AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CONVERSATION-BASED,
PEER-FACILITATED DIVERSITY EDUCATION

A Thesis in
Sociology

By
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Abstract

With increases in minority enrollment to college over the past fifty years, universities have instituted a variety of programs to educate their student populations on issues of diversity and race relations. Many such programs incorporate teaching and lectures on social justice combined with dynamic, inter-race group dialog. The Race Relations Project employed by the Pennsylvania State University, however, utilizes a strategy of small group, peer-facilitated conversation without a lectured social justice component. By focusing on dialog between peers centered on personal issues of race relations, the program attempts to bridge gaps between racial groups and increase mutual and self understanding while avoiding debates on public policy.

This study is an exploratory first step at understanding this diversity programming style focusing both on the process used to conduct programming and the outcomes the program produce. In a two year study, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to understand and contextualize this program and explore its impact on students. While results varied based on year in college and gender, the program was shown to have an impact on students’ positive associations with race relations, increasing their comfort discussing race related issues, and in promoting participation in race-related dialogs.
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Chapter I. Introduction

In 2001, as an undergraduate student of Pennsylvania State University I was approached by Dr. Samuel Richards and Dr. Laurie Mulvey to work on a newly developed diversity intervention program, the Race Relations Project (RRP). I was recruited for this position because of my experience facilitating group discussions as a part of Richards’ general education Race and Ethnic Relations course. For the next two years, I facilitated group dialogues among groups of students for the RRP before graduating with my bachelor’s degree in Political Science and Philosophy in 2003. In 2004 I returned to Penn State to work on my M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology, which provided me with the opportunity to work with the RRP in a different capacity. Richards and I decided that a more serious research effort was required to understand the impact of the RRP on students. Richards was curious to learn whether this program was truly influencing students’ attitudes toward race and what meaning it had for the students who participated. Having invested time into the project as well, I too held the same curiosities.

I spent the next two years conducting this case study. In this time I had unrestricted, hands-on access to the RRP and was a participant in group meetings, observed RRP interventions, held in-depth interviews with program facilitators and co-directors, and administered surveys and interviews to RRP participants. Admittedly, I had some expectations revisiting the project two years after last facilitating, all of which were soon challenged. The program had gone through many changes and it is this program, at the time of this study, I am evaluating. While I had close ties with the
program, the dangers of researcher bias were addressed and checked at every step in this process. I set out to gain a better understanding of what occurs in these groups and have gone to great lengths to verify the validity of this work – from incorporating a variety of research methods to employing additional researchers. In the end, I feel this study represents a detailed and an objective look into this program and its diversity intervention philosophy.

**Literature Review**

Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, administrators at college campuses and universities across the United States have sought to increase the enrollment of minority students in higher education. Continuing today through formalized affirmative action and minority recruitment efforts, colleges are making efforts to increase diversity on their campuses. As diversity increased, research found many benefits, both educationally and socially, of having a diverse student body (Terenzini, et al., 2001). Interaction with diverse peers has been shown to increase educational satisfaction and student confidence (Chang, 1999), positive learning outcomes, active thinking and intellectual engagement (Gurin, et al. 2002), political involvement (Gurin, et al. 2004), minority retention rates, civic involvement, job satisfaction (Bowen and Bok, 1998), comfort in diverse situations (Duncan, et al. 2003) and openness to diversity and challenge (Pascarella, et al. 1996). For these benefits to take place, research has shown that meaningful opportunities for intergroup interactions were required in addition to structural (racial composition on campus) and classroom (curricular) diversity (Gurin, et al 2002). While political debates continue on the legality of affirmative action policies, the feeling that diversity is of value
to higher education institutions and their students continues (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000).

The theory that interaction between people of different races can have positive social outcomes follows the thread of the contact hypothesis first presented by Allport (1954) who claimed that positive effects of inter-group contact do occur under four conditions: 1) equal status during the contact, 2) common goals, 3) inter-group cooperation and 4) support and promotion of authorities or the institution\(^1\). When inter-race interaction included these conditions racial attitudes were improved. However, Allport’s analysis added little insight on the process of positive intergroup interaction (Pettigrew 1998). Also, some have argued that the “situation” presented in Allport’s analysis introduces self-selection, in that those who put themselves in positions of racial diversity are more inclined to allow for positive change to take place, thus limiting the generalization of the contact’s effect (Pettigrew 1998). Pettigrew’s reassessment of the contact hypothesis went on to add that, “four interrelated processes underlie contact effects: learning about the out-group, changing behavior, generating affective ties and in-group reappraisal. Inter-group friendship has strong positive effects, because it potentially entails all four processes” (Pettigrew 1998, pg 80).

However, despite the many positive outcomes attributed to increased diversity on campus, research has also shown that increased diversity has sometimes also brought increased tension, segregation, and misunderstanding between racial groups on campus.

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\(^1\) The latter three of these conditions are the easiest to define: common goals include a situation where members of different races are striving toward the same purpose (and not at odds), inter-group cooperation involves input and leadership from members of all races in the group, and support from authorities and institution means that whatever body is promoting the meeting does so in a way that emphasizes the value of the meeting in a positive way. The first condition, that of “equal status” in a situation or meeting, may be more difficult and its definition may vary between races and, as such, meeting this condition proves to be the most difficult in setting up a situation where racial diversity can provide positive outcomes (Robinson & Preston, 1976).
To begin, the majority of White students feel apathetic towards issues of race (Baxter, 1997) and, at times, even rebellious toward the idea of diversity (Ervin, 2001). This dynamic, coupled with the burden that students of color (particularly African Americans) feel in being “forced” to teach Whites about diversity leads to an obvious hurdle for mutual understanding (Cage 1995, Ervin 2001). In addition, as the focus of these two studies inadvertently shows, non-Black minorities feel ignored and left out of the discussion that is all too often argued in terms of Black and White (Magner, 1993). This considered, it is not surprising that the majority of undergraduates of all races have a reluctance to discuss race-related topics and demonstrate an overall skepticism toward the effectiveness of diversity interventions (Levine & Crureton, 1998A, 1998b).

Understandably, campus segregation has increased and so, too, has students’ desire to remain in racially homogeneous social circles (Astin, 1993a; Levine & Curton, 1998a, 1998b). Ironically, students recognize the problems of interracial interactions as well as the fact that the steps required for correcting these problems are their responsibility, yet the situation has not improved (Fisher & Hartmann, 1995).

Universities have instituted a variety of diversity classes and courses to address these concerns. However, these courses have been shown to be important not necessarily in promoting positive intergroup relationships, but rather in stemming negativity between groups. One study found that race and ethnicity courses did not increase positivity or tolerance but rather prevented the student from becoming less tolerant, as was the case for students who did not participate in the course (Hendson-King & Kaleta, 2000). Simply put, this study showed that college students in fact become less tolerant over time unless this trend is halted by a course on race and ethnicity.
To have a more meaningful effect, research has shown that learning about race relations and race issues should also take place outside of the classroom by students engaging in meaningful social interactions, especially between racially diverse peers (Gurin, et al. 2002 & Gurin, et al. 2003). This has spurred a new sort of effort to increase harmony between races in the form of diversity intervention programs. Research on specific programs is scarce. One study, condensing programs from multiple universities (including the University of Michigan, University of Massachusetts, Arizona State University, University of Maryland, College Park), found this basic trend:

Generally, these intergroup dialogue programs bring together diverse groups of students to engage in discussion of issues related to their diversity, broadly conceptualized; for example, on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. The purpose of intergroup dialogue is to enable participants to develop comfort with, and skill for, discourse on difficult topics towards the end of fostering positive, meaningful, and sustained cross-group relationships. More specifically, intergroup dialogues typically bring together two groups of 8-10 participants each, 16-20 total, representing two discrete identity groups, for two to three hours, once a week, over the course of several weeks to discuss the issues between, and forge friendships among, the groups. Two facilitators, one from each of the two groups represented in a given intergroup dialogue, co-facilitate (Clark, 2002).

These programs, while focusing on discussion between members of different racial groups, generally do so by addressing broader topics of social justice (Clark, 2002). Programs of this type not only bring students together but emphasize student learning through the use of dialogue. In one study, these programs were described as, “a forum for members of differing social identity groups to meet face to face to discuss the nature of their relationship to each other historically and in the present day” (Alimo, et al. 2002, pg 49 – 50). As an example, one particular program, the Intergroup Dialogue Program (IDP) at the University of Maryland at College Park, involved meeting as a group over the course of a semester with trained graduate students or faculty facilitating conversation.
which allowed for four stages of group development to occur: group beginnings (where students get to know each other through the discussion of light topics), exploring differences and commonalities of experience (focusing on oppression, dominance and social constructs), exploring dialogue about issues of conflict (hot topics such as affirmative action), and lastly, action planning and alliance building. Consistent with the previous research, this qualitative study found that the sharing of personal stories guided in facilitated conversation helped develop critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding (Alimo, et al 2002).

Facilitated dialogue has not only been useful in changing attitudes on race through diversity education but more famously by the group Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in changing attitudes and behaviors by alcohol substance abusers. While the focus of the program differs (alcoholism rather than race relations) and AA is focused around a central problem (or disease) commonly shared among the group, parallels can be drawn. Both programs use a similar style of facilitated conversation to gain positive group results. As Schwartz states, “the one to two hours of personal testimonials from three to six AA members who are called on more or less at random to speak about their lives with alcohol and experiences with the AA… are the heart and soul of the open meetings” (1992). The sharing of personal stories through facilitated conversation has been effective in rehabilitating alcoholics by de-labeling and re-labeling stigmatized individuals’ concept of self, alcohol and their place in the world (Trice & Roman, 1970). The power of these conversations can even have the effect of creating a new identity while moving past a prior identity (Cain, 1991). For some, being the member of an AA group can be a life-changing and life-defining event. To do this, AA employs a strict set
of rituals in addition to the conversation, but, as most research has shown, the conversation among peers and the sharing of personal experiences remain the most vital part of the AA program (Cain, 1991, Schwartz, 1992, Trice & Roman, 1970).

