. Out of approximately 40,000 students, only 3,000 international students were present at the University. Altogether, the undergraduate and graduate international students represented only about 13 percent of the student population at Mid-Atlantic University.

The structural diversity of international students was evaluated even further in terms of the composition and density of international students represented at the institution. The composition is a measure of the number of countries represented by at least one international student at an institution. The University reported having international students from over 120 countries. The density of the international student population, on the other hand, measures the relative proportion of regions and countries that are represented at the institution. In 2006, 48 percent of the international students at Mid-Atlantic University were from East Asia and 18 percent were from South Asia. Combined, the undergraduate and graduate internationals (66 percent) at the institution were only from these two specific regions. More specifically, in terms of the proportion of countries represented at the University, the main countries which international students are from include: China, Korea, Taiwan and India. When structural
diversity is assessed at this level, Mid-Atlantic University does not seem as diverse in terms of
having an equal representation of international students from a variety of regions and countries.

Over half (38 out of 60) of the international graduate students that were interviewed stated that a large number of international students of the same nationality at the institution would influence them to socially interact more with co-nationals. These internationals maintained that the number of co-nationals was important because it provided them with greater access to students of a similar national and cultural background. Out of the 38 international graduate students who stated that a large number of co-nationals were important to their social interaction, 29 of them were classified as Self-Segregators or Exclusive Global Mixers. In total, 21 of the internationals that segregated were from East Asian and South Asian countries. Undoubtedly, the Asian student population had a tendency to engage in social interactions with co-nationals, because there were a large number of internationals of East and South Asian nationalities at the University.

The rest of the international graduate students who were not from East or South Asia stated that having more co-nationals was important because there were only a few co-nationals for them to socially interact with on the campus. However, 20 out of 60 international graduate students maintained that increasing the number of co-nationals at the University would not make any difference to their social choices and two international students were simply not sure about whether a larger number of co-nationals at the institution would influence their social practices. For some of the Inclusive Global Mixers—i.e., internationals who tend to socially interact with a mix of host Americans, co-nationals and other internationals—it was important to have more co-nationals at the University. They pointed out that more co-nationals was important because it would be nice to have a few more people of the same nationality and cultural background to
socially interact with at the University. Other Inclusive Global Mixers did not think a larger number of co-nationals would make a difference in their social practices. They maintained that having more or less co-nationals would not influence their social interaction.

The large number of East and South Asian students on campus also motivated some international graduate students to engage in social interactions only with host Americans and a few co-nationals. The social interaction tendencies of the Host Interactors described in Chapter 6 were partially due to the large East and South Asian international student population on the campus. This was perceived as an important factor that pushed many of the Host Interactors to seek social interactions and friendships with students other than the Asian international graduate students.

A final area of structural imbalance that was identified at the University is related to the disproportion of international graduate students represented within different departments. The international students came from 37 departments or areas of specializations on the campus. Five major themes were identified concerning how they viewed the overall structure of their departments. Approximately 26 international graduate students described their departments as consisting of mainly White American graduate students. About 17 of them classified their department as a mix of international graduate students. Another seven stated that it was made up of half Asian (East and South Asians) and half American, and six described their department as composed of mainly Asian graduate students (specifically East and South Asians). Lastly, only four international graduate students perceived their department as a mixture of different nationalities.

Further analysis revealed that the majority of international graduate students who perceived their departments as composed of primarily White American graduate students were
also internationals who tended to socially interact with co-nationals only or a combination of co-nationals and other internationals. Out of the 26 internationals who described their department as predominantly White American, 19 were described as either Self Segregators or Exclusive Global Mixers. In the case of the 17 internationals that described their department as a mixture of international graduate students, eight were either Self-Segregators or Exclusive Global Mixers and nine were either Inclusive Global Mixers or Host Interactors. Even though their departments were composed of a variety of internationals, too many nationalities might have also motivated these students to socially interact with co-nationals or ethnically-related internationals. Moreover, nine of the internationals described socially interacting with American graduate students, thus the international mix in their departments also pushed them to develop inclinations to socially interact with host Americans.

In summary, imbalances in the structural diversity of the minority and international student population at Mid-Atlantic University were crucial factors affecting the students’ social practices. At the departmental level, the unequal proportion of international graduate students also influenced the students’ social choices and behaviors on the campus. The aspects of structural diversity presented were identified as areas that need to be addressed in order to improve social interactions between international and American graduate students.

III. Effectiveness of Diversity-Related Initiatives

University Sponsored Cultural Events at the Student Union

Over half of the international graduate students maintained that they thought most international and American graduate students on the campus did not socially interact with each other or developed close friendships. Their perceptions coincided with the fact that over half of the internationals that participated in this study were also identified as Self-Segregators or
Exclusive Global Mixers. The international students described a number of problems with the University’s diversity-related initiatives as factors that partially contributed in shaping their social interaction patterns. First of all, regarding diversity-related initiatives, Mid-Atlantic University was credited for sponsoring a number of cultural events, especially at the student union. Some even stated that having the option to attend such events was important, because it provided the student body with opportunities to be exposed to, and learn about, different cultures.

Most of the Inclusive Global Mixers and Host Interactors noted that the University was making efforts with respect to diversity. However, they also pointed out that providing opportunities for international and American graduate students was all that the University could do to stimulate social interaction. Some went a step further and even questioned whether it was the role of the institution to facilitate international and American social interactions. For example, Ajay, an Indian graduate student, commented, “I mean why should it? I’m not against it. I’m not saying that it’s wrong, but I’m saying it’s not about [Mid-Atlantic University]. I’m just questioning any institution to sort of saying, ‘oh we want to kick start things.’ That’s really not its role” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/12/06). Ajay maintained that social interaction depended on the individual to choose who they connected with in terms of personality. He and a number of other internationals stated that social interaction is something that should occur naturally and that the University should not and could not force it to happen between international and American graduate students. Keep in mind that the international students that had a tendency to describe social interactions as happening naturally between students are the ones that generally were able to socially connect with host Americans. It was much easier for them to make this comment since they had American friends.
Fyodor, a Russian graduate student, also maintained that University-sponsored cultural events were just a facade and that the institution simply lacked the ability to stimulate social interaction. He maintained that:

The problem is [Mid-Atlantic University] like my other schools, they come up with this very formal things, okay let’s have a festival of international food. Why?...It’s basically like on something what you write a report. You know you’ve done this, we’ve done that and there are people in colorful dresses from all around the world. They gather together for five hours and it was fun. But I really don’t think that university or anybody can create a strategy to say, “look guys be friends,” you know. So if students were put here in this room for five hours, lock the door, five hours later you know we want you to become best buddies. No, it’s personal interaction mostly and it’s person willingness, etc. Personal attraction, you know, people should like each other, right. So you cannot say to somebody “okay, let’s be friends because you are Russian and I am, I don’t know from Florida. So I’m from Florida and I don’t have any Russian friends. That would be cool.” So that’s nonsense (Russian Graduate Student, 10/03/06).

Essentially, Fyodor suggested that cultural events were put on by the University in order to show that the institution was carrying out diversity efforts, but it was really done on a superficial level. He maintained that the institution did not really have any role to play in facilitating social interactions between students. For both Ajay and Fyodor, diversity initiatives organized by the University were not perceived as a medium through which students could really engage in social interaction nor was it viewed as a way in which they could develop good friendships.

Similarly, the international graduate students that generally self-segregated and participated in exclusive global mixing declared that University-sponsored cultural events were positive steps forward in diversifying the campus. However, they were highly critical of the way in which diversity initiatives were organized, carried out and publicized at the institution. These internationals described diversity-related initiatives sponsored by the University as ineffective in organizing events that could possibly facilitate social connections between students. They viewed University-sponsored events as good efforts, but not useful venues or sources for international and American graduate students to engage in cross-cultural social interactions.
The Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers typically noted that they had only attended cultural events at the student union when they first came to the University, and some stated that they simply chose not to attend as many cultural events in subsequent years. They explained that their social time was limited because more time was devoted to academic work. Most of them further noted that they had attended University-sponsored events in the past which were not well-organized. They often maintained that such events were not arranged to the extent of actively facilitating social interactions between American and international students. For instance, Pierre, a graduate student from Switzerland, stated:

I was once at a dinner that was specifically aimed at getting Americans and internationals together. I think everyone who went there, whether it was international students or American students, went for the dinner....I don't want to be disrespectful, make fun of that event, but the Americans students at that table I sat with were undergraduates. They were all probably ten years younger than I am....The idea was to have a dinner at the [name of restaurant] which is the Indian restaurant here downtown....I don't think there was so much interaction as they intended, but they make an effort...I actually got to know an American there who do similar work, research so I end up talking to someone just about research, not so much about international things, so it's just about research (Switzerland Graduate Student, 02/19/06).

Such initiatives put together by the University are positive diversity steps. However, as highlighted in Pierre’s statement, the event was not well-organized in terms of the types of international and American students that were brought together. There was a clear disconnection in terms of age differences and the students’ reasons for attending the event. Pierre did not feel he could connect with the undergraduate Americans, and the conversation he had with one person at the event was based only on research. Thus, the event brought a group of students together, but it lacked organization and efficiency with respect to considering details important in facilitating social interactions among the students.

Other international students noted that University-sponsored international cultural events were educational in exposing them to another culture, but they did not establish friendships from
attending such events. As Geeta, an Indian graduate student, put it “I come to the [student union] on the weekends sometimes. But then again I come with my Indian group of friends. And we come and watch stuff. I love to watch things that are put up, cultural events put up by other nationalities. But that doesn’t mean I interact with them and I take home a friendship, you know. I see it, I enjoy it, and that’s the end of it” (Indian Graduate Student, 10/10/06). University-sponsored events at the student union were enough to draw Geeta to attend the event and she was exposed to other cultures; however, the event was not set up to facilitate social interactions between students.

In relation to diversity-related initiatives, some international students mentioned that the few Americans and other international students that went to cultural events at the student union were friends of international students that organized the event. They also noted that some American professors and people from the local community who were interested in different cultures attended such events. As Jun, a Chinese graduate student, put it:

I think from my observation for the Chinese New Year party, you know now American parents attempt to adopt Asian kids, and some of them adopt Chinese kids. So they tend to bring their child to the party and let them get exposed to Chinese culture. So I see a lot of parents, American parents there….I think sometimes, for example, I invited my close American friends to the Chinese party. But that’s only because I invited her. So I think it’s hard. Probably they are not aware of it, I think. I don’t think that they don’t want to go. They don’t have the information I think (Chinese Graduate Student, 11/03/06).

Americans who attend cultural events on the campus generally already have a desire to be exposed to different cultures. Some Americans that attended University-sponsored international events were invited guests of international students who were closely linked to the nationality group hosting the event.

The international graduate students explained that a limited number of Americans attended international events, because they felt that American students simply did not care or
were not interested in such events, along with the fact that international events were not well advertised at the University. The students emphasized that there was a problem with effectively publicizing information about cultural events, especially to American students. At times, cultural events were either not directly sent out on the international student listserv because the nationality clubs did not provide information to the international office. Additionally, few American students were on the international listserv or part of the nationality clubs’ listserves, so they often receive limited information about events organized by international students.

International and American students’ social interactions were hindered because international cultural events were not properly advertised to the entire student body. For example, Benita, a Mexican graduate student, stated:

I think the American students just don’t care. But I think maybe they should advertise it more. For example, when they send events from the Chinese association, the Chinese association will send an e-mail to all of the other associations. So, if you are not in any association or I am in Latin American, [the Brazilian Club] and the Mexican Association. So, I basically receive the e-mail three times, you know, cause they send it to each association. But for a White American, if they are not in any association like this then they don’t know about that, you know. So they may not know about these things. But even if you don’t receive e-mails, maybe if you are really interested you can look, you know, in the web page of the [student union]. They show all the time. So, I think that it’s because of two things. They don’t advertise it that much and, of course, the people are not interest on that. Cause if you are interested in something you will look for it, you know (Mexican Graduate Student, 11/17/06).

Benita emphasized that American students could be a bit more active in trying to find out about international events. In her opinion, they were often not willing to find out about and attend events with a lot of international students.

Tse-Chuan, a Taiwanese graduate student, also explained that part of the problem with getting internationals and Americans to socially connect had to do with advertising and efficiently dispersing information to American students on campus. Tse-Chuan commented, “Like Chinese New Year that’s very important for us…its important you know in order to invite
or encourage the people, Americans. But I would say this information should, you know, not just go out, not just to Taiwanese student know. Like announce for whole university” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/19/06). The problems relating to advertising international events were important because they limited international and American students from having social contact.

In general, there was a consensus among the international graduate students that Mid-Atlantic University was making an effort with diversity initiatives. The University was effective in providing opportunities to be exposed to other cultures; however, facilitating diverse interactions was identified as a major weakness of the institution. The Inclusive Global Mixers and the Host Interactors differed from the Self-Segregators and the Exclusive Global Mixers in terms of their views about the role and responsibility of the institution in fostering social interactions. The internationals who had a tendency to broaden their social practices to include Americans were uncertain whether social interaction should be the responsibility of the University. They generally did not believe that the institution could foster social interactions between students. Internationals who often engaged in socially segregated practices emphasized that improvements needed to be made in terms of how diversity initiatives were carried out at the institution. Although the Inclusive Global Mixers and Host Interactors were more inclined to suggest that social connections should be established “naturally” with host Americans and different nationality groups, without assistance from the institution, this does not mean that the University is not responsible for assisting other international students who need help socially interacting with diverse nationality groups. The segregated social tendencies that were identified among some internationals suggest that the institution should be responsible, at least in part, for creating strategies which stimulate social interactions among the student body.
Services Offered from the International Student Office

The International Student Services Office at Mid-Atlantic University was described as very effective in assisting international students in their completion of University requirements. The office was helpful with getting international students up-to-date with visa issues and making sure they had filled out all necessary paperwork to legally pursue their degrees at the institution. Such services were identified as the main role and responsibility of the international office. The office also carried out a few diversity-related initiatives to assist international students at the institution.

The international office organized the international student orientation which took place a few weeks prior to the beginning of each semester. The fall orientation composed of the largest number of internationals admitted to the University each year. The orientation week involved helping the international students complete health insurance forms, get University ID cards, and find housing on or off campus. International students also attended a series of seminars and presentations to become familiarized with the University system. As part of the international orientation week, a number of social activities were arranged for the students. Most of the international graduate students that were interviewed noted that the diversity initiatives carried out by the international office were useful in terms of assisting incoming international students by providing them with information about how to function academically at the institution. The orientation week is a crucial time in which international students seek social support and develop friendships with individuals that they first come in contact with in a foreign setting. A few internationals noted that during the orientation week their social activities involved international students being exposed to other nationality groups and not many host Americans.
Such social situations, in which internationals were mainly exposed to co-nationals and other international students when they first arrived, were confirmed based on participant-observation data collected from volunteering at the spring (2007) international orientation and attending a regular weekly social coffee hour organized by the international office. During the spring orientation week, there were less than 100 international students (undergraduate and graduate) being admitted to the University. The orientation week began a week before the start of regular classes. The volunteers, including myself, came back to campus earlier than the regular student population for the orientation week. Most of the volunteers were international students, both undergraduate and graduate, with the exception of a few Americans who were all undergraduate students. All of the social activities during the orientation involved international students socially interacting with other internationals. With the exception of the few American volunteer leaders, the international students were not exposed to any other host American students during social activities. Moreover, few American students were available to socially interact with considering that the orientation occurred a week before the new semester.