In terms of the IDP programs that address race rather than alcohol, there is one vital difference from the approach used to facilitate conversation by AA: the use of peer-facilitation. AA does not use psychologists, counselors or “experts” on alcoholism who had not been alcoholics themselves to conduct their discussion groups. Rather, former alcoholics, peers, lead discussions, and it is this use of peer-facilitation that drives the success of AA programs (Cain 1991). Would peer-facilitation, as opposed to “expert” (professional, professorial or graduate student) facilitation or teaching, have a positive impact where race is the focus?

Few studies have set out to compare these two conditions – one of peer facilitation and the other of expert facilitation/teaching – in terms of diversity education. Approaching this, the work of Nagada, Kim and Truelove (2004) set out to determine the different effects of enlightenment (lectures, readings, and expert opinion) versus that of encounter (intergroup dialogue). Their theory was that students respond differently to expert knowledge than they do to conversations amongst their peers, both being beneficial but in different ways. One study surveyed social welfare students involved in a course that incorporated both approaches to learning to try to determine the effects and impact of each approach. While this study is limited and specific to this case (i.e., a specific course involving both styles simultaneously) one relevant conclusion reached was:

Even though content-based [enlightenment] learning may emphasize the importance of undoing prejudice and discrimination, it may reach
students only at an abstract level. The encounter-based learning, on the other hand, had wider influence on the outcomes because the issues of prejudice and discrimination are personalized in the intergroup dialogues, both in terms of how they apply to the individual students’ own experiences and also their classmates’ experiences. The participatory, face-to-face learning can evoke empathetic relations among peers. As students listen to their peers’ first-person narratives, and come to better appreciate the impact of prejudice and discrimination on people that they know, they may feel more compelled to promote diversity and interrupt others’ prejudices. (Nagda, et al. 2004, pg 209).

If peer-facilitated conversation has been shown to have effects on racial attitude in the absence of expert knowledge or enlightenment, is the inclusion of an overarching social justice theme necessary to the goal of building tighter bonds between diverse student groups and lessening campus racial tension? What exactly is necessary in an intervention to create positive effects in being open to diversity?

Conducting research on college students, a study by Whitt, et al, found that seven main factors had significant positive effects on openness to diversity among college students. These were (1) age, (2) sex, (3) pre-college openness, (4) participation in a racial or cultural awareness workshop, (5) diverse student acquaintances, (6) conversations with other students in which different ways of thinking were introduced, and (7) perceptions of a nondiscriminatory racial environment at the institution (2001). For those factors that occur before the student enters college, (1) being older, (2) being female and a (3) positive predisposition to diversity and being challenged all had positive outcomes on openness to diversity (Whitt, et al, 2001; Levine & Cureton, 1998a; Springer et al, 1996). The literature on (4) participation in a diversity workshops, is also conclusive, in that participation in such programs has positive effects on openness in racial attitudes (Alimo 2002, Clark 2002, Astin, 1993). As stated earlier, much attention has been directed toward examining whether (5) students in diverse environments,
receive added benefits from their exposure to other races and additional educational benefits (Terenzini, et al., 2001, Chang, 1999, Gurin, et al. 2002, Gurin, et al. 2004, Duncan, et al. 2003, Pascarella, et al. 1996, Bowen and Bok, 1998). Mission statements of many colleges allude to the importance of interaction with a diverse population of students (Bowen & Bok, 1998). In addition, these interactions were found beneficial in many ways, one of which was improving students’ multicultural competence (Whitt, et al., 2001). Other work has also noted the importance of peer interaction specifically on the growth and development of opinions that can have lasting effects over the life course (Astin, 1993; Baxter 1997; Whitt, et al, 1999; Pascarella, et al, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Specifically, it has been shown that instances of peer tutoring, peer teaching, and being involved in discussions on race with peers have had positive effects on racial attitudes (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, et al, 1996; Baxter 1997; Pascarella et al, 1996; Whitt, et al, 1999). Providing a diversity intervention program also sends a message to students that the university is concerned about diversity issues. It has been shown that an institution’s outlook on race and diversity (7) also has positive effects on a student’s openness to these issues (Astin, 1993).

With this evidence, it is not surprising that the research recommendations from this study included:

Providing a wide range of opportunities for engaging in meaningful interaction with diverse peers on topics that challenge previously held beliefs and ideas… [In fact] the critical role of peer influences on learning demonstrated in this and other studies argues for incorporating peer interactions into institutional objectives, assessments, and decisions regarding diversity and challenge. (White, et al, 2001, pg 198, 200).

Continued racial tensions show that colleges still struggle to create safe spaces for inter-race interactions (Baxter, 1997). This becomes meaningful because providing
students with a forum to discuss race relations and learn about themselves within the context of a peer facilitated group theoretically would touch on most, if not all, of the factors that have been shown to produce positive effects on racial attitudes.

Purpose of this Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate a program that claims to increase students’ positive associations with race relations and diversity by providing a space for peer-facilitated conversation without the use of expert opinion: The Race Relations Project (RRP) at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State). More broadly, this investigation of a strictly peer-facilitated and conversation-based program will extend our knowledge on college diversity education programs that utilize facilitation.

Guided by two Penn State professors in the field of race, ethnicity and group dialogue, the RRP is comprised of a select group of trained undergraduate students who lead one-time, 90 minute Socratic-type conversations with their peers on the topic of race relations. The RRP claims to conduct these interventions without expert opinion or the use of teaching strategies to discuss diversity but, rather, through promoting student self exploration by way of conversation among peers on personal perspectives related to race relations. While utilizing facilitated discussion in race intervention groups may not be entirely new, it is worth exploring the effect of the RRP as a specific approach to conducting diversity programming, one that is strictly peer-facilitation and devoid of social justice content or expert opinion. Perhaps providing a social justice message through debate or expert testimony is not the best strategy for increasing positivity
toward race relations and attitudes. Perhaps conversations that are designed to increase openness, and nothing more, are also effective.

The nature of this research is largely exploratory as the effects of this specific program, and the implementation of its particular strategy, are unknown. However, it is hypothesized that peer-facilitated, conversation-based diversity interventions as implemented by the RRP will have a positive impact on students’ attitudes toward race relations. To address this hypothesis it will be necessary to answer two main research questions: (1) What is an RRP intervention? and (2) what effect does an RRP intervention have on student attitudes toward race and race relations?

**Research Outline**

While theories exist that would suggest this style of programming would have a positive effect on student attitudes toward race and race relations, no single framework exists to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs. Recently in program evaluation research, mixed-method designs utilizing both the quantitative and qualitative strategies have proven useful for gaining a rich understanding of both the effect of a program and the process the program followed to create the effect (McConney et al. 2002, Miller & Fredericks 2006, Chetterji 2005). It is imperative in evaluation research to understand both the process by which a program operates and the outcomes the program produces. Utilizing a mixed-method approach generates data that are superior at both discovering and explaining effect to any one method alone (Waysman & Savaya 1997, Clarke 1999, Chatterji 2005, Creswell & Plano Clark 2007, Miller & Fredericks 2006, McConney et al
2002). With the goal of understanding the process and outcomes of the RRP, the following research design was implemented:

**Chart 1. Research Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: Process</td>
<td>To understand the RRP facilitators' and directors' approach and philosophy toward race intervention.</td>
<td>Case study collecting data through observation of project meetings and interviews with facilitators and directors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1</td>
<td>To understand how the RRP conducts its race relations intervention.</td>
<td>Participant observation of RRP interventions and data collected from RRP facilitators on the content of RRP interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2</td>
<td>To understand if the RRP intervention has a measurable effect on students attitudes toward race relations.</td>
<td>Quasi-experimental implementation of a survey in a pre-test, post-test format analyzing data with OLS a scale that measure attitudes on race relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II: Outcomes</td>
<td>To further investigate and contextualize the impact of the RRP on student attitudes and how the program produces an effect.</td>
<td>Group interviews with students six months to one year after participating in the RRP.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To gain knowledge of the process of the RRP, a case study research design was constructed (Creswell, 1998). In open ended, exploratory, qualitative case studies, extensive efforts toward verification through triangulation of information are necessary to produce valid results (Nastasi & Schensul 2005, Creswell 2007). This was accomplished though observation of the project over of a two year period. Within this observation of the process, interviews were conducted with the RRP directors and facilitators to gain an understanding of the program’s philosophy. To examine the process of the RRP in terms
of the actual interventions, observation of programs was combined with focus groups of program facilitators to develop a quantitative survey to help define the content of an RRP intervention.

The explanatory research design in the second phase was used to gain knowledge of the outcomes of the program on students. First, impact on racial attitudes was measured through quasi-experimental survey design and analysis using OLS while second, deeper, contextual effects were measured through the use of in-depth group interviews. Again, investigating program outcomes by utilizing two different research methods will allow for triangulation of data and add validity to the findings more than any one method could alone (Creswell, 2007, Chatterji, 2005, Nastasi & Schensul 2005). In an explanatory design, combining qualitative interviews with a quasi-experimental design also increases depth of understanding of phenomena, and bridges gaps between effect and causality (Bryman, 2007, Creswell & Plano Clark 2007, Sandelowski, 2003, McConney, et al. 2002). While comparative experiments can discover a correlation or effect of a program on participants, they alone are insufficient to fully understanding a program because they fail to give an explanation of causality or attempts to understand the operation of the program itself (Miller & Fredericks 2006, McConney et al 2002). A combination of methods bringing together empirical evidence with substantive knowledge over a more extended period of time allows for uncovering a deeper understanding of the program and discovery of additional patterns to produce more encompassing results (Chatterji, 2005). Specifically, this design was developed to refine theories on causality and to create a situation where more inferences could be drawn
through a deeper understanding. As such, the results can be generalized beyond the surveyed group (Creswell, 2007).

In the sections that follow, a detailed look into each of these phases will build a deeper understanding of the philosophy of the project, the process of the intervention and its effect on students.
Chapter II. History and Overview of The Race Relations Project

“We seek to create an environment characterized by equal access and respected participation for all groups and individuals irrespective of cultural differences and, more importantly, where the multiplicity of characteristics possessed by persons are not simply tolerated but valued.”

-A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State

Overview

The RRP consists of co-directors, Dr. Samuel Richards and Dr. Laurie Mulvey, who employ a group of fifteen trained undergraduates to facilitate race dialogues at Penn State University. These interventions are one time, ninety-minute programs consisting of the two facilitators and seven to nine participants recruited through a variety of courses throughout the university. The goal of these programs is for the facilitators to begin and then guide a discussion on race relations by using a Socratic-type method of questioning instead of teaching or initiating a debate. Through the use of open-ended questioning, the RRP’s goal is to have participants learn about themselves through facilitated, focused conversations by sharing stories and personal experiences in a peer setting. The hypothesis is that this initial conversation will spark interest in topics of race relations, inform students that these conversations are beneficial and interesting and leave the students with a sense of positivity and empowerment toward discussing issues of race.

To fully learn the process of the RRP the following section will address the history of the project, recruitment and training of the facilitators, development of the project philosophy, recruitment of student participants, and the content of RRP interventions.
Method

The goal of this phase of the research is to first gain a comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of the RRP. In order to gain this understanding, it was necessary to conduct a case study through in-depth exposure to the project, the directors and the student facilitators. To plan, implement, and improve their diversity interventions, the members of the RRP (i.e. the student facilitators and the directors) meet weekly. Foremost among my research tools was full access to these weekly meetings and constant contact (both formally and informally) with the members of the project throughout the duration of the two years study. In this time I interviewed each facilitator, most multiple times, and held conferences with both directors Richards and Mulvey on a regular basis. While I often took notes, during less formal, everyday meetings notes were not taken. In addition, written memos, journaling and reflection were used throughout this process to keep record of themes and observations. Also, I had access to project resources, the project website (www.racerelationsproject.psu.edu) and an article in the process of publication by the directors that put into writing many of the ideas, philosophies and lessons the co-directors have learned from their work in diversity education.

A Brief History

Due to their experience with the topic of race and their hands-on approach to teaching race relations in the classroom, Richards and Mulvey were approached in 2001 to create a diversity education program to be used throughout the university. Now co-directors, Richards and Mulvey train undergraduates to conduct peer-facilitated,
conversation-based race interventions with their peers. This project is an extension of Richards’ Race and Ethnic Relations course (Sociology 119) that combines lectures and weekly peer-facilitated discussion groups to create a space for both lecture and small group learning.

In developing this program, Richards reflected upon his years as an instructor and Mulvey’s experiences in incorporating group discussion into the classroom and after some years of experimenting with different styles of programming came to the philosophy used by the program today (Richards and Mulvey, 2007). When RRP programs first began, teaching aids were used including videos, fact sheets and facilitators trained with a substantial knowledge on topics of race, diversity and oppression. Questions were posed for the students not only to discuss, but to debate. The thought was to create, in one meeting, some of the experiences of a fifteen-week course on race and ethnicity, complete with data, basic terms and facts that would (hopefully) inspire students to open their mind and change opinions. These debates included topics such as affirmative action, White guilt, the role of oppression, and a myriad of other controversial topics in the field of race/racism, diversity, inequality and ethnicity. Facilitators for the RRP were recruited directly from the teaching assistants of Richards’ Sociology 119 course and trained to conduct similar conversations as they had with their classmates, but now with a new group of students from a variety of classes throughout the university. These facilitators brought their knowledge from the classroom to a new group of students to challenge their beliefs and hold discussions on the topics of race.
Program Philosophy

As the program grew, Richards and Mulvey were beginning to see that their original approach to diversity intervention (condensing a course on race relations into an intervention) was not working the way they would have liked. A finding in much of the research on race intervention and the contact hypothesis was the existence of a selection bias in most racially diverse settings. Specifically, the students that voluntarily scheduled courses focusing on social justice and diversity issues (or participate in an intergroup dialogue) were the students that would most likely enjoy and benefit from such an experience (Allport, 1954, Pettigrew, 1998, Terrenzini, et al. 2001, Richards & Mulvey 2007). The RRP was beginning to conduct diversity programming to a large portion of the student population and, most notably, to segments of the population that were normally less inclined to voluntarily participate in race discussions, for example in the math and sciences (Whitt, et al. 2001). Richards stated, “There are plenty of students that want to learn about race and ethnicity, and they schedule my course or one of the other courses offered on the subject. What we wanted to do was reach everyone else because race affects their lives as well.”

However, this wasn’t always easy. Richards commented, “After a while it felt like we were running our heads into a wall. In fifteen weeks I can’t even reach all of my students, who chose to take my course knowing what it is about, and get them to understand the nature of oppression and racism, yet we were trying to do so in ninety-minutes.” After a series of discussion and examining their program as well as other diversity programs, Richards and Mulvey came to this conclusion:

If there is widespread consensus about the essential components of an effective anti-race program, the fundamentals are more or less as follows: Step one: Focus on White people. Step Two: Describe the
myriad ways race privilege operates invisibly in their lives. Step Three: Encourage people of color to provide personal stories of racism to inspire compassion among White people (contrition should be kept at the surface). Step Four: Convince White people to educate themselves about other cultures in their free time. Step Five: Remind participants to treat everyone they meet equally (while being mindful of the many ways they might offend those who are different) (Richards & Mulvey, 2007).

While these steps have a role within the larger issues of education on racism and oppression, when implemented in a one-time diversity education program, Richards and Mulvey found these tactics seemed to accomplish very little in terms of encouraging students to adopt less racist attitudes or to feel empowered to continue race dialogues with their peers. One particular interview with co-director Mulvey highlighted her frustration,

In the beginning, I definitely wanted students to know the facts, but, when facts were addressed, such as wage disparities between the races, students would become defensive. At best they would slip into a seemingly pre-scripted debate. At the end of ninety-minutes of this, were they better off? Maybe they learned a new fact, but often they hadn’t. In either case the student probably was not more inclined to feel comfortable around other races, or have an increase in a positive outlook toward talking about race in the future, especially for those students who felt shut down or told that they were wrong in the debate. These programs cater to and rely on people “getting it” and that’s not always the case.

Clearly, condensing a semester (or a lifetime) of “anti-racism” education into a one time, ninety-minute intervention was not the answer. Richards and Mulvey remember asking themselves, “If the goal of the program was to increase candidness between students, what role did debate on facts and issues have? Was there a better way?”

With this question, the co-directors decided to re-focus the program on what seemed to work best in bringing students together and in promoting positivity toward issues of race: conversations focusing on personal stories and experiences that promoted inter-group dialogue rather than a debate on political issues with alienating “right” and
“wrong” answers. According to Richards, “Today, the RRP is a space for students to begin to explore how they feel about race. We do not tell them how they feel, but rather, provide a space for them to discuss and discover for themselves their views and attitudes and feelings.”

After learning the difficulties of their original “teach and preach” philosophy of diversity education, Richards and Mulvey conceived a new plan for their RRP interventions. First, RRP groups would have no formally set educational, political or social agenda. As such, Richards and Mulvey felt that this goal would be met if RRP interventions focused mainly on discussing personal stories and experience of race and diversity. In making this shift, the RRP is not “agenda-less,” but it lacks a prevailing structure or set of specific diversity lessons that should be addressed. The goal of the program was to expand the conversation on race and increase positive attitudes toward race relations among the students and lessen racism and racial tension rather than to directly confront or challenge “oppression, inequality, or instances of social injustice.” As such, the RRP consisted of conversations between college students led by trained undergraduate students in race-facilitation instead of race experts. The facilitators were trained to lead a conversation and not to use statistics, give lectures or quote facts.

Facilitators

With this revised philosophy, facilitators would be required to handle the more difficult task of approaching race issues with a more general student population than those who voluntarily scheduled diversity education courses. According to Mulvey, this required asking questions on sensitive issues without appearing judgmental. Students
must be open and comfortable with their own issues as well as able to make others in the room feel comfortable. Richards and Mulvey understood that for students to become better facilitators they would need to be trained to conduct these interventions in a more rigorous way. As described on the projects Website, the process to becoming a facilitator is as follows:
THE RACE RELATIONS PROJECT (SOC 494B): is a paid internship that includes a weekly training seminar and project meeting. Undergraduate students who reach this level in the system have had extensive exposure to conversations about race relations and the study of group dialogue. Using the Socratic Method, these facilitators engage their peers across the university in small group conversations about race relations. The goal is not to teach or preach, but to provide the kind of environment where students can speak candidly to each other about their personal views and experiences. RRP facilitators are observed on a regular basis and participate in personal coaching sessions once a month to provide individualized and intensive training.

SOCIOLOGY 494A: is a secondary training course for undergraduate students transitioning from the role of teaching assistant for SOC 119 to paid facilitator for the RRP. This small class of 8-10 students is hand-selected to pursue further study of the dynamics of small group discussion in order to be eligible to audition for the RRP. For the first half of the semester, students observe, evaluate and discuss the RRP and are more directly trained to use the Socratic Method. During the second half of the semester, they audition to be a facilitator with the RRP.