In addition to this, from participating in a variety of social activities with the international students, the students were observed following segregated social practices especially with co-nationals. At one social activity in which the students went to a local movie theater, the international students sat next to internationals of the same nationality or ethically-related background. For example, a large group of students from East Asia often sat next to each other. A group of Middle Eastern students were together and the students of European and Australian nationalities formed groups. One student from Africa sat together with a few students from South Asia. For the most part, students of the same nationality were observed generally sitting together and hanging out together for most of the other social activities during the week.
A similar pattern of segregation by nationality was observed at the weekly coffee hour sponsored by the University’s international office. From volunteering to set up the coffee and cookies at the weekly coffee hour, on three different occasions, I observed that internationals who attended this social event also tended to engage in social segregation. The Indian students who attended the coffee hour had a tendency to group together to watch soccer in the lounge area and the Chinese students often sat together chatting or sometimes played chess while having tea. Only a few other nationality groups were observed on the different occasions and they usually chatted with any other co-nationals or international students that sat next to them. On the three occasions very few American students, if any, were observed at the coffee hour. The only Americans were the staff who worked at the international student office.

The participant observations revealed that the orientation week and the coffee hour were social events that primarily facilitated international students’ exposure only to other internationals. At such social events, the international students formed segregated social patterns. Not only were there few Americans to be found at these events, there was no active effort being made to get internationals to engage in cross-cultural social exchanges with each other. The space and event was organized, but no strategies seemed to be in place to help the students engage in cross-cultural exchanges with other students. At the time that these observations were conducted, the international office had a new program coordinator who through informal conversations maintained that Americans were not discouraged from attending social events. In fact, she stated that the office was hoping to get more Americans to attend the coffee hour; however, she did not give any specific examples except stating that internationals are encouraged to bring their American friends.
Some of the international students noted that the social events put together by the international office did not actively encourage social interaction between international and American students. Instead, they described the international office as hosting social events only for foreign students. For instance, Akira, a Japanese graduate student, stated, “My feeling is that the programs or activities organized and arranged by the [international office] are mainly kind of just for international students. So, I think that the [international office] should create a kind of position not just as a place for international students. But maybe provide the place where international students can meet and interact with Americans” (Japanese Graduate Student, 09/29/06). The office did not purposefully exclude American students, but it did not make an active effort to persuade American students to participate in the weekly coffee hour or volunteer for the international orientation week. As Sabrina, a Canadian graduate student, noted, “Like they do not specifically say we do not want Americans. If they come, it is like okay well, you know, you can come around and have coffee with international students” (Canadian Graduate Student, 09/25/06). Providing spaces for social interactions, but not actively promoting it to all the students or working on strategies to get the students to talk to each other, does not result in successful diverse interactions. The international office on campus operated fairly well by offering opportunities for internationals to socially interact. However, international students did not see the office as making further efforts to stimulate international and American social interactions.

While a few of the international graduate students identified deficiencies in the international office concerning promoting social connections between international and American students, some internationals noted that there was one international social support office located in the international student services building which helped international students
and their spouses find conversation partners with American students. The program creates connections between an international student or spouse and an American who agree to meet regularly to have conversations and engage in cross-cultural exchanges. The conversation partner program also helped internationals practice their English skills.

From volunteering as a conversation partner, I found the program to be one of the best diversity-initiatives at the University. This program worked extremely well in establishing meaningful social interactions and close friendships between students of different nationalities. My Malaysian conversation partner and I participated in a number of social activities and we had extensive conversations about American and Malaysian culture. The conversation partner program allowed us to be friends and we were able to engage in cross-cultural exchanges relating to different social, cultural and political aspects of each others’ background. The one flaw with the program is that there were too few Americans that volunteered to participate in it. From attending a number of social gatherings organized by the international social support office which often had more internationals than Americans, announcements were made requesting Americans to volunteer because there was a shortage of American volunteers. A few international graduate students commented that they were aware that the international social support office had a lot of problems finding volunteers for the program.

The office also focused on establishing social connections between international students and Americans in the local community. The program differed from a host family because the students did not live with the Americans; they simply met on a regular basis to participate in social activities and conversations. A few internationals pointed out that the office put them in contact with American families from the local community who volunteered to help international students with their transition to the U.S. The international students who were involved in this
type of program explained that they had very positive experiences with Americans from the community. This program helped them to have meaningful social interactions and they also described becoming good friends with the Americans. For example, Fatima, a Saudi Arabian graduate student, stated:

I filled out a form and I waited for them to call me and they called me and assign me with American family of their choice and the family is really good. They took it upon themselves to help us…They want to help us. We didn’t need anything, but they ask do you need anything and they just want to help. It is really good of them. And this family…They’re in the community. They applied also to have an international family and they assigned us with them. So we invited them the other day and I was this is from my country tradition [referring to a colorful scarf]. Yeah and I wore it and showed the pictures. I wanted them to see our country and….They are really, really nice. A couple with a boy and a girl….I thought this very good idea because with this family we met in a picnic….Oh they were really good. And they said bring your laptop and we fix it for you and I told them why don’t you come and we share with you our culture, food and dishes and they stayed almost until 12:00 at night (Saudi Arabian Graduate Student, 10/02/06).

Fatima had positive experiences with this American family from the local community. Her relationship with them was an actual friendship in which they engaged in social interactions that benefited both parties. She engaged in cross-cultural exchanges by participating in social activities with the American family assigned to her by the international support services office. Fatima was lucky to be assigned to an American family because she pointed out that this office had earlier informed her that they often had problems finding Americans to volunteer so it often takes a while to match internationals with American students and families from the community. Thus, inefficiency in the promotion of such diversity initiatives, especially to the American student population, often works against international and American graduate students having opportunities to socially interact with each other.
Nationality Clubs as Facilitators of Social Segregation

In total, 35 out of the 60 international graduate students interviewed stated that they were affiliated with one of the nationality clubs at Mid-Atlantic University. About half describe themselves as active members and half stated they did not actively participate in club meetings and activities. Membership in the nationality clubs was an important social network for many of the international students. However, both the active and non-active members described actions carried out by members of specific nationality clubs which promoted social segregation at the University. The Indian, Chinese and Turkish student associations were described as closed social networks that took care of their own nationalities. In the process of acting as a social support system, these nationality clubs constructed networks of international students who focused only on socially interacting with co-nationals because they were culturally familiar and provided the most social support.

For example, Geeta, an Indian graduate student, noted that the Indian graduate student association was the most helpful to her before and after she arrived at the University. The association created an online chat system which allowed Indian graduate students to communicate with other Indian students at the institution. The nationality club also arranged airport pick-ups and even helped Indian graduate students find housing once they arrived at the campus. Geeta pointed out that:

Like you know Indian students at [Mid-Atlantic University], we have this yahoo group. It’s called the Indian yahoo group or Indians at [Mid-Atlantic University] okay. And it’s an extremely helpful group for students who are coming to the U.S. for the first time. Any queries that you have and you know a lot of things that you don’t know about, you know. Simple things like, you know, everybody comes with certain things from India to begin with because the very first day you are here you are not going to the Wal-Mart to shop, so just kind of to bring a pan to cook in you know the most simple things. You know that it needs to be a flat bottomed pan because you have those hotplates rather than gas stoves. I mean nobody would know that because in India nobody uses hotplates. So beginning from something as simple as that to you know what kind of documents you
need to bring with you, what kind of, you know, shots you need to take and every detail....And they make you so much at ease even before you come because they assure you that the moment you step into [Mid-Atlantic University] you will be taken care of. Somebody will be there at the airport to pick you up. If you do not have any house, we will arrange for your accommodation until you get a house (Indian Graduate Student, 10/10/06).

The Indian graduate student association was clearly a support for Geeta in terms of providing assistance that could ease her transition at the University. Geeta also pointed out that she had an Indian friend who was part of the Indian graduate student association. After arriving at the University, she chose to live with her Indian friend at an apartment complex in the local area which was known as the “Indian ghetto” because it had a lot of South Asian students. Since the Indian graduate student association was a major support for her, she ended-up socially interacting with a lot more Indians at the University.

Other international graduate students described some nationality clubs as closed social networks because the associations did not actively make efforts to be open to Americans or other international students. For instance, Yuan-Cheng, a Taiwanese graduate student, compared the Taiwanese association to the Chinese Graduate Student club in order to highlight the fact that the Chinese nationality club often put together cultural events which did not appear open to other nationality groups. Yuan-Cheng stated:

I think Taiwanese students are more open to Americans because in our last year I found this very surprising because the Taiwanese new year festival we were on the head in the [College Newspaper] and we used English in the whole program but since I also went to the Chinese new year festival and they used only English in the opening. But then they used the whole thing in Chinese and there is nothing, not a word in the [College Newspaper]....And it’s very interesting because when I went to the Chinese festival there are two or three officials from the Chinese embassy. They are from New York and I think it’s really a formal festival. It seems like something like the government control the Chinese students (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/25/06).

The lack of effort made by the Chinese nationality club to translate their program in English, along with the fact that the event was organized very formally suggest that the Chinese
nationality club was not making an effort to engage in cross-cultural exchanges with other nationalities.

A similar idea was expressed by Ajda, a Turkish graduate student, who stated that she was not an active member of the Turkish graduate student association. As Ajda put it:

What I see from Turkish student association is most of the activities are done for Turkish students. Nothing to engage them to the international students….I don’t want to say Turkish student association is open. It’s not open. I mean it is open but because people within the association are not very looking towards internationals that is built in the association’s mind and stuff, I think. You know what I mean? So like and whenever they hold something they know that it’s for Turkish students….I mean they send e-mails to the international student associations all over the university and stuff. But I don’t see a lot of international people coming. And I think because it’s organized to entertain Turkish students. I don’t think they even have a concern about it. Like being blended in the international students or like telling about ourselves and stuff like that (Turkish Graduate Student, 12/08/06).

Ajda’s description of the Turkish student association suggests that this nationality club was not interested in making efforts to engage in cross-cultural exchanges with other nationality groups. Such nationality associations seemed concerned only with co-nationals and no other nationality groups. A lack of active effort by the nationality clubs to stimulate social interactions with other groups indicates that these students often engaged in and reinforced social segregation on the campus. The closed social networks that characterized some of the nationality associations suggest that these types of associations, which acted as social support systems, also encouraged social segregation tendencies among some international graduate students.

IV. Campus Climate at Mid-Atlantic University

American Openness to International Diversity

As for campus climate, the international graduate students expressed two distinct views about American students’ openness to international students. Some internationals made general statements referring to all American students, while others specified that their comments referred
only to the American undergraduate student population at the campus. The international graduate
students who socially interacted with host American graduate students (Inclusive Global Mixers
and Host Interactors) generally viewed American students as open-minded about international
students and their diverse cultures.

For instance, Sonja, the Russian graduate student, emphasized that in her experience at
Mid-Atlantic University, American graduate students were usually very interested to know about
her culture. As Sonja commented, “I by no means I’m try to generalize, but my first experience
has been that they’re [American students] extremely respectful, curious, and open-minded about
me, who I am personally, cultures, whatever. So I never felt that I had to, you know, do my
homework and then go out with them. I mean it was totally, I totally feel myself….They want,
they share their America with me. I can feel it. And that’s how this country was built you know”
(Russian Graduate Student, 10/03/006). Her experiences with Americans who expressed a
curiosity about her background and also a willingness to share their country with her influenced
her to socially interact a lot more with American graduate students.

An Indian graduate student named Neela expressed a similar sentiment about Americans
being very open to diverse groups. Neela stated, “I didn’t know what to expect. But I think, I
definitely got better than I thought I would in the sense that my department is extremely friendly.
And overall, the academic climate I think is extremely open” (Indian Graduate Student,
10/03/06). Her experiences with Americans from her department who often asked her a lot of
questions about Indian culture led her to construct views of the campus as open to international
students. Regular contact with Americans in one’s department also influenced perceptions of
American openness to diversity at the campus.
In contrast, the majority of international graduate students, who noted that they socially interacted mainly with co-nationals and other international graduate students (Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers), had a tendency to describe the campus climate much more negatively. In fact, they generally perceived most American students as individualistic and not interested at all in knowing more about international cultures. These internationals noted that while they were at the University, they only came in contact with a few American graduate students who expressed an interest in their culture. For instance, according to Andelko, a Croatian graduate student:

I have only a few American friends who are interested in other cultures. And by that I mean they would be interested in the places I’ve been to, they’re interested in travel and another perspective on things. So let’s see, that’s maybe what their motivation to be friends with me. But with most of them, there is always something like yeah like baseball or something in American culture (Croatian Graduate Student, 10/30/06).

Andelko only came in contact with a few Americans who were interested to know more about international travel and cultures outside of the United States. For the most part, he suggests that Americans on the campus were primarily concerned with aspects of American culture.

Carmelita, the Costa Rican graduate student, also pointed out that many Americans at the University thought they were open-minded. However, she still viewed some American graduate students on the campus as only interested in American culture, because they did not openly express an interest in learning more about international cultures. As Carmelita commented:

I think maybe because my colleagues I mean they’re social scientists too so they, like they understand about this sort of stuff and they think they’re very open-minded and in a way they are but they don’t realize that, like to me they’re still different. So like the, the bar example is really you know they’ll sit there and they’ll listen to this music and they just take it for granted that everybody loves this music. And I’m like I’m actually pretty bored, you know (Costa Rican Graduate Student, 11/30/06).

Her perception of the American students’ actions in her department influenced her views of the campus climate with respect to Americans showing openness to other cultures.
Such views of American students at the University as not being open to learning more about international cultures are important to consider in relation to international graduate students’ social interaction tendencies. The perceptions that internationals socially construct are influential in shaping their choices of which nationality groups to socially interact with at the university. These views were constructed based on the fact that most internationals came from departments that were composed of mostly White American graduate students or departments that had few Americans and more international graduate students. Thus, structurally too many and too few White American graduate students in their departments contributed in shaping their perception of a lack of openness to international diversity among Americans.

Promotion of Social Interaction in Departments, Classrooms & by American Faculty

The social climate promoted in different departments at the University influenced international graduate students’ social practices. Some international graduate students stated that their departments held regular social get-togethers which allowed all the graduate students to socially interact with each other. Others, on the other hand, maintained that their departments did not host any type of social events to encourage social interactions among the graduate students. The international graduate students who maintained that their department hosted a few social events over the course of the semester were more inclined to socially interact with a mixture of American, co-national and other international graduate students. They pointed out that their department had weekly coffee hours, pizza parties or lunch events in order to provide opportunities for the graduate students to engage in social interactions. Such social events were essential because it gave internationals and American graduate students opportunities to get to know each other.
For the most part, the students who noted that their departments rarely hosted social events for the graduate students were also mainly international graduate students who were identified as generally engaging in social segregation with co-nationals and other internationals at the University. Some of these international students claimed that the graduate students often arranged social events on their own, but they noted that these activities did not occur on a regular basis. The departments that do not actively make efforts to organize social events which can help build social connections between international and American graduate students are also partially responsible for some internationals developing a tendency to segregate at the University. By not hosting social events which provide opportunities for students to socially interact with each other, the departments reinforce student perceptions that the social climate of the University is not welcoming to international diversity. Limited efforts by departments to promote social connections among graduate students, some of whom might otherwise not actively seek to interact with different nationality groups, reduce the opportunities to engage in cross-cultural exchanges or to develop close friendships, thereby increasing the likelihood of social segregation.