SOCIOLOGY 300: is the primary training class for (32) students who have been selected to be undergraduate teaching assistants for SOC 119. Under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Mulvey, the teaching assistants participate in a weekly experiential training seminar while concurrently co-facilitating two weekly sections of SOC 119. During the seminar, the student facilitators explore group dynamics and facilitation techniques (such as the Socratic Method), as well as concerns, challenges and successes they are having with their own discussion groups. This forum creates a peer-to-peer learning dynamic for the teaching assistants which is meant to parallel and support their work in the SOC 119 discussion sections. Unlike SOC 119, SOC 300 shifts the focus from understanding the sociology of race relations, to active engagement in the process of helping others to find their own voice in the dialogue.

SOCIOLOGY 119: Race and Ethnic Relations, explores the historical patterns and current status of racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. This is a large, 500 student class with small, fifteen member discussion groups where students have an opportunity to voice their thoughts about the material from lecture taught by Dr. Sam Richards.

(www.theracerelationsproject.psu.edu)
In this training period, the potential facilitator experiences being a member of a race dialogue group, receives training on facilitation and is introduced to the programs goals and philosophy. According to the directors, this training reflects the preparation required for a student to be an effective facilitator for the RRP. Once facilitators are trained in the RRP philosophy and the art of dialog facilitation, and participants are recruited and scheduled, the RRP programs can be held. To understand the impact of these programs, it will also be important to investigate and learn what occurs during an RRP session and what students participate in the RRP.

Recruitment of Participants

Participants for the RRP consist of Penn State students ranging from freshman to seniors. Originally, interventions were held in conjunction with clubs, dorm floors, fraternities, sororities and student organizations around campus. Over time, classroom professors learned about the program and started contacting the RRP to see if they could hold RRP interventions for their classes. Today, nearly seventy-five hundred students in nearly seven hundred fifty RRP sessions each academic year participate in the RRP. These students are recruited through partnerships with colleges that wish to include a diversity intervention component for their majors.

The RRP conducts programming for all students in the colleges of Communications, Health and Human Development, Science, Business and Education. For these colleges a mandatory course is selected, thus insuring that all students in that college participate in the RRP. In addition, some, but not all, students in Earth and Mineral Science, Agricultural Sciences, Liberal Arts, Engineering, Information Science
and Technology participated. In these cases, the courses selected for RRP participation are not required for all students in each college, but include a large portion of each college’s students. In addition, RRP programs are conducted for student groups and clubs that wish to hold a conversation on race, all student athletes through a specially designated course, as well as all resident life assistants (RAs). In all cases, it is either decided by the professor (when all students in a college are not required to participate in the RRP) or college head (when the whole college is required to participate) that it would benefit their students to participate in a race dialogue even though the general content of the course does not apply to race. As one professor put it, “all students need to have experiences talking about race and race relations. It will help them in their careers in business but also as students at a multicultural university in multicultural world.”

The RRP handles all logistics of scheduling students into RRP sessions and keeping record of attendance, lessening the burden on a professor wishing to implement the RRP into their course. Once courses have been selected to participate in the RRP programs, students of those courses are informed that they are required to participate in the program via their syllabus and also through an instruction email from the RRP. This email directs them to visit the RRP website and register for a session. Each course has a set allotted time during the semester for their students to schedule an out-of-class RRP session that fits their schedule. Intervention sessions generally occur at night, between 6:30 – 8:00 PM every Sunday through Thursday, but there are a small number of day time sessions. The RRP interventions last ninety-minutes and have seven to nine participants along with the two peer facilitators. After completion of the program, the student will receive class credit as determined by their professor or department.
Conclusion

Interviews with program coordinators and facilitators and observation of the program helped build a better understanding of the process the RRP employs to structure race interventions. While understanding this history is an important step in contextualizing the program’s effect, a more detailed examination of the intervention itself is necessary to fully understand the process through which RRP produces outcomes.
Chapter III. Quantitative & Qualitative Description of the RRP Intervention

To understand what occurs during an RRP session, a mixture of research methods was utilized. First, a survey was developed to quantify what happens in an RRP intervention and was administered to facilitators after a random sampling of RRP programs. Concurrently, observations of RRP groups were conducted through video monitoring to insure that the method used to quantify the content of an RRP discussion was accurate as well as to expand upon the precise process in which the content of conversation was addressed.

Post Group Facilitator Surveys

After preliminary program observations to familiarize myself with the program, I held a focus group with four senior facilitators to discuss what happens during an RRP session and to develop a survey to be administered to RRP facilitators. This survey would help quantify the topics of conversation that were regularly held during the RRP groups over the course of the semester.

During the senior facilitator focus group, facilitators said that one of the main strengths of the program is its ability to adapt to any conversation brought up by the students, and also that certain core conversations were most relevant to the students and the program’s philosophy. I asked facilitators to make three lists: first, the conversations that happened most often in an RRP group, second, all conversations on race issues that they happen elsewhere (e.g., conversations with friends, in other classes, and in all areas not including the RRP) and third, conversation topics they were trained to avoid. After
this was done, we condensed their answers into a single list, condensing similar answers into a main idea. In a follow up discussion, we identified conversational topics that fit in different thematic categories, of which we agreed upon four (pre-college experience, macro issues, inter-personal issues and college experience)\textsuperscript{2}. I presented the final copy of this check list to both directors of the program as well as the remaining facilitators (not involved in the focus group) during a project meeting. They agreed with the categorizations as well as the thoroughness of the list. Mulvey, the director most closely working with the facilitators on their facilitation skills, said the PGFS represented a fair assessment of topics regularly covered and others that she would not expect to be covered in an average RRP program. Upon her request, the final instrument would also include space for other “write-in” answers to be added so a facilitator could add a topic not mentioned on the list. This would insure comprehensiveness and allow for refinement of the instrument in the future.

During another program meeting, facilitators were trained to self-administer the PGFS and were instructed to be honest and accurate in their classifications. The RRP can, and does, adapt to different conversations, so political discussions (though advised against) do occur. It was made clear that an accurate account of the conversations conducted through the RRP was the main goal of this exit survey and it was in no way linked to evaluating their performance as a facilitator. If a group was selected for a facilitator exit survey, the co-facilitators were asked to confer and rank the level to which

\textsuperscript{2} Pre-college experience (PCE) included conversations about the student’s hometown, high school, childhood or families’ treatment of race. Macro issues (MI) included topics from the news that include world events, religion, racial profiling, affirmative action, politics and other similar issues. Personal issues (PI) included conversations on issues that directly related to the students on a personal level, including, double standards, stereotypes, language/cultural barriers, marriage and dating. College experience (CE) involved all conversations on race that included more recent events related to Penn State including campus racial climate, parties, clubs/activities, classes and social atmosphere.
each topic was addressed in the session on a three point scale of, “None,” “Some,” and, “A lot.” These terms were chosen for simplicity by the facilitators as easily identifiable, hierarchical categories to rank the amount of each discussion during the intervention.

Next, facilitators were asked to rank the four main topic areas from most to least in terms of their importance in the conversation. (The Post Group Facilitator Survey can be found in Appendix A).

Of the 350 groups in the Spring 2005 semester, 75 were randomly selected to receive the Post Group Facilitator Survey (PGFS). Facilitators from 63 groups returned PGFS’s, of which 60 were filled completely in the topic check list (asking them to rank different conversations as being discussed “none,” “some,” or “a lot”) and 58 ranked the intervention on four categories of conversation from most to least discussed.

Table 1: Facilitator Responses to PGFS by Topic Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inter-Personal Issues</th>
<th>Most Discussed</th>
<th>2nd Most Discussed</th>
<th>3rd Most Discussed</th>
<th>Least Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Personal Issues</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Experience</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27.50%</td>
<td>34.50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-college Experience</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro Issues</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the surveyed facilitators, 57 percent ranked “inter-personal issues” as the most addressed category of the conversation during the intervention while in seven percent of the interventions it was ranked least. Conversely, “macro issues” were ranked least discussed with five percent of groups ranking this category the most addressed conversation during the intervention and sixty percent of groups rating it least. Between
“college Experience and “pre-college experience”, no clear conversation was more prevalent, though it seems there is a slight edge toward discussing college than pre-college experiences.

In a meeting with RRP facilitators and directors, I reported these data and discussed possible implications. First, it was agreed that this was an accurate representation. Each category of conversation is addressed, to some extent, in every group, and it varies by group as to which is the most addressed. Generally, it was agreed that the difference between “macro issues” and “inter-personal issues” was accurately addressed. Distinguishing between “college experience” and “pre-college experience” was most likely a distinction between the class level of the students in the intervention, with freshman groups most likely focusing on pre-college experiences and predominantly upper-class groups focusing on college experiences. Given that the participants are recruited from classes that often have homogeneity in class rank, conversations may have focused on one, but not both of these topic areas. The data on specific conversations highlighted this more distinctly.
Table 2: Percentages of “none” and “a lot” by category from PGFS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre College Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Stories</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents / family</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hometown demographics</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Issue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Events</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Profiling</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Media</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative Action</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics / Policy</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-Personal Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double standards</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop culture</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does it mean to be…</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage / dating</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Stories</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current events (local)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus racial climate</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parties / social scene</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraternities &amp; student groups</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hub and commons</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While “macro issues” were discussed, none of the specific topic areas from this category were discussed “a lot” in more than 10 percent of the groups. Notably, the topic area of affirmative action was completely avoided in 85 percent of the RRP sessions sampled. Only 3 percent of groups lacked examples of personal stories from either “college experience” or “pre-college experience”, but this category of conversation was discussed “a lot” 28 percent of the time for pre-college and college experience. The three
most common conversations discussed “a lot” were stereotypes (52 percent of groups), hometown demographics (35 percent of groups) and conversations on what it means to be a particular race (33 percent of groups). Two of these conversations fall in the “interpersonal issues” category, which was also reported as the most addressed category of conversation.

Direct Observation

To further investigate what happens in addressing these themes during an RRP intervention, direct observation of RRP discussion group interventions was conducted through video monitoring. The RRP regularly uses a video monitoring facility as a training tool to educate and train student facilitators. “Watching others facilitate race conversations, and watching video recordings of yourself helps you to identify ways to ask better questions and approach certain topics,” said co-director Mulvey. During the two years of my study, Mulvey and each facilitator regularly observed their own groups and groups of other facilitators. Throughout the course of this research, both in official program meetings and in one-on-one or small group interviews, I met with the facilitators and Mulvey to discuss observations of the RRP intervention. The purpose of this qualitative research was not to duplicate the investigation into the themes of conversation (completed quantitatively) but to expand on those themes by observing how they are discussed and the process by which the RRP implements these conversations within their diversity intervention. The use of multiple researchers was important as it allowed for

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3 I was given access to observe RRP interventions in both real time and on video. Consent was obtained from student participants in these observed sessions and when the group was recorded (as opposed to viewed in real time) tapes were deleted according to IRB specifications.
the necessary peer-review and triangulation of data which produced a more complete and verified understanding of the RRP intervention.

During an RRP session, co-facilitation, where each group contained two facilitators, was used. Facilitators are matched into co-facilitation pairs during weekly RRP planning meetings. The two facilitators selected for each group are matched so that in each a group a White and a minority facilitator are used. This allowed for a dynamic of interracial dialogue to occur before the program officially began. In nearly every group, as students entered the RRP intervention, they were greeted by the facilitators and were immediately involved in a candid conversation about daily events. The co-directors informed me that this is used strategically to build a report between the facilitators and the students and to establish that the facilitators are their peers. As facilitators began the official program, conversation was started by the facilitators asking the participants about their expectations in coming to a “Race Relations Project” session and what topics they wished to talk about in terms of race relations at their university. This usually led to conversation on a variety of topics such as campus environment and segregation, dating, and stories from home or their social lives.

As the conversations started to develop into discussions on topics of race, the facilitators took neutral stances on most issues, asking others in the conversation what they think rather than interjecting their own opinion. As groups continued, facilitators were often asked their own opinions, especially in groups where the minority facilitator was the only minority present in the room. In these cases, facilitators shared their

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4 Each meeting the RRP directors place a schedule for the week on a large, video projection screen. If a given evening has four RRP groups at 6:30 PM, four White and four minority students will volunteer to facilitate that evening. The rooms used for the RRP groups are all adjacent, and on the night of the programming, facilitators pair off so that a White facilitator is paired with a minority facilitator. As the semester progresses, schedules get more fixed as facilitators begin to work similar nights of the week.
opinion but in a way that kept the focus on participants in the group, though in a few cases facilitators did share their opinions as participants. Mulvey noted that this was discouraged and that the focus was to be on the participants but also notes that, as interested persons involved in these conversations, it was impossible for the facilitators to remain completely neutral at all times. Adopting this approach in conversation with the other research observers we noticed that facilitators were observed sharing opinions but rarely if ever to the point of losing their place as the facilitator of the conversation.

Overwhelmingly, however, facilitators remained neutral. When controversial and even false information was brought up by a participant in the intervention, the facilitators continued facilitating, asking other participants around the room to respond with their opinions more often than correcting the misinformation. This was observed on multiple occasions. In cases where facilitators corrected information or directly commented on a possibly controversial statement by a participant, it seemed to change the mood of the conversation as a whole while directly and drastically altering the contribution of the participant being corrected. Most commonly, when misinformation was met with a firm response by a facilitator, a debate would unfold between members of the group and the facilitator, in a sense, putting them at odds. These debates were actively pursued, in turn, by the participants in the group, which seemed to invigorate the participant but push aside others in the room. When a participant in the room would challenge another to debates, facilitators often would focus away from their difference and instead toward the reaction of other participants to the disagreement.

The RRP co-directors believe that an open environment free from an expert opinion correcting false information will foster a conversation where members can be
more open. The thought behind this strategy is that in the presence of an expert, students feel less open to share honest opinions and instead are pressured to withhold their thoughts that may conflict with those of the expert or the group. Observing instances where debate was instigated by a facilitator showed decreases in openness, specifically from those in the group not initially involved in the debate. In the majority of groups where an open, non-judgmental environment was created by the RRP facilitators, more members in the group seemed willing and able to share their opinions. Specifically, this was observed when the facilitators invited participants to share politically incorrect opinions rather than refuting them. This often led to fruitful discussions through the facilitators directing conversations away from debates and toward personal reactions and response stories.

For example, on the topic of interracial dating, White students often shared stories that their parents would not support them in a bi-racial relationship (especially White females). Rather than holding a debate on “correctness” of such an opinion on interracial dating, the facilitators would guide a conversation to encourage others to share how their parents would act in a similar situation. In this way, students found commonalities between each other and learned that racially diverse people may have similar issues – in one group, a Black student agreed that they could never bring home an Asian partner – and also saw that differences exist within their racial group, for example when other White students would give accounts of their parents being accepting of their interracial dating. For many, holding a discussion with their peers on their how race is addressed in their home and family brought many (if not most) students to the realization that they have never had a conversation with their parents about race. Students making this
realization often admitted that they were curious and interested to find out how their parents would respond.

At the end of their RRP discussion, students had not only shared stories and learned about how others feel about a particular issue of race, they also were shown, directly through their experience, that discussing race in a diverse setting does not have to be threatening or dangerous. Often, participants admit that the RRP group was the first time they vocalized certain thoughts, especially in a diverse setting, for fear of being rejected or looked down upon. Overcoming the fear associated with sharing personal feelings in a diverse setting is an issue I saw addressed in a majority of interventions through the use of personal stories. Instead of primarily focusing on the racism of White people through people of color sharing stories of discrimination (a common practice noted by Richards and Mulvey of other diversity education programs), White students were regularly encouraged to share their experiences of feeling uncomfortable in racially diverse settings as well. Often, to insure that all students had an opportunity to share their personal stories, facilitators made special efforts to call on White students\footnote{White students needed the most prompting to share stories, especially when the White student was from a predominately White town.} to talk and share their stories.

However, this is not to say that White people dominated RRP interventions. As is consistent with previous research, minority students entered the room with a greater capacity to share their thoughts and feelings on race while White students seemed to feel disempowered in this diverse setting (Cage 1995, Baxter 1997, Ervin, 2001). While the facilitators are trained to create a welcoming environment where students feel comfortable enough to share their opinions and stories, it often took a while for White
students to, as one facilitator put it, “warm up” to the conversation. While some White students never seemed to completely “warm” to the RRP conversation, by the end, a majority were full participants in the group dialogue. In many RRP interventions, dominant personalities or intense personal stories, regardless of race, had a way of directing the conversation. These personalities and stories aside, stories shared by minority participants increased interest and elicited more questions from the group than did the stories from White students. This was not true in all RRP sessions, but in sessions where enough participants of color were present, the major interest often seemed to be on their stories. As the groups went on and as facilitators took steps to focus conversation around all participants and not just participants of color that may have come into the room more prepared to discuss race, White students appeared more comfortable joining the conversation and also shared their stories.

As the RRP interventions promoted the sharing of personal stories and opinions, it is important to note that other conversations were discouraged, most notably debate approaches to political and social topics. The thought behind this strategy was to avoid turning the program into a battle of wits or a debate which, through their experience, Richards and Mulvey found less effective at opening racial discussion. According to Mulvey,

> When we used to hold politically oriented RRP discussions (such as the benefits and drawbacks of affirmative action), we found that nearly identical conversations would unfold in each and every group, as if, students responses were scripted, this didn’t challenge anyone’s views or open up the possibility of thinking differently about these issues.

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6 Political topics that cover societal issues of race, racism and diversity including, but not limited to, affirmative action, illegal immigration, racial profiling, workplace discrimination, minority test score and wage gaps and conversations held in the Macro Issues category from the post-group facilitator survey.
Political topics were not avoided in full, but rather directed to what individuals are competent to discuss and how these issues affect them. The focus was placed on individual experience rather than policy issues. One facilitator added,

We definitely don’t want a debate about the correctness of affirmative action policy, or the Iraq war or anything like that… If its part of the conversation, we would want to know how these things make people feel and how it affects their interactions with others. We bring the conversation back to them, not to some policy.

The final (and main) focus of the RRP seemed to be that stories admitting a participant’s prejudice were encouraged and not avoided. The intervention actively sought to have participants identify their biases and prejudices, or as the directors called them, “pre-arranged defenses” and to discuss them amongst their peers rather than hide behind them. According to co-director Richards:

Students hold prejudiced ideas in their head, that’s a fact. We all do at some level. But rarely do students seriously attempt to take those ideas from their head and articulate them to a group of peers in a serious way, especially in a diverse setting. They may joke with their friends, or passively agree with prejudices of their friends and family, but rarely are they asked to articulate and defend these thoughts. When they are made to feel comfortable to share their stories and opinions, students begin to learn what they actually think and as they attempt to put in to words these prejudices, they begin to challenge themselves and their own ideas. This process is more powerful than my lecturing to them about inequality in arrest rates. It’s personal; they are the ones challenging their own prejudices, not someone else. And that makes all the difference.