In addition to departments organizing and promoting social events to encourage diverse social interactions, the social climate in some classroom settings was also identified by a few international graduate students as affecting their social interactions. At Mid-Atlantic University, some disciplines were not organized to facilitate discussion or any type of interaction between the students. In particular, some international graduate students who were pursuing degrees in the math and science fields explained that they often did not have opportunities to initiate interaction with their peers, because their classes were arranged so that students came in, sat down, and simply took notes from the professor. They were often not asked any questions and
none of the students initiated conversations because they were all busy taking notes for the entire class period. They did not have any breaks in which students could chat with each other. Additionally, they pointed out that most of their colleagues left directly after the class ended, so they did not wait around to have conversations with each other. The international graduate students explained that they only saw other graduate students from their respective departments in the classroom. Yet, the classroom setting was not set up to stimulate interaction or intellectual exchanges among students. They barely talked to each other, so the climate of the classroom really did not provide any opportunities to become friends or engage in social interactions outside the classroom.

For example, Salim, a Turkish graduate student studying in the Engineering field, described his classes as not facilitating a social climate among the students. As Salim put it:

I have some issues with the classes. The way [Mid-Atlantic University] gives class. They do not have any breaks. So, I think the main reasons that I do not have any friends from class…We just go into class and go out of class. Go into class and out of class. Like I usually try to do something like I do a joke with the professor or I just look at the newspaper. I try to do something….That is the thing that I do not like about [Mid-Atlantic University]. The classes and the education systems does not have breaks (Turkish Graduate Student, 09/25/06).

Such classroom experiences led Salim to see the University as not making active efforts to use the classroom setting as a space to stimulate social interaction among the student body.

Hwei-Syin, a Taiwanese graduate student in the Statistics Department, also noted that her classes were not very interactive. There was really no social climate in the classroom, so she rarely had any conversations with the American students who were taking the same classes. According to Hwei-Syin, “I think like in class like if you go to class it’s hard to be interactive with them because you just go to class and then when you’re done you just, you just leave….After class everyone just left” (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/25/06). The classes that
she attended did not encourage discussion among the students. The disciplines in which these international graduate students were pursuing degrees involved teaching and learning topics that professors do not always believe require discussions among students. However, this leads one to question what impact limiting social contact has on international graduate students pursuing degrees in such disciplines. The statements made by some international students in this study suggest that a classroom setting without a social climate does in fact affect some international students’ social opportunities.

Lastly, the social climate promoted by faculty members at the University was identified as important in stimulating specific social tendencies among international students. A few international graduate students who mentioned that they socially interacted with a mixture of host American, co-national and other international students pointed out that their social interactions with diverse nationality groups resulted from some faculty members actively making efforts to bring multiple nationality groups together. Ajda, a Turkish graduate student, stated:

I think I was fortunate. And I think it’s happening because of our professor….Our professor himself is a different individual in the sense that, like he’s open to new cultures and willing to learn about them. Like he is a friendly and curious type of a person. And the students that come to his program are generally either selected that way or they’re people who have kind of a passion even though they’re like Americans but they have kind of a passion to be exposed to these kinds of people (Turkish Graduate Student, 12/08/06).

While noting that the students who joined their program clearly had a passion for working with people of diverse cultural backgrounds, she also pointed out that the professor whom she worked with was interested in international cultures. Ajda attributed the mixture of social interactions she had with different nationality groups to the efforts made by her professor.

In contrast, the social segregation patterns carried out by some international graduate students on the campus is linked to the social climate promoted by faculty members in their
departments. A few internationals explained that some faculty members in their departments did not always show that they were open to international diversity on campus. Some were often described as being insensitive to international students’ cultural differences. For example, Alena, a Palestine graduate student, described a number of experiences with a faculty member in her department which she felt demonstrated the professor’s insensitivity to international graduate students’ cultural differences. In Alena words:

I worked with a faculty member who is a senior, who says that she does work for diversity, but she treated me like crap….I remember there was a meeting, the first meeting where someone from the survey center was there and she wanted to introduce me and she said, “I mean and this is [Alena]” and the lady was very nice. She started to be nice and she was like that is an easy name. She [referring to the professor] is, “wait until you hear her last name” and she started laughing at me. And I just looked at her and shrugged my shoulders and I did not know whether she intentionally or unintentionally says statements that are inflammatory. I mean you do not have to like my last name. It does not matter with me whether you like it or not. It is really inflammatory when you make fun of it with another five people in the room (Palestinian Graduate Student, 09/26/06).

Alena did not socially interact with other Americans at the University. Most of the graduate students that she spent social time with were from an international background. The type of social interaction practices she engaged in suggests that experiences such as the one she had with this American professor, who claimed to promote diversity but did not actually practice what she preached, influenced her social choices.

Altogether, the social climate promoted by departments, in the classroom and by faculty members at the University, influenced international graduate students’ social practices. The students’ experiences in these three contexts contributed in shaping the international graduate students’ views about the campus climate, especially Americans’ openness to international cultures. The international students expressed positive and negative views about the campus climate which shaped their social choices and behavior patterns. Overall, the way in which
international graduate students perceived the campus climate impacted their social interactions with host Americans, co-nationals and other international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University.

**Impact of 9/11 on International & American Social Interaction**

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the United States was a major event which affected American citizens’ views of foreigners. The majority of international graduate students (42 out of 60) who participated in the study were admitted to Mid-Atlantic University in the years after 2001. Eighteen of the international graduate students, however, stated that they were admitted to the University before or during the year 2001. During the interview and focus groups, international graduate students attending Mid-Atlantic University were asked a number of questions about what impact they thought 9/11 had on their social interaction practices. They were also asked whether they thought 9/11 affected American students’ (undergraduate and graduate) willingness to socially interact with international students on the campus.

Approximately 80 percent (48 out of 60) of the international students emphasized that 9/11 did not affect their social interaction choices. Only 20 percent (12 out of 60) of the students stated that it played a role in their social practices. Of the 48 students who said 9/11 did not influence their social practices, 17 international students stated that they thought the event affected some American students’ social perceptions. About 27 internationals pointed out that they did not think the event affected American students’ social choices and four internationals were not sure about what impact it had on American students. Out of the 12 international graduate students who felt 9/11 affected their social practices, 10 students thought the event also affected American students in terms of not wanting to socially interact with internationals and two students were not sure of what impact the event had on American students.
Most international graduate students explained that they were sympathetic to Americans who had to deal with such a tragic event. In relation to the campus climate, surprisingly the majority of international students maintained that they did not sense much negative tensions associated with 9/11 because they were in an academic setting. Therefore, people were generally more educated and were able to judge that not all international students were terrorists. As Alena, the Palestine graduate student, put it:

I mean other people I hear in the media like in the news that other people might have been in situations where they have been bothered at least verbally. Again I deal with educated people. I am like in an academic setting, so people are actually more educated than the average American on the street. So you know that might be it actually. It might be the fact that I am just dealing with an educated population more than others (Palestinian Graduate Student, 09/26/06).

Similarly, Mahir, a Turkish graduate student, stated:

Oh it didn’t affect how I choose to interact with them. I don’t know how it could have affected how they choose to interact with people. But probably I mean we are in an academic circle here so people and that education level and in that circle I mean they are not ordinary people. They are more educated and you know liberal, open-minded people. So I think they feel the affect of that event socially, if any at a minimum level in the university atmosphere (Turkish Graduate Student, 12/05/06).

The fact that they were in an academic setting, the international graduate students maintained that they did not directly have any negative experiences relating to 9/11 at the University. Since the faculty, staff and students at Mid-Atlantic University were perceived as generally educated people, most internationals suggested that they did not feel alienated by Americans. They did not express any feelings that the campus climate was a hostile environment or unwelcoming to international students.

In general, most international graduate students explained that if anyone would feel the effects of 9/11 on the campus; it would be students of Middle Eastern backgrounds. A few noted that they had Middle Eastern friends who had negative experiences after 9/11, but not necessarily
on the campus. For the most part, they stated that they thought most internationals did not encounter any problems relating to 9/11 at the university. As Jun, a Chinese graduate student, noted:

You know I definitely can feel they [referring to Americans] are fearful of like Arabs. But I don’t see because you know Chinese like India, China, we are not their enemies. You know we just tend to come here, study and probably stay here, but we don’t create problems. We don’t throw bombs or we don’t do terrorist activities. So I don’t see that has a big influence on us (Chinese Graduate Student, 11/03/06).

Considering that the terrorist attacks on the U.S. were carried out by individuals of Middle Eastern background, most internationals felt that mainly Middle Eastern students would have negative experiences. However, not all internationals on the campus that were Muslim were affected by the 9/11 event. For instance, Jafar, a Pakistani graduate student, pointed out that his friend who was Muslim and had the same name as one of the 9/11 terrorists, did not encounter any negativity at the campus. According to Jafar:

Like my roommates’ name is Osama and he was just telling me like last week he’s like never felt as if someone has insulted him by his name or anything like that. I mean that’s a big thing. And he’s Pakistani and of course we were one of the people who were severely affected by this in terms of the events. And this coming from a guy whose name is Osama. Everyone can relate to 9/11, but he never felt unsafe, I mean he was telling me very candidly. So based on that experience I don’t think it’s an issue (Pakistani Graduate Student, 10/02/06).

Clearly some Muslim international graduate students did not feel any negative impact from 9/11 at the institution.

However, most international graduate students’ assumptions that Middle Eastern students would feel the most socially isolated at the University because of the 9/11 event were fairly accurate. The social practices of international graduate students from Middle Eastern countries, along with international students who were of a Muslim religious background, were indirectly and directly impacted because of the event. While the majority of international graduate students
pointed out that they did not encounter any negative experience associated with 9/11 at the University, in critically assessing some of their statements, the students described a few ways in which the event indirectly affected them. Even though they did not mention any specific experiences at the University, such as being called a foreigner or a terrorist, they were affected in other ways. For example, a few of the Muslim international graduate students explained that the event positively affected them in terms of giving them a voice to educate Americans that not all Muslims are terrorists. Within the context of the University, they explained that 9/11 created an opportunity for international and American students to engage in dialogue about cultural differences. Some international students even speculated that the event increased international and American interactions.

For instance, Sarila, a Turkish graduate student, noted that she thought Muslim international students and American students were more likely to interact at the University because she assumed that Americans had more questions about Muslims after the 9/11 event. Therefore, she assumed that the event actually stimulated more interactions. As Sarila put it:

This may cause more interaction with different cultures because of these attacks and everything. I mean some people start to learn whether this really promotes violence and they started to ask Muslim people and Muslim people started to tell it, no this is not the way it is and so this creates an interaction, I think. I do not know. I did not have a chance to observe these occasions. So this is just my guess (Turkish Graduate Student, 09/25/06).

Similar to Sarila, Alena, the Palestine graduate student who was also Muslim mentioned above, was affected by 9/11 because she developed a stronger voice and felt the need to correct Americans at the University who misinterpreted the Muslim religion. Alena vehemently stated:

I think we are all under differences. We just want to tell those people look we do not condone that. We do not approve of that. Before September 11th I guess it was okay with me to be silent sometimes when people speak about Muslims. About the Middle East and things like that and kind of say something that is ignorant. After September 11th you know I cannot just keep my mouth shut if someone states something that is not right (Palestinian Graduate Student, 09/26/06).
The fact that some Muslim international graduate students developed a stronger voice and felt that it was necessary to educate Americans about the Muslim religion following the 9/11 event suggests that they were psychologically impacted by the event. Thus, even though they maintained that they did not sense overwhelming negativity on the campus relating to 9/11, they were still affected because they developed feelings about having to defend their religious background while at the University.

In addition to this, a few international graduate students pointed out that some of their friends had experiences with American students on the campus which made their friends feel alienated at the institution. For example, Ajay, an Indian graduate student, commented that:

It hasn’t happened to me personally. I don’t know if any of my roommates had that happen to them. I mean like sort of this militant behaviors against internationals because of nationality or because of not so much race but basically nationality. I mean I’ve heard that happen in [the Mid-Atlantic area]. I know people who have been on the receiving end…it’s not that prevalent. I mean I’ve had friends who have been called slurs. Indian friends who have had like, you know, have been called slurs. They’re a little bit more bitter…but that’s natural. I mean it’s natural. I wouldn’t fault them for that (Indian Graduate Student, 10/12/06).

Most internationals pointed out that they had friends who noted that they had negative experiences with American following the events of 9/11. The experiences that their friends encountered indirectly affected these international students even though they did not explicitly admit it. Such experiences, which were shared among friends, affected some of the international graduate students in terms of how they viewed Americans at the University. The views that they constructed in turn shaped their social choices, behavior patterns and sense of self on the campus.

Some internationals also maintained that they had a tendency to avoid certain topics of conversations with American graduate students who were usually from a politically conservative
background. Abdul, a Bangladeshi graduate student who was of a Muslim religious affiliation, noted:

> It did not impact me personally [referring to 9/11], but there is still when people are talking about more religious types of things. Sometimes I just try to avoid this discussion because I do want to make comments. That we do not have regrets or speculations…Those kinds of conversations I do not want to get involved with this (Bangladeshi Graduate Student, 09/26/06).

Similarly, Sabrina, the Canadian graduate student, commented, “Definitely when people talk about American politics. I have no idea what is going on. I just usually do not say anything or I make some joke like I do not even remember which party Bush is a part of” (Canadian Graduate Student, 09/25/06). The fact that some internationals stated that they avoided conversations relating to American politics, religion and the Iraq War indicates that they were indeed affected by 9/11. The psychological impact that the event has had on international students influences the perceptions that they construct of Americans and whether they want to socially interact with them.

The 17 international graduate students who pointed out that Americans were affected by 9/11 maintained that at the University the event did not affect American students in terms of not wanting to socially interact with internationals. The event only made them become strict with policies that allowed internationals entry into the country. So, even though Americans in general were affected by the event, international graduate students did not directly see it as an important factor impacting their social choices. They also noted that they and their friends sometimes had to deal with tight controls concerning the number of visas that were allowed to enter the United States. For the most part they did not think the event affected Americans at the University to the extent that they might think twice about socially interacting with internationals on the campus.
The 12 international graduate students who stated that the effects of 9/11 had an impact on their social interaction practices emphasized that they did not generally feel safe at the University. They perceived the September 11th terrorist attack in the United States as changing the social atmosphere of the University even though most of them were not at the University when the event took place. In general, the 9/11 event made them feel insecure as foreigners in the U.S., but they did not necessarily feel unsafe at Mid-Atlantic University. The event had a psychological impact on them within the context of the institution in terms of making them uncertain about the types of interactions they could have with Americans. For instance, Andelko, a Croatian graduate student, stated:

“It’s just that because of the legislature that came after September 11th I don’t feel as safe as I would have. For example, I can be arrested and put in jail without access to a lawyer, without access to any legal help, be held indefinitely just because I’m not a citizen….And that can be just a mistake. You can have a FBI agent clicking on the wrong name and you disappear…The paperwork amount related to that with all those forms you have to fill out it’s just immense (Croatian Graduate Student, 10/30/06).

Andelko described socially interacting mostly with other international graduate students. The fact that he felt somewhat insecure being a foreigner in the United States affected who he chose to socially interact with at the University.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Adekola, a Nigerian graduate student, who pointed out that it was more the issues associated with 9/11 occurring at the national scale that were really affecting him the most. As he stated:

Because it’s not my point to choose who I interact with but when you get to hear like there’s a lot of intelligence whatever going around, like people trying to tap your whole lives. And what the president is saying…You don’t feel secure even though you know you don’t do anything. But you will feel uncomfortable…I feel more cautious…Of course I have to be much more cautious because of how I have been perceived. A lot of people do not know…a lot cannot distinguish between a terrorist and a Muslim. You get what I’m saying? And so I would be very stupid to assume that everyone distinguished that. I must be cautious (Nigerian Graduate Student, 10/16/06).
The broad current event issues that took place after 9/11 made him more cautious about his interactions with Americans. The different debates that occurred after 9/11 and the various rules and regulations that were implemented made him more insecure about how Americans as a whole perceived foreigners. Adekola developed such feelings within the context of the institution even though he did not experience anything negative at the University itself. The issues that he raised suggest that the 9/11 event mentally affected him in terms of how he thought other people at the University viewed him as a foreign student and as a Muslim. For the most part, Adekola described his social tendencies at the University to be mostly with other international graduate students. Thus, the way in which he thought that he was perceived at the University indirectly affected his social interaction patterns.