Co-director Mulvey agreed:

Not every student leaves the RRP group feeling that they must challenge their deeply held racism, I’m sure. But what they do leave with is a sense that it is okay to talk about race and in the best cases about their own prejudices. Not “prejudice” as a topic, like “prejudice is bad” but to really talk about and confront their personal prejudices. Our society has gotten really good at teaching people to identify and hide prejudices, but not how to admit and overcome them. The more we openly face our prejudices, the more we begin to understand that we do not understand why we hold the feelings we do. And that is the beginning of change.
This sentiment was observed in the RRP interventions. While the conversations included prejudice as a societal problem (usually at the offset) the facilitators worked to guide the discussion toward addressing prejudice as a personal issue. For one, students often admitted to holding prejudices, being able to tell a story of when they may have uttered a prejudiced remark, but struggled to give an explanation why (or if) they really felt that way. Students were often unwilling or denied feeling any prejudice at the start of groups, but after hearing admissions of other students in the room many students began to share similar admissions and more readily participated in the conversation. This was more useful at promoting conversation than when facilitators would directly address a participant’s denial of holding any prejudices. This latter approach occurred at times and seemed to “shut down” the accused participant rather than open the student up to accept or acknowledge their prejudice. While the RRP claims to be an “open forum” for discussing opinions on race, the groups can vary and sometimes this seemed to be less true than others. Though these instances occurred relatively rarely, their impact was clearly seen each time it was observed. Students did not respond well to direct confrontation by facilitators but responded positively to reflecting on personal stories and in dialogue with their peers.

In nearly all successful groups, prejudice was neither celebrated nor judged, but rather, acknowledged and confronted. Overall, most conversations seemed to contain positive discussions on a personal race issues that involved most participants in the room. A few conversations were less stimulating and less interesting insights were shared than others. The groups seemed heavily dependant on the skill of the facilitators to motivate participants to talk and on the participants to be receptive and willing to share. The
facilitators admit they have “off nights” and on these occasions conducting RRP interventions are particularly difficult. Other times, facilitators report that they experience groups that are “lifeless” and more resistant groups where students are less inclined to share. I observed a pattern of “follow the leader” where a snowball effect of group participation was seen. When a conversation started to become vibrant, facilitators were able to lead an active conversation. In cases that began more quietly, conversations tended to remain more subdued.

As race can be a deeply personal and sensitive issue, a few conversations I observed got very intense. Facilitators are instructed to use this intensity in a way that brings it to a positive conclusion of understanding. Controversy was neither sought nor avoided, but it did occur. According to co-director Mulvey, facilitators are taught strategies to handle these situations early in their training. For the majority of groups, however, intensity was low, as many students admitted that they do not regularly talk about race and that issues of race are of very little importance to them personally. While they followed along with the conversation, most admitted that they did not want to attend an out of class assignment on race relations and for many students this was not an opportunity to share their opinions on race, but an unnecessary, burdensome assignment. Many groups began slow, facing this dynamic of generally antipathetic, resistant students

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7 Group effects were not only seen in the tone of the group, but also the style in which content was addressed. For example, when a group would address a minority group as “African American” instead of, say, “black,” that particular label would be used throughout the group. Very often, this nomenclature would have to be initiated by a minority group member before White people were sure of, “the right thing to say.” A few groups used this as a point of conversation, and held a discussion about the labels we use for each other, and if there is a “right” way. Other times, group influence on language used was left unmentioned. Also, this labeling had an effect on references to White people: if a White person first identifies as “Caucasian” the rest of the group would continue using that term, while if “White” was used the rest of the group would adopt that same label.

8 Exit surveys conducted by the RRP report that only 28% of participants agree or strongly agree that they “looked forward to attending” their RRP session.
that were not inclined to share. Often times, this in itself became a topic of conversation as common questions included, “Why don’t we talk about race,” “How should we talk about race,” and even “Should we talk about race?” However, even in the most difficult and slow starting groups, no RRP session met overwhelming refusal and when students heard the tone of the conversation, most participated and left the room with a sense that their time was well spent.⁹

Conclusion

The RRP is a peer-facilitated, dialog-based program that engages students on topics of race relations on a personal level. The hope for the directors is that this style of conversation, one that is non-threatening and open, will have a ripple effect in promoting participants to extend conversations on race relations to their friends, roommates and families. While no topic was ever fully ignored, conversations on inter-personal issues took precedence over all others and personal stories from college and pre-college were more of a focus than discussions on macro level issues. These conversations explored both the negative and positive impacts of race on a person’s life, and while at times a few strayed from this overall purpose, the facilitators overwhelmingly promoted the importance of dialogue on race issues rather than answering race questions and reshaping people’s opinions. RRP interventions that broke from this goal of increasing dialogue highlighted the ill effects such a dynamic has on the open conversation. While most RRP conversations were not overly intense in topic or content covered, each group did bring a group of students together and provided an opportunity for personal, race relations

⁹ Exit surveys conducted by the RRP report that 89% of students self report the program as worthwhile.
discussion. Now that the process of the RRP has been described, it is important to discover if the program has any effect on student’s openness toward diversity.
Chapter IV. Survey Research on Effect of the RRP

A quantitative survey design utilizing a pre-test, post-test format was implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of the RRP program. Next, in-depth qualitative group interviews were used to provide validation by triangulating the data in a more rich and complete context and to investigate the depth of effect (Liberman 2005, Creswell & Plano Clark 2007).

Sample

A controlled sample of students was selected for participation in the quantitative survey experiment. To produce quality results, steps were taken to insure a valid and unbiased group of students. A random sample was impossible, as the RRP test and control group status could not be randomly assigned to students from the entire Penn State population. However, of the courses participating in the RRP the courses selected for this research represented a cross section of the general student population.

Of the participating RRP courses available during the Spring 2005 semester, surveys were administered to two classes in the college of Health and Human Development (HHD) and two Introduction to Sociology courses from the College of Liberal Arts. These colleges were selected for their willingness to allow for data collection, which not only required class time to administer the pre and post-test surveys, but also some manipulation in the assignment of the test and control groups. Also, courses in these colleges represent large, general education courses that contained no content on race or race relations and were often scheduled by the average college student.
Of the two courses that agreed to participate from the HHD department, one was randomly selected to receive the pre-test/post-test survey along with the RRP treatment while the other was selected to receive the same pre/post test survey without the addition of any race intervention. In a similar manner, students from the Introduction to Sociology courses were selected for the same test, however, in this case students came from two course sections taught by the same professor. With the professor’s agreement, one section was randomly selected to receive the RRP test while the second section was not given the RRP program or any other race intervention. Both courses shared the same syllabus in which race would not be addressed as a topic until after the post-test survey was implemented. Lastly, a third Introduction to Sociology course, taught by a different professor, was selected as an additional test group to provide a larger sample group.

During the ninth week of class (and on the same day) a pre-test was administered in all classes. Over the course of the next month, students in the test group classes were presented with the opportunity to participate in an RRP group, while students in the control group were not. After all students in the test group had completed the project, a post-test was administered in all participating classes (including the control group). Pre-test and Post-tests were matched based on a series of non-identifying questions.\footnote{A series of questions were asked for pre-test/post-test matching purposes. These included first letter of others’ maiden name, the number of full biological siblings, the number of half/step siblings, and the number of roommates. Combined, these questions combined allowed for pre- and post-tests to be matched. After matching, the non-identifying questions were discarded.}

In all cases, these selected courses represented large, introductory courses that normally receive students from across several different disciplines. The courses that were selected for this research were limited by a few constraints, including willingness of the professors to give up class time for the implementation of the survey and the
difficulty of finding courses similar enough to conduct a test-group and control-group research design. In short, the full range of courses that participate in the RRP were not available for research. However, all students involved were unaware prior to registering that the course would include a diversity intervention, the participation in a research test, or the participation in a research control group, so it can be assumed that the scheduling of the course was not influenced by the possibility of participating in the RRP.

Survey Design

After a semester testing research instruments that measure attitudes on race relations, research tools that indirectly measured racial attitudes were selected to measure the effect of the RRP.\footnote{In the Fall of 2004, 200 self-selected students received extra credit to participate in the RRP and receive various racial attitude scales. Due to self-selection, this preliminary test group was used only to develop future instruments and not for analysis. This preliminary testing provided guidance in terms of forming and integrating questions that would accurately and effectively measure racial attitudes. For one, the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale, Short Form was originally used but omitted from future tests in favor of more indirect testing measures (Fuertes, et al, 2000). This original testing period also gave some insight as to what types of students would self select in to a race relations program.} Direct questioning, while beneficial, can fall susceptible to students marking answers they think they should and not necessarily the answers that reflect their true thinking (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). In order to test attitudes on race relations less directly, an instrument developed by De Meuse and Hostager, the Reaction-to-Diversity Inventory (RTD),\footnote{The Reaction-to-Diversity Inventory was part of a three year research project aimed to develop an instrument to test the effectiveness of workplace diversity programming. Criterion-related validity of this instrument was tested through the use of this list of words as well as an additional survey utilizing these words in sentence form. DeMeuse and Hostager conducted these tests multiple times in a variety of business settings.} which asked participants of a diversity intervention to circle from a list of seventy words those that come to mind when they think of diversity, was sued (2001). Unknown to the participants, each word was previously assigned a positive or negative score (+1 or -1) so that a raw, numerical reaction to diversity score
can be calculated in order to make comparisons.\textsuperscript{13} For this study, the RTD instrument was streamlined to sixty words to be used in analysis.\textsuperscript{14} (see appendix B for the RTD in context of the survey given to students).

**Chart 2. Adapted DeMeuse and Hostegar RTD Inventory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive words</th>
<th>Negative words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Apprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grateful</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopeful</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Resentment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Immoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justified</td>
<td>Unjustified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper</td>
<td>Unnatural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensible</td>
<td>Useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>Worthless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperate</td>
<td>Fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Patronize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>Resist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>Stubbornness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Unfriendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancement</td>
<td>Clashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Insecurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit</td>
<td>Rivalry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding</td>
<td>Sleeplessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom*</td>
<td>Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important*</td>
<td>Unimportant*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary*</td>
<td>Unnecessary*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{*Added words not found in the RTD inventory}

\textsuperscript{13} In addition, these words are separated into categories (emotional reactions, judgments, behavior reactions and personal consequences). Differences on these scores are not the focus of this study, but some analysis on these variables can be found in the appendix. (see appendix G).

\textsuperscript{14} The RTD was initially given to participants of a diversity intervention at a business setting. To adapt this instrument to college students, and to streamline the word list, the fourteen words under the category of organizational outcomes were dropped and replaced by four uncategorized words necessary, unnecessary, important and unimportant. Also, students were asked to respond to words that they think about when they think of “Race Relations” rather than “diversity” in order to remain consistent with the language of the study.
Variables

Dependent variables were constructed from the RTD inventory to compare participants of an RRP group against those students in the control group. Each student circling words on the RTD generates a raw score for his/her attitudes toward race relations ranging from +30 to -30 based on which words were circled. Change scores were calculated by subtracting the pre-test scores from the post test scores and were calculated for each student on the entire inventory of words as well as separately for the positive and negative words. Examining the change score for each student controls for their prior thought and experiences with race and allows for the focus to be on the events between the pre and post-tests, in this case, the participation in the RRP. This removes the need to control for many pre-existing factors that could contribute to more positive or negative pre-test scores which, again, allowed for the examination of change that can be attributed to the RRP intervention.

The main independent variable in this research is participation in the RRP. Additional control variables were used to test for independent effects and interactions on the change score. The independent variables that proved to be significant included gender, sex, and year in college (freshman, sophomore, junior and senior).

15 For example, if a student circled ten positively coded words and six negatively coded words during their pre-test, their pre-test total score would be +4 (10 – 6). In the post-test, if 14 positive words and 6 negative words were circled the post-test score would be a +8. This would result in a change score of +4 (Post-test – Pre-test). In addition, the RTD inventory was also examined separately for positive and negative words.

16 Additional control variables were used, including, race (White, non-White), diversity of a students’ high school (majority one race or racially mixed) and a students’ self reported assessment of their involvement in race related conversation (very often, sometimes, not very often, never). These variables were found to have no significant effects.
### Table 3. Independent Variables

Total N = 469

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>RRP Participant (1)</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Group (0)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White (1)</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-White / Person of Color (0)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male (1)</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (0)</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Freshman (ref)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square tests showed that students’ race and gender were not significantly correlated with RRP participation (see appendix C). However, RRP participation did vary significantly among classes, freshman being the deviant group much more likely to receive the RRP treatment than any other class.\(^{17}\)

These crosstabulations and the regression analyses to follow were performed only for cases that completed both the pre and post-test and that answered all questions on the survey.

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\(^{17}\) One of the test groups was predominantly made up of freshmen while all other courses contained sophomores, juniors and seniors. The impact of the program did not differ significantly across the courses through which the students participated.
Results: Testing for Effect

Using Ordinary Least Squares regression (OLS), data were analyzed to test for an effect of participating in the RRP on the change scores measured in the RTD inventory.

Table 4. Unstandardized Effects on the Total Change Score from the RTD inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>1.45**</td>
<td>1.44**</td>
<td>2.32***</td>
<td>1.82~</td>
<td>-2.91</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male x Test</td>
<td>-2.21*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>-4.94*</td>
<td>-4.68*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore x Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.32*</td>
<td>5.02*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>-0.68</td>
<td>-4.95*</td>
<td>-4.81*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior x Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.80*</td>
<td>4.77*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>-1.43</td>
<td>-3.13</td>
<td>-3.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior x Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r square)</td>
<td>(.013)</td>
<td>(.011)</td>
<td>(.023)</td>
<td>(.020)</td>
<td>(.043)</td>
<td>(.048)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05, ~ p< .07

N = 469

As might be expected, participation in the RRP was shown to have a significant positive effect on student attitudes toward race relations as measured by change scores on the RTD inventory. For the entire RTD inventory, participants in the RRP showed an average change score increase 1.45 words greater than the control group (p<.01) (Model 1). Gender was added to the regression in Model 2 with no effect. However, in Model 3 the interaction between gender and the RRP variable shows that men have a smaller
positive change than women; in other words, women are more strongly impacted by the RRP program (p < .05). In fact, for men the effect is near zero. The coefficients for Model 3 show that for women participating in the RRP have change scores that are 2.32 points higher but for men the change score for those participating in the RRP is only 0.1 point higher than for those in the control group, as is shown in Table 5. Looking at the difference scores, it is not surprising that the difference for females is significant while for males it is not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.32***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

In model 4, students’ year in college was added to the equation with no significant effect, however, when interactions with year are examined in Model 5, some interesting results were found. The positive impact of the RRP is significantly greater for sophomores and juniors than for freshman. In fact, as Table 6 reveals, seniors and freshman seem to experience a negative effect of the program.
Table 6. Mean Change Scores for the Four Classes in RRP and Control Groups (model 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>-0.81</td>
<td>-0.82</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-2.90</td>
<td>2.41**</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>-2.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Freshman and seniors who participated in the RRP had less positive change scores than the control group who did not participate (differences between the RRP and control group equal to -2.90 and -2.61, respectively). In contrast, sophomores and juniors who participated in the RRP had more positive change scores than the control group who did not participate (differences between the RRP and control group equal to 2.41 and 1.89 respectively). However, when examined independently, the only difference between RRP and control group that is significant is for sophomores. While the other coefficients are intriguing, we can be confident only that sophomores experience a positive difference after participating in the RRP rather than the control group.

Additional independent variables were examined as well, including diversity of high school attended (majority one race or mixed race), race of respondent (non-White or White) and prior discussion of race relations (a lot, some, not a lot, and none), and course (which academic course the student participated in the RRP through). None of these variables were found to have significant effects on the dependant variable nor to interact
with RRP participation. In other words, none of these factors contributed to explaining the differences between pre and post-test scores and students in these categories can be assumed to be affected by the RRP similarly.

To summarize, when examined alone the RRP had the effect of promoting a rise of 1.45 words in students’ pre-/post-test change scores. Female participants in the RRP seem to react more positively than male participants, who showed nearly no difference. More surprisingly, the most pronounced positive effect of the program was seen on sophomore and junior participants of the RRP. In fact, the RRP had a negative effect for freshman and senior participants. However, when examined independently, only the sophomore effect proved to be significant.

Results: More Positive or Fewer Negative

As displayed by the previous analysis, students who participated in the RRP have increased change scores between the pre and post-test. However, this positive change could either be the result of circling more positive words, fewer negative words, or a combination of both. To determine which occurred, a variable was constructed to measure the nature of the change by adding the change score on the positive words to the change score on the negative words. Using this variable in OLS will allow for distinction between the circling of positive and negative words. A positive “relative positive/negative scale effect” (hereby noted as RSE) would indicate more movement on the positive scale (the circling of more positive words than fewer negative) while a negative RSE would indicate more movement on the negative scale (the circling of fewer negative words than more positive words).
Table 7. Relative Positive/Negative Scale Effect (RSE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1.28&lt;sup&gt;~&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<sup>~p = 0.059</sup>

As the coefficients in Table 7 reveals, the regression of the RSE on the RRP test variable showed evidence that the beneficial effect of the RRP is more pronounced on the positive words from the RTD inventory than the negative words. The positive RSE coefficients approached statistical significance (at p=.059). To further explore differences in the patterns for positive and negative words, multiple regressions were performed on the change scores of positive and negative coded words separately.

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<sup>18</sup> Between the pre and post test a student circled three more positive (+3) words and three less negative words (-3), their change score would be a 6. However, when these two scores are added together, a score of 0 is found, indicating that there is no differentiation in the effectiveness of the RRP on positive and negative words. In this case, the RRP caused equal movement on the positive and negative words indicated by an RSE of 0. However, the student may not have circled the same number of positive and negative words. In this case, a non-zero score would be found. If the student had circled 4 more positive 3 less negatives their change score would be a +7 (indicating that the RRP produced a positive outcome) but their RSE score would be +1 (4 – 3 = 1) indicating that the RRP’s effect was more pronounced in the circling of positive words. Conversely, if the student circled 4 less negative words and 3 more positive their change score would remain +7 but their RSE score would be -1 (3 – 4 = -1), indicating that the RRP’s effect was more pronounced in the lessening of negative words.
Table 8. Unstandardized Effects on the Change Scores for Positive Words from the RTD Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>-0.675</td>
<td>-0.549</td>
<td>1.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>1.37**</td>
<td>1.71**</td>
<td>1.682*</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender x Test</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
<td>-1.02</td>
<td>-0.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-2.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore x Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior x Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.837</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.80*</td>
<td>-2.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior x Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r square)</td>
<td>(.017)</td>
<td>(.019)</td>
<td>(.031)</td>
<td>(.045)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05   **p < .01
N= 469

In Table 8, results for Model 1 indicates that without controls, the RRP has the effect of increasing the positive words circled by 1.37. Adding gender in Model 2 the RRP retains it effect, increasing positive words circled by 1.71. Though gender’s effect is non-significant, the gender by test interaction term shows that that female participants seem to react more favorably to the RRP treatment. The coefficients from Model 2 show that women participating in the RRP circle 1.71 more positive words than women in the control group while males circle .81 more words as a result of participation in the RRP. The difference between students in the control group and RRP participants is only significant for women, as shown in Table 9 below.
Table 9 Positive Mean Change Scores for Males & Females in RRP and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.71**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, ** p<.01

Table 8 shows that models 3 & 4 added class and the interaction of class with RRP. It was found that freshman and seniors circle less positive associated words between the pre and post-test while sophomores and juniors circled more positive words. Analyzing the coefficients for the positive words displays a pattern similar to that of the entire RTD inventory. As shown in Table 10 below, sophomores and juniors circled 1.95 and 2.96 more positive words, respectively, while freshman and seniors circled .88 and 1.1 fewer positive words respectively. However, the difference between the RRP and control group scores was only significant for the sophomores and juniors, not for the freshman and seniors.
Table 10. Positive Mean Change Score for the Four Classes in RRP and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>-1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
<td>1.95*</td>
<td>2.96*</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

This negative effect shown for the freshman and seniors is interesting, but confident conclusions can only be drawn for the sophomore and junior respondents who circled significantly more positive words as a result of participation in the RRP.