Some of the internationals who stated that 9/11 affected them in terms of their social choices also maintained that they had international friends who encountered negative interactions with Americans outside the University. The experiences that their friends had to deal with affected them in terms of making them less confident about how open Americans really are towards internationals. Andelko, the Croatian graduate student, described a situation experienced by his Arab friends. Andelko stated that:

I’m not really sure but some of my friends were Arabs from Salt Lake City and just after those attacks they felt very alienated. They felt even sometimes unsafe that somebody might hurt them just because they were Arabs. They had a funny experience about that. Let’s say, it was a little bit awkward. They were at Boulder Dam south of Las Vegas just after the attack maybe a couple weeks later. So there’s a tour of Boulder Dam which is a huge dam so the host is asking us where are you from? And this guy says, “oh I’m from Missouri.” “And sir where are you from?” “I’m from Syria.” “And sir where are you from?” “I’m from Jordan.” And the host was like, “okay we’ll start our tour now.” You know she was kind of like she felt awkward. It was very obvious that she had two Arab students at a facility like that (Croatian Graduate Student, 10/30/06).

Since Andelko’s friends were of a Middle Eastern background, such experiences made them feel isolated from Americans. While he noted that it was an awkward experience for them, he
explicitly pointed out that especially after 9/11, his friends felt very unsafe in the United States. International graduate students who have friends that had negative experiences with Americans after 9/11 also felt a similar impact being a foreign student. At Mid-Atlantic University, Andelko’s choice to socially interact mainly with other international graduate students suggests that to some extent the experiences that his friends shared with him affected his social behavior on campus.

Altogether, the majority of international graduate students did not identify any overwhelming negative effects of 9/11 present at Mid-Atlantic University. Most of the internationals did not relate their social interaction choices to feeling unsafe or experiencing anything negative associated with the effects of 9/11 within the context of Mid-Atlantic University. The students described a few issues associated with 9/11 which were assessed as indirectly affecting their social choices and behaviors. The larger societal issues that they read about or heard on the news relating to the 9/11 event and especially the Iraq War seemed to have more of a psychological impact on them in terms of how they viewed Americans and how they thought Americans viewed them. The ideas that they socially constructed about Americans indirectly played a role in their social choices within the context of Mid-Atlantic University.

V. Impact of U.S. Higher Education Institutional Culture on Cross-Cultural Social Interactions

Overall, most of the international graduate students gave the University credit for attempting to improve diversity on the campus. International graduate students who socially interacted with Americans, as well as those who engaged in segregation, generally emphasized that there were aspects of the institutional culture and the University’s diversity efforts that
needed to be dramatically transformed in order for international and American students to develop cross-national social interaction tendencies. Currently, the University appears to be fixated on a discourse of diversity which overemphasizes a narrow focus on enrollment without taking into account the importance of fostering cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions. In other words, the institution is focusing primarily on improving structural diversity and diversity-related initiative efforts without fully investing time in stimulating diverse interactions among the student body. This mode of diversity promotion is becoming embedded as part of the organizational habitus of the institution.

As is evident from the international graduate students comments who participated in this study, University efforts which involve bringing internationals and Americans together within the confines of a U.S. educational setting do not automatically result in extensive cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions among a large number of the students on the campus. Diversity efforts must also actively work on creating cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions among students. As some internationals noted, certain diversity efforts carried out by faculty at the institution played a crucial role in shaping positive social interactions with Americans and other internationals. Yet, for other internationals, the limited or poor quality efforts carried out in the name of diversity resulted in these students turning away from social interactions with Americans and other internationals.

The social tendencies of the Inclusive Global Mixers suggest that some efforts, such as faculty initiatives and conversation partner programs, are ways in which to assist students in attaining cultural and social capital from diverse groups of people. However, such diversity efforts must become more integrated into the institutional culture in order for cross-cultural interactions to take place across the University. The broader ramification of U.S. higher
education institutions perpetuating organizational habits that reinforce limited interactions among diverse groups is that it severely limits the institution’s ability to effectively implement initiatives that would bring about important changes to diversity policy. The institutional culture itself needs to be significantly reformed to promote more widespread international awareness and commitment to cosmopolitan social practices.

VI. Conclusion

A series of institutional factors were identified as being equally important as international graduate students’ cultural background in influencing their social interaction tendencies on the campus. The institutional factors that were identified at Mid-Atlantic University suggest that improvements need to be made in terms of improving various aspects of structural diversity, diversity-related initiatives and diverse interactions. A variety of issues were raised in relation to each area of diversity by the international graduate students who participated in this study. The international graduate students’ statements about the institution reveal that there are a number of complex internal issues that need to be addressed at the University in order for international and American graduate students to engage in meaningful social interactions and develop close friendships.

In terms of the size of the institution, some international who found it easy to socially interact with a mixed group of students from various nationalities did not consider size to be an important factor to their social practices. Yet, size of the institution was identified as important by international students who had much more difficulty socially interacting with different nationality groups. The structure of the University also contributed in shaping the international graduate students’ social interaction tendencies. There was a clear structural imbalance in the minority and international student populations at the University. A lack of minorities prevented
international students from participating in social interactions with diverse groups of Americans. A large number of East and South Asians led some internationals to engage in self-segregation or segregated social practices. It also led other internationals to seek out interactions with nationality groups other than East and South Asians, such as host Americans.

In terms of diversity-related initiatives sponsored by the institution, most international graduate students agreed that hosting cultural events at the student union opened up opportunities for students to be exposed to different cultures. However, some were not sure the institution could shape such events to facilitate social interactions. Other internationals maintained that the events were not organized or publicized well, therefore they were not perceived as sites in which internationals and Americans could really engage in building social interactions or friendships. The international graduate students questioned the role of the international student office to facilitate social interactions. Most thought it did a superb job with getting them through the hurdle of foreign student paperwork in order to be at the University. However, they were uncertain about the extent to which the office actively encouraged and promoted social contact between international and American graduate students. A few diversity initiatives were identified which seemed to create meaningful social interactions between the students, yet there were still problems regarding recruiting more Americans to participate in the programs. The nationality clubs also provided a good social support system for international students. However, some of the associations constructed a very tight closed social network which led some internationals to engage in social segregation.

As for the overall campus climate, the international graduate students who generally had positive interactions with Americans often constructed views that they were open to diverse cultures. Those who viewed the campus climate as heavily focused on American culture and
limited interest in international cultures viewed the institution as not very open to other cultures. The types of views that they constructed also influenced their social choices. A few other issues relating to the social climate promoted by different departments, in some classrooms and by faculty, were also identified as key factors influencing internationals’ social practices. Lastly, the effect of 9/11 was evaluated to determine if it had any impact on the international graduate students’ social interaction patterns. Most internationals were not affected by any major negative experiences within the context of the institution. Rather, they were indirectly affected based on larger societal debates, restrictions and policies that came after the event.

Improvements can be made in terms of assisting international graduate students to move beyond social segregation to a more inclusive mixed social interaction pattern. U.S. higher education institutions, in particular, are critically discussed as currently being central agents that inhibit and promote social tendencies among international graduate students which affect their accumulation of cultural and social capital. Proactive efforts and dramatic diversity policy changes related to stimulating cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions are advocated as what is necessary to truly create changes in the institutional culture of U.S. colleges and universities. In the next chapter, a number of policy recommendations are discussed that were provided by the international graduate students who participated in the study. The recommendations that were suggested are described as possible strategies which could bring international and American graduate students together to initiate social interactions. The recommendations are critically assessed using Cynthia Coburn’s (2003) reform ideas on depth, sustainability, spread and shift in ownership in order to determine if they can truly stimulate meaningful social interactions as well as establish cross-cultural exchanges and friendships among different nationality groups.
8. CREATING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS:
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE
INTERNATIONAL & AMERICAN RELATIONS

I. Introduction

In the process of identifying different social interaction tendencies associated with the international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University, a number of questions were raised concerning whose responsibility it is to stimulate social interactions between international and American graduate students. In particular, should international graduate students initiate social interactions because they are foreigners in the United States? Or, is it primarily the responsibility of American graduate students to actively make stronger efforts to socially interact with internationals because they are the hosts and the foreigners are their guests? Lastly, to what extent is the institution accountable for stimulating social interactions between international and American graduate students? In terms of the types of policies that need to be created at the University, it is the position taken here that all three agents are considered equally responsible for shaping diverse social interactions on the campus.

Some international graduate students who participated in the study emphasized that foreign students are the most responsible for engaging in social interactions with host Americans because they are guests in the country. Since international graduate students are visitors in the U.S., they noted that internationals should make more of an effort to get to know their American hosts. A few internationals maintained that the University did not have any role or responsibility to get international students and Americans to engage in social interactions. These students
perceived social interactions as something that should occur “naturally” without any involvement from the institution. The majority of international graduate students maintained that internationals, Americans and the institution play an equal part in establishing social connections. In relation to creating policies that facilitate social interactions, the international students emphasized that the University could not force international and American graduate students to socially interact on campus. Diversity policies that are meant to stimulate social interactions, they argued, should not be pushed upon Americans or international students. The diversity initiatives also cannot simply operate with a goal of exposing students to different nationalities. University-sponsored initiatives must be actively promoted to get international and American graduate students interested in knowing more about each other’s cultures, and strategies must be put in place to stimulate social interactions among the students that attend such events.

In this chapter, a number of recommendations are discussed that were offered by the international graduate students. Their recommendations are meant to assist graduate students, along with the institution, in creating and modifying current diversity policies to facilitate social interactions. The students’ recommendations are critically assessed in relation to Cynthia Coburn’s (2003) ideas on how to “scale-up” educational reforms. Coburn (2003) contends that a school reform is often assessed for scale in terms of its ability to be extended to other schools. However, scale must also be evaluated in terms of whether a reform has the ability to attain effective changes. Coburn (2003) suggests that in evaluating the scale of a school reform one needs to examine it for depth, sustainability, spread and ability to shift in ownership. Depth refers to how well the reform can “improve teaching and learning for large numbers of students” (Coburn, 2003, p. 4). Sustainability is viewed as the extent to which the original reform can be
continued over a long period of time. Spread involves not only thinking about a reform spreading across different institutional contexts but also consists of “reform principles or norms of social interaction becoming embedded in school policy and routines” (p. 7). Shift in ownership refers to whether the reform can be transferred from an external set of ideas to a practical policy that is supported and carried out by the individuals for whom the reform is intended to stimulate changes.

While Coburn uses these ideas in the context of larger societal school reform, they are also useful in evaluating the success of policies that might be implemented within a University setting. Thus, the international graduate students’ recommendations are evaluated for depth, sustainability, spread and shift in ownership to determine how effective it might be in stimulating social interactions between international and American graduate students. The students’ recommendations are also discussed in terms of how they can be made stronger in order to improve Mid-Atlantic University’s diversity policies and facilitate diverse social interactions on the campus.

Next, the recommendations proposed by the international graduate students are critically discussed in terms of whether they represent “quick fixes” that are symptomatic of the organizational habitus of the University. Typically, the institution comes up with a set of diversity ideas which are aimed at promoting cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions, yet they are never completely taken seriously to the extent of being effectively carried out in terms of practices which would achieve the cosmopolitan ideals put forth by institution. The chapter concludes by proposing a number of policy reforms that call for the institution to put in place steps which can truly lead international and American students to recognize and participate in cosmopolitan social dynamics that shape hybrid cultural identities among the student body.
II. Initiatives to Stimulate International & American Graduate Students’ Social Interactions

*Changing International and American Attitudes*

The international graduate students proposed a number of recommendations to improve social interaction at Mid-Atlantic University. Their recommendations suggest that the University needs to take steps to modify its diversity policies, especially in the area of structural diversity and diversity-related initiatives in order to stimulate diverse social interactions. Although their recommendations were made in relation to the ways in which the University could better assist international and American graduate students with engaging in cross-cultural social exchanges, the entire responsibility was not solely placed on the institution. Throughout their interviews, some students noted that international and American students were also partially responsible for making active efforts to socially interact with each other.

They recommended that international graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University should be open and interested to learn more about other international and American students’ cultures. Students should be willing to pursue social relationships at the institution, not simply come for the academic credential. It was also recommended that American students should be open and willing to actively engage in efforts to get to know international students who come from different cultural backgrounds. However, simply recommending that international and American students should change their attitudes about their social choices does not hold much weight in relation to Coburn’s ideas on depth, sustainability, spread and shift in ownership. You cannot establish a policy which states that students need to change their attitudes about each other and expect social changes to take place at the institution.
International and American graduate students come to the University with preconceived ideas and stereotypes about each other which affect their social choices on the campus. Therefore, within the context of the institution, international and American students’ attitudes need to change in order for students to want to engage in diverse social interactions. At Mid-Atlantic University, the students might make a more active effort to socially interact with different nationalities if the University’s diversity policies promoted the importance of diverse social interactions among the student body. The students need to make personal attempts to engage in social interactions with different nationality groups. However, the institution also needs to assist in this process.

In particular, the structural diversity and diversity-related initiatives established at the University need to be improved to accentuate the fact that establishing diverse social connections is an essential part of the institution’s norms, values and culture. If diverse social interactions are actively promoted and strategies are developed as part of its diversity policies, then it may become embedded in the institutional culture. University policies that give equal or greater weight to encouraging diverse social interactions have the potential to obtain depth, because a large number of international and American graduate students might be willing to learn from each other. If social interactions are promoted as part of the institution’s culture, then these social practices can also spread and be sustained over a long period of time. The shift in ownership process will be much easier, especially if the ideas promoting diverse social interactions are embedded as part of the institutional culture. Students are more likely to change their attitudes in terms of wanting to engage in diverse social interactions if it is part of the University’s norms and values.
Constructing Social Connections through Departmental Activities

A key recommendation offered by the international graduate students in this study is arranging sport activities composed of a variety of international and American graduate students. Since sports were perceived as a major part of the American and Mid-Atlantic institutional culture, some internationals explained that sports were one way to bring internationals and Americans together to engage in positive social interactions. The international students recognized that sports, especially football, were a “big deal” for American students, and even though football was not necessarily popular among internationals, some internationals also enjoyed sport activities as a leisure time activity. Therefore, sport activities were seen as a strategy that could bring international and American graduate students together socially.

They proposed that the University policies could encourage departments to create small-scale social activities such as arranging a variety of sport activities to get internationals and Americans to socially interact. The students spoke about departments hosting various international and American types of sports competitions which could be held on a regular basis. Some even noted that there could even be departmental competitions across the campus with mixed teams of international and American graduate students. Mahir, a Turkish graduate student, commented, “Well I think like doing sports together like that kind of thing, a competition, basketball tournament, soccer tournament or American football, volleyball, something like that. I think these things socialize people a lot” (Turkish Graduate Student, 12/05/06). Similarly, Wen-Chun, a Taiwanese graduate student, stated:

Well the first thing I would think is actually sports. Sports is kind of, you know, really international thing. Everybody like well soccer, tennis, and the sports. It’s, I don’t know. It gets people outside of the building, you know, in the open air. That’s good thing. And yeah, it’s related to the knowledge or the background you have. You know everybody knows how baseball is played, generally and it’s played the same way over the world (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 09/28/06).
Sports were described by the international graduate students as a leisure time activity which could bridge gaps between students. As long as they had a general idea of how a game was played, they could participate and have fun. Such activities were seen as effective means to get students from different cultural backgrounds to socially interact with each other. Thus, policies that encourage departments to organize sport activities are important diversity efforts which facilitate cross-cultural social exchanges among students. Such diversity initiatives involve more than exposing students to different cultures, they actually foster social interactions between different students.

Such policies also require active support from departments if it is to succeed in establishing social interactions. University administrators and departments hold positions of power in terms of their ability to influence social changes on the campus. At the University level, diversity committees need to open lines of communication with departments in order to sponsor and organize social activities. At the department level, faculty and current graduate students can make active and consistent efforts to encourage incoming international and American graduate students to attend and participate regularly in department sport activities. Faculty and graduate students can influence new students’ interests and willingness to become involved in such events.

As a diversity initiative that is meant to stimulate social interactions among students, sport activities must be promoted at the department level in such a way that the students recognize that the benefits associated with participating in such activities are essential to their educational experience at the University. Sponsoring a variety of sports events, and actively informing internationals and Americans, can help them learn a lot about different nationality groups’ leisure time activities. This creates perceptions about the campus climate as open to
diverse cultures. By actively highlighting the social advantages associated with becoming involved in different sport activities, international and American graduate students might be more willing to participate in such diversity efforts. Students need to be informed about the importance of developing diverse friendships, building team camaraderie and engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. Matching up international and American graduate students on different sports team can also help students learn from each other about the rules of different games. It is an important strategy for initiating social connections between students of different nationalities, and it can minimize ideas about cultural differences.

In relation to Coburn’s (2003) theory of scaling up a policy to bring about effective changes, the international graduate students’ recommendation to arrange sports competitions is a good idea which can spark different nationality groups’ interests and stimulate social interactions. Such a recommendation can acquire depth if international and American graduate students are matched together on teams. If University administrators and departments work together, and if international and American graduate students are encouraged to attend and participate in sport social activities, then this type of activity can be sustained over a long time. If the University and departments actively promote participation in cross-cultural sport activities on a regular basis, then it can spread in terms of becoming embedded as part of the institutional culture. Over time, it will be easier for a shift in ownership to take place because participating in such activities would become a regular departmental social activity at the institution. A departmentally organized sport activity is an important strategy which can facilitate cross-cultural social exchanges.

In addition to this, a few of the international graduate students maintained that social interactions were more likely to occur between international and American graduate students if
departments, rather than the University, organized smaller informal group activities and regular social events. These students explained that large University-sponsored events were not appropriate spaces for social interactions. They noted that diversity initiatives that were sponsored by the institution were too big, and therefore they could not facilitate social interactions among the student body. Some diversity efforts that were sponsored by the University were also perceived as too formal and not geared towards stimulating social interactions between students. As Geeta, an Indian graduate student, pointed out:

“I’ve been to one of these [University] breakfasts meetings…Those kind of meetings you know the way it’s organized I think it sucks because you know everybody’s sitting around a round table where [someone’s] sitting at the head of it and then [they] asks everybody questions. And then you know you eat while you know everybody’s talking and it’s like a kind of a one person interaction. [The host] interacts with everybody….So the group size is quite good. But the way it’s organized is not great at all. So I went there. I sat there, ate, heard a lot of people, saw some faces, and walked out (Indian Graduate Student, 10/10/06).

The formal organization of University-sponsored events was perceived as an ineffective means for stimulating social interactions. Some events brought a small group of students together, but they were not designed in a way to get the graduate students to know each other.

International graduate students recommended that departments arrange or at least help facilitate smaller-scale activities to encourage international and American graduate students’ social interactions. For instance, Anil, an Indian graduate student, candidly stated:

I would say stop doing things at the University level. For example, the Graduate Student Association can have some socials and things like that, okay, but we hardly attend them because it’s like something that is university-wide, I mean even [the international office] has these weekly coffee things but people don’t go. It’s like it has to start at the lower level. If the department organizes say a picnic more often, then that would be something I would go to….It has to be something that the department does rather than something which the university does…I’m saying a person will not be comfortable going to something where, you know, there will be hundreds of people or even if it’s not hundreds of people…whereas in the department you might have let’s say taken a class with someone so you at least know that person’s name and maybe one or two things about
them…then it’s much better to break the ice and go to a picnic or something (Indian Graduate Student, 10/19/06).

Small-scale departmentally organized social activities were seen as more effective social interaction strategies. Some international graduate students recommended that departments host regular lunches/dinners, coffee hours, potluck parties, ice-cream socials, holiday parties and other informal events which would allow international and American graduate students to have more social opportunities to communicate with each other. The international graduate students perceived departmental socials as small enough that students would not feel extremely awkward or intimidated by each other.

The international graduate students’ recommendation that the University encourage departments to organize regular small-scale social opportunities has depth because it is an initiative that involves starting to build social connections at a smaller level, yet if implemented in departments across the University, such a policy has the potential to affect a large number of students. Therefore, it has a stronger potential for getting international and American students to socially interact with each other. It is also very easy to sustain department-organized social events because the students are more likely to attend events hosted by their departments and will not feel as isolated in comparison to attending large University events where they do not know anyone. Additionally, if departments sponsor regular social events and make them a part of the social routine of the department, this will greatly improve the sustainability of such activities. Sustaining small-scale departmental socials also influences the spread of the policy, because once social events become a customary social practice, they have the potential to be embedded in the social structure of the department. Shift in ownership to departments can only occur if individuals in the department buy into the idea and are willing to participate in the events. Thus,
departments must be provided with financial resources to sponsor and advertise social events and they must strongly encourage all graduate students to attend on a regular basis.

**Conversation Partner & Mentorship Programs**

In terms of establishing diversity initiatives that could lead international and American graduate students to engage in social interactions, one recommendation put forward by participants in this study was that the University should establish a policy which provides incentives for American graduate students in order to encourage them to volunteer as conversation partners or mentors to incoming international graduate students admitted to the University. Most internationals were aware that there was a conversation partner program at the University and that the international office had problems finding Americans to participate in the program. Therefore, they recommended that the University make more of an active effort to get American graduate students interested in international cultures by giving incentives to become involved in such programs.

The conversation partner program was found to be an effective initiative that actually results in social interactions and the development of good friendships between international and American students. Along with the conversation partner program, the international graduate students recommended that the University create a mentorship program whereby incoming international students are paired with co-national and American student mentors. They noted that a co-national could help translate information that might not easily be understood by an American, and they explained that an American student would make their transition easier in terms of slowly getting them familiar with their new cultural setting. This triangle type of mentorship program was seen as one strategy to help international and American students engage in social interactions.
As diversity initiatives, the conversation partner and mentorship program have depth in terms of getting students to learn more about each others’ cultures. However, such programs currently lack the ability to be sustained, spread and shifted in ownership especially if American students are not voluntarily participating in the programs. Ideally, the act of volunteering means that individuals do some good to assist someone else in need and in return they gain social capital in the form of new friendships and social connections. In the case of students, they also benefit by being able to put something on their resume that they volunteered for a specific social cause. Within the University context, such programs will only work if the University can get enough students to care about, or think that there is something to be gained from, volunteering for such programs. Such programs cannot expect to succeed simply on a voluntary basis. In addition to creating such diversity initiatives, the University needs to actively advertise that these programs are available on the campus to all students. Advertisements should not only be tailored to international students; they need to reach American students as well.

The University needs to provide its target—i.e., American students— with some sort of incentive that would make them want to give up some of their time to spend with internationals. The success of such programs depends on the ability of the University to get Americans interested in participating in them. Incentives could be given in the form of course credit, sponsoring study abroad trips and awards recognition as service to the institution. These types of diversity initiatives involve international and American students having to actually meet on a regular basis and they have to communicate with each other. Thus, they have more depth because the students are more likely to teach and learn from one another. If the University promotes such programs and emphasizes the incentives, they might also gain depth in terms of
getting a larger number of students interested in socially interacting with students of diverse nationalities.

The conversation partner and mentorship programs can be sustained if active efforts are made by the University to raise awareness of such programs among students and foster an interest in participating in such activities. The programs can also be successfully spread if they are initiated on a small-scale within departments. Operating such programs at a smaller scale is more likely to influence the students’ social interactions, especially if it a regular policy carried out by departments. If it is embedded as part of the department policy, it can have a strong impact in getting students to socially interact. By establishing University policies which require or encourage departments to organize and promote conversation partner and mentorship programs, it becomes much easier for the policy to shift in ownership from an “external set of ideas” to a “practical policy” which individuals are more likely to carry out and support.

Organizing Graduate Housing & Living with American Roommates

Some internationals pointed out that one way to get international and American graduate students to engage in social interactions at Mid-Atlantic University is for them to live together. They recommended that the University provide more organized graduate housing for international and American graduate students on campus. While there was some on-campus housing available for graduate students at the time of this study, most of it was primarily available to international and American graduate students with families. Most graduate students who participated in the study noted that they generally lived off campus because there was not much graduate housing available on campus.

If international and American graduate students lived on-campus in resident halls, similar to the undergraduate students, some internationals thought that internationals and Americans
would be more likely to socially interact with each other because they would be more in contact with one another outside of their departmental settings. They would meet each other in the hallways, have meals together and even be roommates. The idea of living on campus in graduate student housing was declared as a sure way for students to socially interact with each other. Having international and American graduate students live on campus as roommates was perceived as a more likely possibility in which students would choose to “hang out” together.

It is not an impractical request for the University to provide more graduate student housing on campus. However, if the University made more graduate housing available for international and American graduate students, it would also need to actively encourage these students to choose to live on campus. Such residential buildings should not be designated as graduate housing exclusively for internationals only. Additionally, in order to influence students to engage in diverse social interactions, active efforts must also be made to mix international and American graduate students as roommates who choose to live on campus.

The recommendation to provide graduate student housing and establish policies to mix international and Americans student as roommates has a great deal of depth. It involves constructing a situation in which the students are more likely to learn from each other because they are living together in a private setting which is also where they feel comfortable and relax to engage in social interactions. If a large number of international and American graduate students were to live in graduate student housing on campus, then such a policy will gain greater depth because more students are likely to engage in diverse social interactions. Such diversity efforts can be sustained if the University, along with international and American graduate students, choose to live on campus. The cost of graduate housing therefore needs to be somewhat affordable for international and American graduate students if it is to succeed as an initiative that
stimulates cross-cultural social interactions. Departments and on-campus housing offices can also encourage incoming graduate students to look at graduate housing on campus when they are visiting the University as prospective students.

If international and American graduate students live together as roommates on campus, they are bound to engage in some social contact. Obviously, not all students who live together are going to become good friends. However, living with diverse roommates on campus can initiate cross-cultural exchanges and social contact among students which can overtime impact the embedded social structure of the University. Such an initiative can spread and become part of the embedded norms of the institution, especially if it is promoted by departments and graduate students that live on campus. If the University organizes graduate student housing and establishes policies to mix international and American students as roommates, then the University’s ideas to initiate social interactions through such efforts automatically shifts in ownership because housing administrators will be required to follow diversity efforts. Moreover, the graduate students who decide to live on campus will automatically facilitate the University goals because they do not get to choose their roommates.

Apart from the University, some of those students interviewed recommended that international graduate students should make more of an active effort to live off campus with American roommates. For some international graduate students, living with American roommates was important because they learned more about American culture and social norms from their American roommates. It was much easier for them to engage in social interactions with American graduate students on the campus because they spent social time with their American roommates off campus. For example, Salim, a Turkish graduate student, pointed out, “I live in the upstairs with an American and a second generation Indian. Downstairs there are
two white Americans and one is my Turkish sister….Last night we went out together, the four of us. We have bar-b-ques. We have a huge, big yard (Turkish Graduate Student, 09/25/06). Salim also socially interacted with more white American graduate students on the campus. Similarly, Vladimir, a Russian graduate student, explained that he lived with five roommates in a house off campus, four of which were American and one graduate student from Switzerland. He stated, “we are very good friends, they cook food at home and we sit and eat at the house” (Russian Graduate Student, 02/23/07). These international students found off-campus housing from internet searches and in some cases they put ads for roommates in the local newspaper. They chose to live with Americans because they wanted to learn more about their host culture.

In critically assessing this recommendation, it would be impractical for the institution to create a policy that requires international and American graduate students to live together off campus. It does not make sense realistically, thus the larger question is how to encourage international and American graduate students to live together off campus. This recommendation is a good idea, but it lacks the capacity to be translated into a University policy. From a practical standpoint, the most departments could do is encourage incoming graduate students to find American roommates who are currently attending the University.

Nationality Clubs as Facilitators for Cross-Cultural Social Interactions

The international graduate students that were interviewed offered a number of criticisms about the nationality clubs at Mid-Atlantic University, especially the way in which social events were publicized to other nationality groups on the campus. Some nationality clubs did not invite other nationality groups to social events. In general, most of the clubs operated as a closed social network. American students were usually not aware of some events that were sponsored by the nationality clubs because they were not on the clubs’ listserves. Additionally, social events that
were organized by the nationality clubs were often perceived as very formal and not welcoming to Americans students. The events need to be organized to attract the attention of American students as well as a variety of international students from different countries. There was generally not much of an attempt by the nationality clubs to facilitate cross-cultural social interactions.

A few international graduate students recommended that the nationality clubs, particularly the executive officers, need to communicate with other club officers to encourage their members to attend social events sponsored by other nationality clubs. Nationality clubs also need to collaborate and arrange social events that are jointly sponsored by multiple clubs in order to get various nationality groups together. Most importantly, the clubs must actively advertise to American students (undergraduate and graduate) to encourage them to attend social events. They must also make it more welcoming to other international students as well as Americans. The student clubs need to arrange social events to attract diverse nationalities. As Tse-Chuan, a Taiwanese graduate student, put it:

Like Chinese New Year that’s very important for us…it’s important, you know, in order to invite or encourage the people, Americans. But I would say this information should, you know, not just go out, not just to Taiwanese students you know. Like announce for whole university. I think they still have a lot of American students interested about this event or activity. And I would not say most of them but I still believe some of them are more interested about other culture. And I would, and I still want to suggest that like TA [Taiwanese Association], you know, like invite some other club or something like this and like make them feel more comfortable in here. Even prepare some like American food or something like this (Taiwanese Graduate Student, 10/19/06).

The nationality clubs at the University can play an important role in facilitating international and American social interactions. It should be part of their goals and responsibilities to work at bringing groups together to engage in cross-cultural exchanges. Therefore, while the clubs are
good support systems for students, they should not operate as separate entities because this encourages segregation on the campus.

In relation to its diversity policies, Mid-Atlantic University should require the nationality clubs to set goals and make plans to organize social events which seek to bring diverse nationalities together. The University should sponsor such events and assist the clubs with advertisements across the campus. The clubs should also organized social events with interaction strategies in mind in order to break the ice among students from different nationalities who might choose to attend the events. The key idea is to get students communicating at social events. The nationality clubs cannot organize events with the hope that interactions are going to “naturally” take place. Club organizers need to help facilitate social interactions. The nationality clubs are important agents that can get one or more nationality groups participating in cross-cultural interactions. The social events that they organize are spaces that can attract students, but they need to go one step further to assist students in mixing with each other.

The efforts of the nationality clubs will have depth if social events are better organized to initiate cross-cultural social exchanges. The University needs to work with the nationality clubs to facilitate students’ social interactions. If the University and the nationality clubs sponsor, advertise and organize social events to attract different nationality groups, it will be sustained since more students might gain an interest to attend such events. Actively working on increasing international and American graduate students’ awareness and interests in attending nationality clubs’ social events can spread across the University.

The social practices of attending nationality club events can become part of Mid-Atlantic University’s student social interaction routine, but this might not happen instantly. It takes time for a reform to become embedded into the social structure of the institution. The international
graduate students’ recommendation for the nationality clubs to better organize and promote social events requires that the University establish policies that motivate the clubs to function as agents that can bring diverse nationalities together. In order for this idea to shift in ownership from a set of diversity initiatives recommended by the University to actual practices carried out by the nationality clubs, the club mission and goals need to change. The nationality clubs must modify their role as only a social support system to include responsibilities for initiating cross-cultural social exchanges. A shift in ownership to the extent that the nationality clubs’ social events become places for building social interaction and fostering friendships is possible, but not without extensive efforts being made by internationals, Americans and the institution.

**Creating Social Interactions through Classroom Activities & Course Assignments**

The University classroom is also an important setting to initiate social interactions between international and American graduate students. Social interactions do not necessarily have to take place in a classroom, however efforts can be made to initiate interactions within the context of a classroom setting. International and American graduate students spend a significant amount of time engaged in academic-related activities, part of which involves taking graduate courses together. Thus, the classroom is an ideal location for faculty to instigate social contact between students of diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Several international graduate students emphasized that in some of their courses, the faculty made efforts to pair-up an international and American graduate student to work together and communicate on different classroom assignments. Such efforts were seen as effective in fostering dialogue between international and American graduate students who on a regular basis might not choose to interact or communicate with each other.
For example, Sabrina, a Canadian graduate student, noted that this was one way to assist international and American students with beginning to interact. Sabrina stated:

I think one thing and I have noticed in one of my classes, in the genetics class, an international will often be paired up with a partner and I have noticed that the like professor always pairs up someone who is international and someone who is American. A classroom is a really good place to start because it is hard just in everyday life to like try to influence who people interact with (Canadian Graduate Student, 09/25/06).

Social connections can start through faculty organizing various classroom activities which involve pairing up international and American graduate students. Only a few internationals mentioned that this occurred in their graduate courses. Active efforts by faculty members to organize class activities between international and American graduate students are important for initiating cross-cultural social exchanges. These are steps that can facilitate international and American contact which can perhaps stimulate further interests and social interactions with diverse cultures.

Along with organizing classroom activities between internationals and Americans, other internationals explained that faculty members could stimulate cross-cultural interactions by preparing course assignments that deal with international issues. International graduate students might be more inclined to have discussions with Americans in the classroom if some of the course material was related to their own cultural background. As Akira, a Japanese graduate student, put it:

I think that during the classroom, I think the curriculum the topics discussed in the classroom should be more multicultural. Not totally multicultural and international but I think some things international like culture should be brought into it a little bit more so that we can discuss something international or multicultural….the group work or discussions or something like that. That would be helpful (Japanese Graduate Student, 09/29/06).

For some internationals, making the course topics and assignments a bit more international or multicultural was also perceived as important in initiating international and Americans social
contact. If topics had some international focus, then internationals might have more to discuss with Americans in the classroom.

Modifying classroom activities and course assignments to be more inclusive of international cultures is an important recommendation for Mid-Atlantic University to consider in relation to improving its diversity efforts on the campus. International experiences in the classroom can affect whether they choose to initiate social interactions with Americans. The University must establish policies which call for faculty members to take a more active role in facilitating international and American graduate students’ social interactions. Faculty can be influential in shaping student experiences on the campus. Thus, using the classroom setting as an opportunity to initiate cross-cultural social interactions should be a responsibility of faculty at the University.

University policies that strongly encourage faculty to actively organize classroom activities and course assignments to initiate international and American connections have depth because such acts can create opportunities in which students of diverse backgrounds can learn from each other. If such policies are implemented across departments on the campus and faculty carry out such diversity efforts, the depth of the policy expands in terms of affecting changes among a large number of students on the campus. The success of this recommendation depends on the ability of faculty members to actually make active efforts to initiate connections among diverse students in the classroom. To sustain this policy, incentives can be provided to faculty members in order to encourage them to carry out such initiatives. Incentives can be given in the form of University awards and recognition or their service to the institution can count as part of their tenure portfolio.
Additionally, if the University implements such a policy across departments, then it can have a greater impact in terms of spreading its ideas and goals. A University-wide policy which specifically focuses on faculty efforts is more likely to influence the social norms of the institution. Since the policy requires that incentives be provided for faculty members who actively make efforts to get students to interact in the classroom, it also has greater feasibility to shift ownership of the reform from a University recommendation to a practical set of ideas that faculty will embrace and adopt. It is not simply a recommendation; rather, it involves incentives to ensure that steps are being taken to encourage cross-cultural social exchanges.

**Informal Graduate Student Study Groups**

A couple of international graduate students recommended that international and American graduate students take more initiative to establish informal study groups in their departments. Since graduate students spend a lot of time on their academic work and they often do not have much free time to spare, some internationals pointed out that one way to stimulate social interactions between international and American graduate students would involve them coming together to work on their academic development. If graduate students would be more willing to form study groups that meet on a regular basis, then their interactions could transfer from work relations to social interactions. By working and having to communicating with each other, then both sets of students might feel more comfortable socially interacting outside their work setting.

The international graduate students noted that in order for study group sessions to work in terms of facilitating interactions, international and American graduate students have to be proactive and willing to work with each other. The study group recommendation is a good idea that has the potential to stimulate social interactions, but the key issue is how to get students to
willingly participate and remain interested in attending study group sessions in their departments. Some internationals pointed out that they attempted to initiate social interactions by creating study groups in their departments. However, they lacked the capacity to get graduate students to buy into the idea and to want to attend because some had language barriers and others simply were not interested. For instance, Alojz, a Slovakian graduate student, stated:

The professors we have in our program who came from like the top universities. I hear the stories they always speak about having study groups and that they still keep in touch with people from their cohorts. And that’s what was my original idea there at the beginning….The pro-seminar it’s the main subject you take the first two semesters, so I was asking people or I was suggesting to come like one hour before seminar. Bring your lunch and then just share, just talk about interesting books, articles whatever you read and to just have like community of people with similar professional interests. It never materialized…we had many Asian students and many of them at the time linguistically it was difficult for them to communicate. I think for them it was the language barrier. But the American students never reacted (Slovakian Graduate Student, 10/04/06).

Alojz suggested that informal study groups, such as the ones his professors formed when they were in graduate school, were effective in creating strong bonds between colleagues. However, his attempt to form study groups with international and American graduate students from his cohort never materialized because of language issues and lack of interests among the students.

The recommendation for graduate students to create informal study groups in their departments is a good idea to initiate social interactions among students from diverse backgrounds. However, in order for it to materialized and have an impact on students’ social interactions, departments must take a more active role in fostering study groups as a part of departmental academic and social norms. Departments cannot simply recommend such activities to graduate students because if they are not perceived as embedded in the social structure of the department, then the students will most likely not carry-out such initiatives on their own. Study groups that are required by departments can assist internationals with overcoming language barriers and learning to better communicate with Americans. In turn, Americans would benefit
from study groups because they could build group solidarity with internationals. They might also feel comfortable and become more understanding of international linguistic difficulties.

If incorporated as part of the academic and social structure of the department, informal graduate student study groups can achieve depth, because such activities have the potential to increase academic and social learning between American and international graduate students. If departments establish a policy that requires incoming graduate students to form study groups that meet at least once a week, then the policy can be sustained over time. Additionally, such a policy acquires spread especially if it is required by the department. As the years past, graduate student study groups can become a regular routine carried out by graduate students in departments. Having graduate students form study groups makes the shift in ownership process much easier because it is not a policy that you would have to convince students to carry-out. Instead, if it is promoted as part of the embedded academic and social structure of the department, then it will be much more easily supported and carried out by the graduate students.

**University Organized Trips with a Mix of Internationals & Americans**

Some international graduate students suggested that the University could sponsor and organize trips or excursions with a mix of international and American graduate students. The students maintained that University-organized trips to visit different sites in the United States or even arranging trips outside the country would be a great opportunity for international and American students to develop friendships. The international students explicitly stated that the University should organize trips to actively recruit international and American graduate students. A mix of graduate students of different nationalities must be recruited in order for the initiative to effectively result in diverse groups of students engaging in social interactions. The
international graduate students even recommended that the University could recruit graduate
students from various departments across the campus.

Organizing trips composed of a mix of international and American graduate students was
perceived as an opportunity to facilitate social interactions. If the students traveled to unfamiliar
locations together, they would be more likely to interact with each other since they shared the
connection of being from the same institution. University-sponsored trips that are organized for
students to travel outside the United States also has the potential for internationals and
Americans to establish friendships because in a foreign location, they are more likely to seek
comfort and support among those that are familiar to them. As Ifeanyi, a Nigerian graduate
student, stated:

I guess an example of something that could be done would be an excursion…We want all
of you to apply. And by their [referring to a University organized process] sorting process
find a good balance to mix. People from all over the place, people from different
programs, different departments, that kind of thing. The point is when you happen to be
somewhere different from where you exist you have no other choice but to be with the
same people, same background (Nigerian Graduate Student, 10/02/06).

In constructing diversity initiatives, the international graduate students suggested that the
University could sponsor trips that would attract international and American graduate students.
Graduate students could receive official University invitations to attend the trips or they could be
given out as departmental awards to graduate students who demonstrate outstanding academic
and teaching performance. Most importantly the trips should be organized with a mix of
international and Americans in order to facilitate diverse social interactions.

A University policy involving regularly sponsoring domestic and international trips
composed of a mix of international and American graduate students has a great deal of depth
because such efforts would work well in terms of getting students of diverse backgrounds to
break down barriers and begin communicating with each other. If the University can allocate
funds to sponsor a few trips each semester, then the policy will have even greater depth with respect to reaching a larger number of graduate students on the campus. In order to sustain graduate student trips, the University also needs to actively promote these opportunities to students across departments. Additionally, it needs to be made attractive to international and American graduate students if they are to continue choosing to go on the trips. These are the individuals who are responsible for sustaining and making the initiative successful, therefore it has to be advertised as fun social experiences for students.

Sponsoring trips for graduate students will spread if promoted to all departments and graduate students on the campus. In terms of becoming part of the social norms of the institution, the spread of the idea is dependent on how well the University is able to sustain it. If it cannot get diverse graduate students who are willing to attend University-sponsored trips, then it is unlikely to spread or be sustained on the campus. However, considering that this is a University-sponsored diversity initiative, there is a very good chance diverse groups of graduate students will be interested in attending such trips. The University needs to arrange and sponsor such trips if it is to shift in ownership from a set of ideas to a practical policy with participation by international and American graduate students. The University must translate this from a possible idea to a viable policy in order for it to become part of the social norms of the institution.

III. Moving Beyond “Quick Fixes” to Establishing Diversity Policies that Foster Institutional Changes

In critically evaluating the international graduate students’ social practices and recommendations to improve cross-cultural social exchanges at the University, it is clear that the institution is not the only agent responsible for facilitating their social tendencies on the campus.
The students’ cultural background plays an equally important role in motivating tendencies to socially interact with some nationality groups and not others. Within the context of the University setting, it is possible to influence international and American students so that they develop cosmopolitan social tendencies. The University milieu is the ideal location to reinforce cosmopolitan ideals, especially the promotion of diverse social interactions.

Judging from the international students’ social practices and recommendations, they seem to hold themselves and the University to be responsible for shaping their social tendencies. The students’ recommendations, especially the nonchalant manner in which they proposed ideas to initiate cross-cultural interactions between internationals and Americans, seem to suggest that the students themselves appear to be falling into the organizational routines of the institution. More specifically, their recommendations might initially appear to be “quick fixes” that are characteristic of existing institutional responses which are based upon lofty diversity ideals yet fail to achieve them in practice. However, I would argue that many of their policy recommendations actually have the potential to initiate substantive institutional changes.

Reforming the culture of U.S. higher education institutions so that it promotes cosmopolitan ideals is undoubtedly a difficult task for colleges and universities to achieve. However, it is not an unachievable goal. The international graduate students who participated in this study were adamant that you cannot force social interactions to take place on a University campus. The students are right in the sense that you cannot truly create social changes on a college campus by mandating and implementing policies which seek to force social interactions. It is unproductive to establish rules and regulations that require individuals to engage in social connections or tell them to start developing friendships. As McLaughlin (1990) contends, “you cannot mandate what matters” (p. 12). Constructing diversity policies which force social
connections will not work to achieve cosmopolitan social goals. Improving the structural diversity and diversity-related initiatives at U.S. higher education institutions alone will also not result in changes in the institutional culture.

The larger question then is what sort of policies can create cosmopolitan social practices at U.S. higher education institutions such as Mid-Atlantic University? What can be done to get the University to construct diversity policies that would allow it to move beyond diversity “ideals” to implementing actual practices that achieve the ideals of cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions among international and American students on the campus? In order for real changes to take place, the organizational habitus of U.S. colleges and universities must be transformed so that the institutional culture also values cosmopolitan ideals. The culture of American universities itself needs to be transformed in order to achieve cosmopolitan social goals. The social norms and values associated with the institution must be embedded with ideas relating to the promotion of cross-cultural exchanges as well as the formation of diverse social networks and friendships. The next question, then, is what policies can be created to achieve this goal? Essentially, what can institutions such as Mid-Atlantic University do to transform the institutional culture to reflect cosmopolitan ideals?

In answering such questions, the following considerations should be kept in mind. First, diversity polices must take more proactive steps to actually get international and American students (undergraduate and graduate) to communicate with each other. University-sponsored events and activities should involve not only exposure to international cultures, such events should be reorganized so that they are more interactive in facilitating communications between international and American students. Getting students of different nationalities to communicate is an important step in changing the students’ minds about each other. International and American
students’ preconceived notions and stereotypes can be broken down if they are placed in situations in which they can talk to each other. Opening lines of communication is a major step in changing people’s minds which can contribute in changing an institution’s culture.

Second, diversity efforts must work on the details of how the university organizes activities and events to facilitate social connections between international and American students. Diversity efforts that bring together smaller groups of students can be more enriching and have a long-lasting impact on individuals. Small-scale social events that are organized by departments across the University have the potential to affect social changes with diverse groups of students. Changes in the institutional culture are likely to occur as international and American students develop a better understanding of each other’s cultural background and develop deeper social relationships.

Third, the initiation of changes in the institution’s culture also requires getting University administrators, faculty, staff and students to buy-into cosmopolitan ideals. These individuals are the “street level bureaucrats” who are responsible for carrying out University diversity efforts (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). They hold perhaps the most important role and responsibility for directing changes in an institution’s culture. These individuals are responsible for implementing lasting changes, and they have the power to transform the institutional culture. Universities must therefore provide incentives for these individuals to recognize the benefits of cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions. Simply promoting and informing individuals on a campus that engaging in diverse social interactions is a good idea because it leads to cross-cultural exchanges, the formation of diverse social networks and the development of international friendships is not necessarily going to make people want to become more cosmopolitan. They might recognize that it is important but not be motivated enough to carry out such actions on the
campus. Therefore, within the context of a University setting, providing incentives to individuals at all levels of the institutional hierarchy is important for encouraging them to participate and believe in such cosmopolitan ideals.

Lastly, the University should not only take on a role of financially sponsoring diversity events. It needs to take a more active role in ensuring that events are organized well and promoted across the campus to all students. The information needs to reach both international and American students in order to stimulate interest and participation. Advertisements and promotions of diversity events which emphasize that the University believes in cosmopolitan principles can lead students to buy-into such ideals, and this can result in changes in the institution’s culture. Adequately distributing information relating to diversity events on the campus has the power to reach a larger number of students, and it can help them become more accepting of the cosmopolitan social norms promoted by the University. If U.S. universities are fearful of promoting too much diversity on a campus, or are overly concerned that students might be resistant or feel that diversity is being enforced on them, then the ideals that the University aims to accomplish will not be achieved. American colleges and universities need to be willing to risk encountering resistance in order to achieve much needed social changes.

IV. Conclusion

In order for social interactions to take place between international and American graduate students, the students themselves need to be open to different cultures. This is likely to occur within the context of the institution, particularly if the University actively promotes initiatives that stimulate social contact among the student body. The students and the institution are responsible for influencing and changing socially constructed stereotypes and attitudes as part of their educational experience. The recommendations that the international students made in
relation to improving University policies have the potential to increase cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions on the campus. However, University initiatives alone cannot reshape the social norms and values of an institution. The administrators, faculty, staff as well as the international and American students themselves need to be actively encouraged to promote and practice cross-cultural interactions.

In the next chapter, the broader implications associated with internationals’ social tendencies at a U.S. institution such as Mid-Atlantic University are discussed in relation to what it means for the future of U.S./foreign relations. A lack of social interactions between international and American graduate students raises some important questions about what sort of relationships Americans and internationals establish within the broader global context. The impact of international graduate students forming group solidarities and excluding Americans are also discussed in terms of what this means for their overall academic and social experiences in a U.S. educational setting. It is suggested that the larger significance of engaging in social interactions and cross-cultural exchanges within a U.S. institutional context is crucial for building good relations between the United States and other nations across the world. Therefore, American universities are called on to take active steps to incorporate cosmopolitan ideals into their institutional culture.
I. Introduction

A U.S. institution of higher education is an ideal milieu for international and American graduate students to engage in social interactions. The University environment is unlike any other formal organizational setting which brings together a significant number of internationals and Americans in one location. As an educational setting, it is also supposed to be a place where cultural barriers among students are broken down to facilitate academic and social interactions. Based on the results of this study, 65 percent of the international graduate students (Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers) tended to participate in social segregation. The majority of internationals socially interacted with co-nationals and other internationals. These students excluded host Americans in their social practices. Only 35 percent of the international students (Inclusive Global Mixers and Host Interactors) typically engaged in social interactions with host Americans on the campus. Yet, these internationals were also selective about the types of American graduate students that they interacted with at the University.

The data that were collected and analyzed revealed clear segregation tendencies occurring among international graduate students on the campus. This means that cultural barriers are not necessarily diminishing at the institution and extensive social interactions are not occurring between international and American graduate students at Mid-Atlantic University. The results of this study raise important questions about the larger societal implications associated with international and American graduate students not engaging in social interactions at the institution. If graduate students are not socially interacting at U.S. institutions such as Mid-Atlantic University, then what impact does this have on future interactions in the larger society?
More specifically, based on their social experiences at a U.S. institution, what sort of perceptions do international graduate students construct of American students and take back with them to their home countries? Additionally, what impact does limited social interactions with Americans have on international students’ future academic, social, political and economic success? Lastly, what impact does a lack of social interactions between international and American graduate students at a U.S. higher education institution mean for future U.S./foreign relations? These questions suggest that there is a larger significance of international and American students engaging in cross-cultural social interactions on a U.S. college campus setting. Participating in cross-cultural exchanges and diverse social interactions within the educational context is crucial in shaping the future roles and relationships that students construct in the broader global society.

In this chapter, a discussion is presented on the impact that international students’ social experiences at a U.S. institution can have on future global interactions. A series of issues are identified concerning the impact that a lack of cross-cultural social interactions has on the students’ future interactions and success. The U.S. higher education setting should be effectively utilized as a cosmopolitan spatial context in which international and American graduate students should be working on building global solidarities. It should be a space for improving cross-cultural understanding among students from diverse national backgrounds. Thus, the University should be seen as a place to instigate cross-cultural communication and to construct global solidarities across national divides.

As formal organizations, U.S. higher education institutions are responsible for more than simply the transfer of academic knowledge and skills. American colleges and universities also have a responsibility to facilitate cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions among the student body. Meyer & Rowan (1977) suggest that “institutionalized myths” in the broader
society give rise to “rationalized formal structures” such as educational institutions. In relation to U.S. higher education institutions, global economic competition often results in such formal organizations constructing routines associated with preparing students with knowledge to function in a global society. Such formal higher education structures are problematic to the extent that they focus solely on academic routines, without equal emphasis being placed on cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions. I maintain that the internationalization of the organizational culture of American universities is crucial for building cross-national relationships and global solidarities. Finally, I briefly summarize the theoretical findings of the study drawing attention to the need for international and American students, as well as the University, to take proactive steps to operationalize cosmopolitan ideals within the context of U.S. higher education institutions. The chapter concludes with a few possible directions for future research.

II. Implications for Broader U.S./International Relations

*Overcoming Stereotypes of Americans*

Some international graduate students often come to the United States with preconceived stereotypes and prejudices about Americans. Their views of Americans are constructed based on information they obtained from watching the television and other news media sources. International students’ negative views of Americans often reinforce their own sense of culture. The students bring stereotypical views with them when they are admitted to a U.S. higher education institution. The stereotypical views and negative ideas that some foreigners associate with Americans have been reinforced as a result of 9/11, and the United States’ current involvement in the Iraq War. The U.S. intervention in Iraq, in particular, has led many internationals to construct perceptions of the United States as a superpower nation that is ignorant, uncompromising and unwilling to work with the global community.
In considering the larger global perceptions of the United States, it seems even more crucial that U.S. higher education institutions should be working actively to diminish negative stereotypes of Americans. The University context is the ideal setting to influence international and American students to move beyond stereotypes and to establish social connections which can lead to cross-cultural relations. The after-effects of 9/11 and the current effects of the Iraq War call for universities across the U.S., along with international and American students, to develop more proactive efforts that work to facilitate positive social interactions. Diversity efforts that aim to establish diverse social connections must be a priority for U.S. institutions and individuals in order for cross-national global solidarities to develop.

Some of the international graduate students who participated in the study often commented that Americans in general were too individualistic, ignorant of foreign cultures and only concerned with their own interests, values and ways of life. Such statements were often made by international students who generally had limited social interactions with American students. Other internationals who regularly participated in social activities and developed close friendships with Americans on the campus described Americans as professional, hard-working, family-oriented and interested in foreign cultures. Such statements suggest that within the context of a U.S. institution if international graduate students do not engage in social interactions with Americans they often perpetuate negative stereotypes of them. The stereotypes they construct of Americans are reinforced based on their social experiences, or lack thereof, with Americans.

Thus, the broad implication of engaging in segregated social tendencies on a U.S. college campus is that it can lead internationals who return to their countries after completing their degrees to transfer and perpetuate negative stereotypes of Americans. A consistent practice of
limited social interactions with Americans on a University campus can result in a cycle of negative stereotypes and perceptions being reinforced about Americans. Additionally, since most international graduate students return home to acquire top-ranked academic and other leadership positions in their respective countries, limited social interactions with Americans can influence their future interactions with Americans in terms of larger global relations. The views that they take back with them to their home countries will shape their social choices and behaviors with Americans later in life.

Moving Beyond Social Segregation

The limited efforts made by U.S institutions, along with a lack of active attempts being made by international and American graduate students to participate in social interactions, also reinforces patterns of social segregation in the larger society. If international students generally participate in social interactions only with co-nationals and other internationals, and exclude American students, then once they return home they may continue such social segregation practices. As future leaders in their countries, the students will have great influence in choosing to establish group solidarities with nations other than the United States. Thus, their social tendencies within a U.S. higher education setting can be translated into their broader global social actions in the future.

Some international graduate students also remain in the U.S. permanently or for a few years if they acquire occupations after completing their degrees. The internationals who engaged in limited social interactions with diverse groups of students within the context of a U.S. institution are more likely to continue such social tendencies once they leave the University. Thus, the social segregation practices they took part in with co-nationals and other internationals may transfer with them in their future social practices. For instance, internationals who declared
that they often established work-relations with Americans, but social interactions with students of the same nationality, of a similar ethnic background or other internationals, also will likely continue engaging in such social interactions after graduation. The broader implication is that social segregation tendencies are perpetuated in the United States by internationals, which prevents them from forming broader national connections. Thus, they establish same-group solidarities, while at the same time engaging in exclusionary social practices with Americans.

*Improving the Development of Cross-Cultural Communication Skills*

One of the most significant implications of international and American graduate students not engaging in social interactions within a University setting is that they do not learn to develop cross-cultural communication skills. Their overall education is limited if they cannot effectively work, function and communicate with individuals from diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Considering that the United States is increasingly becoming home to growing immigrant and international populations, better preparing students with cross-cultural communication skills seems to be a necessary and valuable aspect of a student’s educational development. Furthermore, the larger socio-political conflicts occurring among nations across the globe demands that international and American students be better equipped with cultural and communication skills that are needed to assist them in solving real world social problems.

If international and American graduate students attend U.S. higher education institutions with only the goal of acquiring academic training and getting the U.S. credential, then they are not fully being prepared with skills that they might need to work with each other in the future. Being prepared with socio-cultural skills allows one to engage in social interactions with diverse groups which is also an essential part of a student’s educational development. Such skills assist students in getting to know social and cultural practices that are linked to individuals of different
nationalities. This is important for learning effective ways to interact and communicate with culturally distinct individuals who one might come into contact with in future situations. If international and American graduate students are not actively engaging in social interactions, then they are also not acquiring skills that can assist them in being more culturally sensitive and open to foreign differences. Limited cross-cultural communication skills hinder a person’s openness, interests and willingness to know individuals that are from different national and cultural backgrounds.

*Enhancing Future Global Economic Relations*

The increasing global economic links between the United States and other nations demands that international and American students engage in social interaction while studying at U.S. higher education institutions. U.S. business relations, especially with East and South Asian nations, is continuing to expand and requires internationals and Americans to develop socio-cultural skills that can lead to successful global economic relations. Within the context of a University setting, social interactions between diverse students is an important way in which students can develop such skills. If international graduate students are socially interacting with co-nationals and other internationals, then this may not be a positive sign about the types of global economic relations foreign nations might be headed towards vis-à-vis the United States in the future.

If internationals are primarily establishing social connections with other internationals, and not with Americans, this can impact their future business decisions and global relationships. Since international students are forming social solidarities with other foreign students, this social pattern might transfer into the types of global economic relations that they will choose to participate in as well. Depending on how strong a social connection they establish with other
international students at the institution, they might also choose to maintain such social contact after completing their degrees and returning to their home countries. The strength of the relationships they create in a U.S. higher education setting with other internationals is important to consider in relation to their choices for future global economic ties.

**Gaining Cross-Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity**

In relation to establishing global connections, U.S. higher education institutions, along with international and American graduate students’ inability to engage in social interactions within a University setting, hinder the formation of “global villages.” From socially interacting with diverse nationality groups, students often acquire information about socio-cultural traditions as well as norms and values associated with each others’ cultures. By attending a U.S. university, internationals and Americans are given opportunities to move beyond superficial stereotypes and prejudices and to learn more about each others’ cultural backgrounds. When students engage in social interactions and develop friendships, they gather knowledge about each other which can make them sensitive to cultural differences.

When international and American students do not engage in social interactions, they are limited from accessing cross-cultural knowledge and developing cultural sensitivity. These are important factors that contribute in shaping the formation of social and cultural capital which may later be converted into economic capital. Individuals need to be knowledgeable and open to differences in order to develop a sense of belonging to a global community. Universal ideas about forming global connections and networks will only remain a set of theoretical ideas if social opportunities are not taken advantage of by engaging in cross-cultural social interactions. The U.S. higher education milieu is the perfect place to transform the ideal of a “global village” into a practical goal. Thus, in order for global solidarity to be achievable, it is crucial that U.S.
colleges and universities, as well as international and American graduate students, begin to work on ways to effectively engage in cross-cultural exchanges and meaningful social interactions.

III. A Critique of U.S. Higher Education Institutions as Formal Organizational Structures

International graduate students’ social tendencies within the context of a U.S. higher education institution will undoubtedly have an impact on their broader global social relations in the future. Meyer and Rowan (1977) contend that formal organizations such as educational institutions operate based on rationalized ideals conveyed within the broader context of a society. In relation to U.S. higher education institutions, such organizations operate as rationalized formal structures that promote an institutional culture that is chiefly responsible for preparing students with academic and technical knowledge to function in the larger global society.

As a formal organizational structure, Mid-Atlantic University seems to perpetuate academic knowledge acquisition as the principal aim of its institutional culture. Cosmopolitan ideals are implied to be part of the overall mission of the university, yet the necessary steps to integrate such ideals into the organizational culture of the institution are not implemented. The results of this study suggest that in the case of Mid-Atlantic University, the rationalized formal structure of the institution needs to be reconfigured or re-engineered in order to ensure that cosmopolitan ideals are operationalized and put into practice. This study calls for a transformation of the international culture of American colleges and universities to highlight the need for cosmopolitan ideals involving stronger international awareness and commitment to cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions among students from different nations. If U.S. colleges and universities hope to achieve cosmopolitan ideals and expect to impact broader
global changes, such as building cross-national relations and global solidarities, universities must recognize and promote internationalization as part of the institutional culture. The recommendations put forth in Chapter 8 offer some strategies in which to reshape the institutional culture of Mid-Atlantic University.

The need to internationalize U.S. higher education institutions is not a recent phenomenon. Based on research conducted by the American Council on Education, Green (2002) reports that following World War II and the Cold War, talks emerged to improve U.S. educational environments in terms of better preparing undergraduate students with diverse knowledge and skills to work and function in multicultural settings. The expansion of globalization, and more recently the September 11th 2001 terrorist attack in the United States, calls for higher education institutions to take more active steps to integrate internationalization ideals into the culture of American colleges and universities. Especially in relation to globalization, a number of scholars call attention to the need for U.S. higher education institutions to construct organizational habits which encourage all students to engage in cross-cultural exchanges as well as the formation of diverse social networks and friendships (Currie & Newson, 1998; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000; Green, 2003).

Green (2003) also contends that U.S. higher education institutions are barriers to internationalization. Moreover, she states that, “Barriers can be institutional in nature, caused by policies, practices, and traditions, or they can be individual, resulting from faculty and student attitudes” (Green, 2003, p. 11-12; also, see Ellingboe, 1998). U.S. colleges and universities often do not actively pursue and practice internationalization ideals to the extent that they become embedded into the institutional culture. Thus, Green (2003) puts forth a number of recommendations concerning how American universities can work on integrating a climate of
internationalization as part of their institutional culture. Her recommendations can also be applied within the context of Mid-Atlantic University in order to improve its current institutional culture.

Green (2003) suggests that the following strategies must be carried out to achieve internationalization on U.S. higher education college campuses:

- Successful internationalization can only occur with strong institutional leadership that consistently promote, communicate widely and accumulate resources to support campus diversity initiatives
- Limiting the formation of barriers to internationalization by providing incentives, creating development opportunities to prepare faculty and students with international skills, and working with administrative governing bodies to shape multicultural course and curriculum development
- Changing attitudes and shaping cosmopolitan thinking can also be facilitated through creating communication opportunities, spaces to know outsiders and creating departmental workshops
- Support structures at universities need to open up lines of communication across departments, colleges and offices in order for cross-collaboration and partnerships to occur and to achieve internationalization goals

(Green, 2003)

Such recommendations offer valuable insights into ways in which U.S. colleges and universities can initiate internationalization into the institutional culture. If implemented, such recommendations have the potential to maximize the students’ cultural and social capital accumulation.

Similarly, Leach & Zepke (2005) propose ideas to improve student outcomes within the context of higher education settings. They maintain that rather than expecting students to assimilate or acculturate into the existing culture of the institution, the institution should integrate and adapt to the culture of the students. According to Leach & Zepke (2005), “students should maintain their identity in their culture of origin, retain their social networks outside the
institution, have their cultural capital valued by the institution and experience learning that fits with their preferences” (p. 54). By integrating and adapting the institutional culture to reflect the diversity of its students, the authors suggest that institutional changes are more likely to take place on a college campus in terms of students gaining capital resources from each other.

The proposal put forth by Green (2003) and Leach & Zepke (2005) represent some additional steps which can be carried out within the context of U.S. higher education institutions to transform rationalize organizational habits that primarily promote the aims of academic productivity so that they incorporate the ideals of cosmopolitan diversity as well. The spread of globalization and the increase in anti-American ideologies since 9/11 demand that the culture of American colleges and universities be changed to reflect a culture of internationalization. The recommendations made in Chapter 8, along with those proposed in this chapter, offer key strategies to assist universities such as Mid-Atlantic University in achieving cosmopolitan diversity goals, which can result in international and American students engaging in cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions.

IV. Conclusion

In closing, this study provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for explaining international graduate students’ social interactions and cultural identity development process within the context of a U.S. higher education institution. The theoretical model was constructed based on my analysis of the qualitative data collected from conducting this study. In relation to the theoretical model and feedback loop, the study revealed that the Self-Segregators brought embodied forms of cultural capital with them to the institution, which reinforced their essentialized cultural identity. Within the institutional context, the students’ cultural identity led them to engage in positive social interactions with other co-nationals, which increased their
social capital through the establishment of friendships and resources acquired from closed social networks. The socio-cultural resources acquired from other co-nationals contributed in reinforcing the international graduate students’ sense of cultural identity, while in the process they engaged in othering American and international students from different national and cultural backgrounds.

While these students self-segregated by socially interacting only with co-nationals, the findings also demonstrate that the Exclusive Global Mixers engaged in social interactions with co-nationals and other international students more broadly. The social interaction tendencies of the Exclusive Global Mixers were broken down even further into Ethnic Global Mixing and International Global Mixing. The Ethnic Global Mixers are internationals who had a tendency to socially interact with co-national and ethnically similar internationals, while the International Global Mixers are internationals that were more inclined to socially interact with co-nationals and a range of other internationals.

Taking into account the institutional setting (such as cultural activities, access to nationality clubs, spaces for internationals to connect) and the cultural capital brought to the institution, both groups of international graduate students accumulated socio-cultural capital resources from engaging in positive social relations with other international students, which resulted in the development of either essentialized or hybrid identities inclusive of internationals, yet exclusive of Americans. While the Exclusive Global Mixers forged social solidarities with other international students, such global mixing was predicated upon the “othering” of American students. Both levels of segregation can be understood as involving voluntary acts (based on the strength that they attach to their cultural capital) and involuntary acts (based on a number of
factors related to the institution’s structural composition and its responsibilities to facilitate socio-cultural diversity).

The Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers both enhanced the quality of social capital resources that they accumulated by developing strong support systems. They capitalized culturally and socially from investing in smaller-group social networks composed of co-nationals and other internationals. Moreover, by self-limiting their social groups, they deepened cultural capital and formed stronger social networks. However, by not engaging in social interactions with Americans and internationals in the first case, and by excluding only Americans among the latter, the Self-Segregators and Exclusive Global Mixers decreased their total “potential” cultural and social capital resources. From a cosmopolitan perspective, the limiting of oneself to specific social interactions prevented these students from gaining a full academic and social experience that could have enhanced their overall education.

The actions of international graduate students who included host Americans in their social practices while attending the predominantly white Mid-Atlantic University can also be explained using the model. The Inclusive Global Mixers had a tendency to socially interact with co-nationals, internationals and host American nationals (white and minority groups). This group engaged in positive social interactions with all groups of students and thereby accumulated social capital resources from a variety of American and international sources. They not only acquired socio-cultural resources in the form of the U.S. credential, but they also gained information about the social and cultural norms associated with different groups, which allowed them to engage in better relations with a diverse array of people. From a cosmopolitan stance, the group dynamics of these international graduate students represent the ideal model for cross-cultural exchanges and meaningful social interactions.
Positive social interactions encouraged further investments in social relations with the expected return of redefining one’s essentialized cultural identity to a stronger hybridized/pan-national identity. Unlike the Self-Segregators who engaged in an exclusive othering process of outsiders, Inclusive Global Mixers recognized national and cultural differences across different groups, but they still established cross-national group solidarities with a variety of individuals. They othered students that were different from them in terms of national and cultural background, but they did not necessarily engage in negative othering. The Inclusive Global Mixers actually viewed those Others through a positive lens of difference.

Lastly, the Host Interactors socially interacted primarily with American students and co-nationals. Their cultural capital played a distinct role in assuring this group of international students of their national and cultural identity; however, they were still able to invest in social interactions with Americans because they saw them as important agents of social and cultural capital resources. By investing in friendships with Americans, they gained returns in terms of learning about American culture. Such social investments shifted the Host Interactors’ essentialized cultural identity to one that was more “bicultural” rather than pan-national (Valentine, 1971, p. 133). Participating in positive social interaction with American and co-national students reshaped the Host Interactors’ identity to be more integrative of two distinct cultures. Similar to the Inclusive Global Mixers, they recognized the distinctions between themselves and Americans and were aware of Americans as an Other, but they capitalized on such differences to the extent of wanting to be able to move socially and culturally at ease between their own culture and the American culture.

The act of only socially interacting with Americans was a voluntary action on the part of this group of international graduate students who wanted to gain socio-cultural resources from
attending a U.S. university. Additionally, the institution’s inability to have a sufficient number of students from a particular country/region, along with the diversity of the student body at the department level, are factors that were considered in relation to these students’ social practices. The exclusion of other East and South Asian internationals from a voluntary and involuntary perspective also raised concerns that these students limited their accumulation of socio-cultural resources from a myriad of sources by not diversifying their academic and social experiences while studying at the University.

The theoretical explanation that is linked to the empirical data in this study contributes to the cultural and social capital literature by demonstrating that a marginalized group—i.e., international graduate students on a college campus—has agency in defining their own forms of what constitutes a legitimate culture. Moreover, the findings illustrate that the marginalized or subculture group on a U.S. college campus also has the ability to define dominant and other marginalized groups as an “other.” Within the context of a U.S. higher education institution, the study essentially draws attention to the importance of moving beyond examining cultural and social capital as a uni-directional process in which the marginalized group attempts to adopt the socio-cultural resources and practices of a dominant group.

Additionally, the findings reveal that, as a subculture group at Mid-Atlantic University, international graduate students define cultural and social capital in their own way to the extent that they do not necessarily assimilate/acculturate to accept the white American norms, values and traditions that are embedded as part of the organizational habitus of the institution. Moreover, the University’s efforts to foster diversity, which reflected limited attempts to achieve cosmopolitan ideals on the campus, perpetuated segregated social routines among the student
body. Thus, most international graduate students, with the exception of the Inclusive Global Mixer, also fell into similar social segregation practices.

Taking a normative cosmopolitan stance, this study demonstrates that international graduate students do not necessarily have to assimilate/acculturate into American culture to successfully achieve a goal involving diverse social interactions and cross-cultural exchanges. However, within the context of a U.S. higher education institution, international and American students must be proactive in seeking diverse social relationships and must be willing to take advantage of all potential opportunities to accumulate cultural and social capital resources. Both international and American students need to be encouraged to be open to building social relationships with host nationals, co-nationals and other international students attending a U.S. college or university. U.S. higher education institutions must also actively work on reforming their organizational habitus to reflect and operationalize cosmopolitan ideals in order for all students to want to engage socially with each other.

The social interaction patterns that international graduate students engage in within the context of a U.S. higher education institution undoubtedly have an impact on their broader global social relations in the future. Since the University operates as a microcosm of the larger global context, the ways in which students function socially inside its walls is a direct reflection of their future social choices and behaviors in the larger global society. If international and American students, along with the University, do not work together to achieve cosmopolitan goals, then all parties involved will be at some disadvantage with respect to working and functioning together socially at the individual and global scale. Thus, this study also draws attention to some of the larger issues relating to future U.S./foreign relations that are likely to occur if international and American graduate students continue to engage in limited social interactions.
To conclude, this project critically examines international graduate students’ social interaction tendencies on a specific U.S. higher educational setting. However, over the course of conducting the study and analyzing the data, new ideas arose about its future directions. To begin with, the future direction of this study involves expanding it to include a comparative analysis of Mid-Atlantic University with other U.S. colleges and universities with similar characteristics. Such a comparative study of a variety of universities with a significant number of international graduate students is needed in order to determine if similar or different social patterns are formed across other U.S. higher education institutions. Additionally, quantitative approaches would also be useful in assessing issues relating to the effect that size and the numbers of international students present at an institution might have on students’ social practices.

Another area of research worth pursuing involves reexamining the issue of structural diversity at U.S. higher education institutions in relation to international graduate students. More specifically, the structural diversity of American colleges and universities needs to be assessed not only in terms of increasing the total number of international students that are present at an institution. It is equally important to expand the composition and relative proportion of countries represented. Future studies should develop more sophisticated metrics for measuring structural diversity. Lastly, the issues identified in this study suggest that diversity policies that are established and implemented within U.S. colleges and universities need to take into consideration international and American students’ cultural differences and perceptions if effective strategies are to be constructed to initiate cross-cultural exchanges and social interactions. The study offers new directions for improving U.S. higher education institutions’ current diversity policies. Thus, it is hoped that the current study will stimulate future research.
that seeks to create more effective diversity initiatives which will foster cross-cultural social interactions among all students.
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Residence:
4. Date of Interview:
5. Time spent/lived in the U.S.:
6. Years at University:
7. Gender:
8. Occupation:
9. Telephone Number:
10. Country of Birth:
11. Department:
12. Marital Status:
13. Nationality Club/Gatekeeper/Poster Advertisement:
14. Request Copy of Final Dissertation:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Can you tell me where you were born? And which country have you spent most of your life in? Also what other countries have you traveled to or spent time in over the course of your life so far?

2. Can you tell me about your life in the Mid-Atlantic area? How do you spend your time?

3. What was your first impression of Mid-Atlantic University (or the Mid-Atlantic area)?

4. How was it different than what you had expected? Did anything in particular surprise you?

5. Do you think that you have changed as a person since arriving to Mid-Atlantic University? How have you changed? Explain why you feel you have changed or why you have not changed?

6. Do you think you now make different choices about who to interact with since coming to Mid-Atlantic University? If so, explain why you now make different choice OR If not, why you do not feel you make different choices now?

7. Who do you usually socially interact i.e. spend leisure time and have “meaningful interactions” with at Mid-Atlantic University? Which groups of people do you usually hang-out with the most? And explain why?

8. Do you socialize mainly with other international students from the same region or country as yourself? (i.e. Europe, Africa, Middle East, Latin America, India, China) Can you tell me why you do OR why you do not socialize with other international students?

9. Do you socialize with other international students in general? Why?

10. Would you say that you socialize more with other White American students at Mid-Atlantic University? Explain why or why not?

11. What about other minority students at Mid-Atlantic (i.e. African Americans, Hispanics etc.), do you ever socialize with them? Explain why or why not?

12. Are the people you socialize with mainly from within your department or outside of your department? Can you describe the people you socialize with inside or outside the department? Why do you socialize more with people either inside or outside of your department?

13. How diverse i.e. how many international and minority groups are represented in your department? Are there a lot of international and minority students in your department?
14. Would you say the majority students in your department are international students from the same region or country as yourself? Or Is the majority international students as a whole? Or is the majority American “White” students? Are there any minority American students in your department as well? Explain why you feel your department has more or less of one group over another?

15. How often do you socialize with the group that you do say you hang out with the most? How much time would you say you spend with that particular group? and why?

16. What do you do when you get together? Describe the types of activities you attend? Why are these activities so important to you? Are they specific to your culture or ethnic background?

17. Who do you eat lunch/dinner with on a regular basis? Or share meals with during the week and weekend? Why or why not?

18. Are there specific places where international students congregate (i.e. student union, student organizations, sport events etc.) with each other or mix with each other a lot on campus? Can you name a few and explain why these places are so important to international students? Do you personally go to these places as well? Explain why or why not?

19. Have you ever had any experiences where you think cultural differences have been an obstacle to you interacting with U.S. students? Can you explain why?

20. Have you ever had any experiences where you think cultural differences have been an obstacle to you interacting with other international students from other countries? Explain why or why not?

21. Do you think U.S. students, specifically “White” American students are more or less hesitant to interact with you? Why or why not?

22. What about minority American students, are they also more or less hesitant to interact with you? Why or why not?

23. Do you know anything about the University’s diversity policies or plans? If yes, what do you know? If no, why not?

24. Would you say that Mid-Atlantic University is a diverse university i.e. in terms of international and minority students? Why or why not?

25. Do you think the university tries to get international students and the majority White student body to socialize? If no, why? Or If yes, why and describe how?

26. Do you think the university tries to get international students to socialize with other minority Americans of different race/ethnicity? Why or why not?
27. Do you think you as an international student tend YOU to socialize with other international students like yourself from the same region more rather than with other white American or minority students more? If yes, why? If no, why?

28. Do you think other international students like yourself tend to socially interact together a lot more? If yes, why do you think this is the case?

29. What types of international students would you say tend to socialize together? And why this group or groups in particular?

30. Can you describe any personal experiences in which you think the university has not made any attempt to get you to interact with other U.S. students?

31. Do you think that this university does enough to encourage international students and the white majority American students to socialize outside the classroom? If no, why, Or If yes, how?

32. Do you feel “at home” here at Mid-Atlantic? If no, why?, Or If yes, why?

33. Do the people you socialize with make you feel more “at home” here at Mid-Atlantic? Why? Who are they?

34. Is there anything that makes you feel you belong here? What makes you feel separated from other students?

35. Do you tend to socialize with other international students because they share things in common with you? Can you describe those things you think you share in common and explain why these things are important?

36. Has the September 11th terrorist affected you in anywhere, specifically can you describe how it has impacted you in terms of who you chose to socialize with? Explain why you feel this way?

37. Do you think the September 11th terrorist attack has affected international student life here at Mid-Atlantic? How? And explain why?

38. How would you make Mid-Atlantic University more diverse?

39. How would you get international students like yourself to socialize with more American students?

40. What would you do to get American students to socialize more with international students?

41. Do you personal feel you make an effort to socialize with more American students? Why or why not?
42. What do you think needs to be done to increase socialization on the Mid-Atlantic campus?

43. Do you think international students tend to make more of an effort to socialize with the majority American student body? Or do you think American students make a stronger effort to socialize with international students. Explain why or why not?
APPENDIX B: INTERACTION CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Type of Meeting</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time Period Spent with Individual</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLE: White American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Advisee Meeting</td>
<td>Professor’s Office</td>
<td>9:00am to 10:00am</td>
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