Table 11 reports analysis of the negative words from the RTD inventory treated separately, to investigate the effect of the RRP on decreasing negativity.
Regression analysis showed that participation in the RRP did not significantly change the scores on the negatively coded words from the RTD inventory. Introducing gender (model 2), left the RRP effect non-significant as was the effect of gender and its interaction with RRP. Table 12 (below) shows that both men and women who participated in the RRP circled fewer negative words (.71 and .6 respectively) than students in the control group, however, the differences between the RRP group score and the control group scores were not significant.
College class status and its interaction with RRP are added in Models 3 and 4. Again, there are no significant effects.

Furthermore, Table 13 shows that in the case of negatively coded RTD inventory words, the differences between being a participant in the RRP and being a member of the control group were not significant for any of the four classes.

### Table 12. Negative Mean Change Score for Gender in RRP and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

### Table 13. Negative Mean Change Score for the Four Classes in RRP and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05
Conclusion

Using a modified version of the RTD inventory, students participating in the RRP were shown to have a significantly greater positive score increase between the pre and post-test than students in the control group (Table 4). This relationship was more pronounced for female students; for males there was virtually no difference between the RRP participants and the control group (Table 5). Separating students by class status, participation in RRP only significantly increased the scores of sophomore students; juniors shown a positive effect of the RRP while freshman and seniors seemed to be negatively affected by RRP participation, but none of these effects were significant.

To more accurately isolate the program’s effect, the RSE variable was analysed to see whether RRP effects were different for positive words as compared to negative words (Table 7). Results showed that the RRP produces changes in scores on the positive words but not the negative words. Further analysis showed that participation in the RRP was a significant factor in influencing students to circle positively coded RTD inventory words (Table 8) and for this subscale the effect was, again, more effective for female students (Table 9). When student class status was examined in the analysis of positive words, participation in the RRP was shown to produce significant positive outcomes for both sophomores and juniors (Table 10). As regards the negatively coded RTD inventory words, the RRP was not shown to be a significant predictor of change nor did it interact with gender or class (Table 11, 12 &13) indicating that participation in an RRP program increases a student’s association with positively coded words but does not decrease association with negatively coded words.
The existence of these statistical relationships is important in understanding the
effect of the RRP intervention but does little to contextualize the depth of the program’s
impact or how these relationships operate. To investigate this and to deepen our
understanding of the program a qualitative approach was also employed.
Chapter V. A Qualitative Exploration of RRP Effect

While the survey data serves as a good indicator that the RRP does affect positive associations with race relations, these results alone do not offer a complete understanding of the nature of these effects and precisely how the RRP impacts student behavior. Also, the post-test surveys were administered days after completion of the program and offer little explanatory power in terms of any lasting effect. During the Spring 2006 semester, further research was conducted to contextualize and better understand the effect of the program on students through qualitative research methods.

Sample

As previously stated, thousands of Penn State students participate in the RRP. This population of students became the focus of this next, qualitative step. It was feared that offering an invitation to participate in a research study to those students who had completed the RRP during the Spring 2005 semester would attract only those students with the most positive and negative reactions and would not draw a generalizable sample of RRP participants. A purposeful strategy to limit this bias and obtain a more generalizable subset of the population of students that had participated in the RRP was implemented to increase the reliability and validity of the data.

Each weekday evening during the Spring 2006 semester, the RRP conducted programming for 40 to 50 students. Through conversations with the facilitators we learned that on any given night, three to seven of these students would share stories of having completed an RRP intervention for a different course prior in their college career.
Interestingly, it seemed that many college students found themselves enrolling in two (or more) courses that required the RRP during their four years in college.

This population of students offered some very unique benefits for sampling. First, these students are required to attend an RRP session for class credit, regardless if they completed the RRP for a previous course. Students rarely, if ever, know prior to scheduling their courses which incorporate the RRP program nor has any evidence been found that students choose to take a course based on whether the RRP is offered. A student who completed an RRP session in the Spring 2005 would have, for our purposes, a relatively random chance of selecting a course during the Spring 2006 semester that also required the RRP. Courses do not advertise their participation in the RRP, and students learn of the course’s participation in the program via a course syllabus handed out after the course is scheduled. Therefore, the students that show up each evening to participate in a second RRP program are those that, on their own accord and without knowledge, scheduled a course that, again, required RRP participation.

As such, professors were informed that the RRP was planning to request the participation of these students in a group interview research study rather than having them participate in a second RRP session.¹⁹ On weeknights during the Spring 2006 semester, participants in the RRP’s who had previously completed an RRP program were asked if they would rather participate in the RRP group interview session. Fourteen group interviews were conducted from a total of 48 students with group sizes ranging from three to six participants.

¹⁹ None of the professors shared any reservations to their students receiving the focus group rather than the RRP program. IRB approval was sought to conduct these focus groups. No video or audio recordings were taken, but notes on each group were recorded.
Table 11. Group Interview Participants by Race and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To recruit participants, students arriving for their RRP session were asked if they had previously participated in the RRP, when they had completed the RRP and if they wished to participate in a different and new project aimed at studying the interventions effect. All but two eligible students accepted this invitation and approximately ten were turned away. Most students participating in this study completed the RRP during the Spring 2005 semester (to match those in the quantitative study), but some had participated in the Fall 2004 semester.

Group Interview Leaders

Four group interview leaders were used for this research for two main purposes. First, triangulation of data through multiple data collectors would allow for reliability to be established. In addition to me, two former facilitators (both of whom had spent the fall semester studying abroad) and a student who had never worked for the RRP were recruited and trained to conduct these group interviews. The main target of these group interviews would be students who had the RRP the prior semester, so former facilitators that were involved with the RRP during that (Spring 05) semester were not used. Using

20 During focus group testing period, one of the courses being offered RRP interventions was an education course which had a majority female population. As such, a disproportionate sampling of females participated in the focus group study. Penn State is a predominantly White university, and as such, the focus group participants reflect the mostly White Penn State population.

21 Students were turned away for two primary reasons, 1) there were not enough or too many students available (at least three but no more than six) to conduct a focus group or, 2) one of the focus group leaders was identified as having been the student’s RRP facilitator (this occurred once).
former facilitators that had been away from the project for nearly a year and one student outside the project was also useful to control for researcher bias. First, it was necessary to use students (as opposed to adults) as it was felt that students would share more readily with a peer.\textsuperscript{22} Group interview leaders did not admit to any personal ties or reservations that would hinder them from investigating the RRP objectively and it was emphasized through researcher meetings that honest reports of student opinions, whatever those may be, were to be investigated. The one group interview leader that had not been part of the RRP prior to participating in the research project was important in this process to verify that all angles were being explored and that an unbiased perspective was being used in investigating the student responses to the interview questions.

To further establish validity, each group interview would be conducted by two researchers. Two researchers being present allowed for one to act as the primary interviewer while the other primarily took notes. In addition, it allowed the researchers to consult after each group interview to insure an accurate depiction of the stories shared by the participants. Four weekly meetings were also held during the group interview process, allowing group interview leaders to consult and insure that consistency was maintained in the operation of the group interview.

\textbf{Interview Schedule}

A month was spent developing the preliminary set of questions and format for the group interview. These questions were explored through multiple meetings and two

\textsuperscript{22} Being a young graduate student, I felt that my status of being slightly older was not noticed or addressed and I took steps to appear as a contemporary.
initial test group interviews. After these test groups, the interview schedule was revised and implemented during the two month-long data collection period. New directions of inquiry and interest that were found during the data collection were addressed through the weekly meetings between the group interview leaders.

Generally, the group interviews lasted one hour, though some went longer. During the interviews, students were asked to comment on their general experience with the RRP group including any stories or situations from their intervention that they could recall. It was thought that the level to which students could recall their experience and feelings during their first RRP discussion months later would indicate the depth of impact. Recounts of how each student felt during the program were explored as well, including feelings the student may have felt going into their RRP session and the actions and reflections the student experienced after the program. Specific questions were asked to see if the RRP prompted the student to continue the conversation afterward by either starting a conversation with friends or family after their group. Students were also asked to comment on whether they felt that the RRP affected any of their beliefs about race relations or diversity at Penn State.

Results

After all group interviews were completed, a final meeting was held with the interview leaders to discuss their experiences over the past three months. Notes were collected, categorized, and condensed to three categories: expectations, experiences and effects. Expectations include how students felt prior to their RRP session and the thoughts and feelings they had before participating in the RRP. Experiences relate

\[ Data \text{ from these groups not part of the analysis.}\]
directly to the students reaction to the interaction that occurred during the RRP session. Effects include the impact the RRP had on students.

Expectations:

The most common phrase uttered when students were asked about their thoughts regarding their participation in the RRP was, “I didn’t want to go.” Nearly all students regardless of race or gender reported that they were not excited about participating in their first RRP session. Some reported less opposition than others, but the general feeling was that their time could be better spent elsewhere (or anywhere). Students were not outwardly opposed to participation, and none envisioned that it would be a terrible or negative experience, but the thought of a 90 minute, out-of-class diversity program was not appealing.

Aside from this apathy, most of the apprehension toward participation in the RRP was related to the students being fearful of offending others. Nearly all white respondents, and even some minority respondents, were worried or apprehensive about participating in the RRP for this very reason. The few that were not apprehensive all shared a similar story of talking with other students who had participated in the program who told them, “not to worry.” White students had a nearly universal fear of stating their opinions on race, being viewed as a racist and, by far the most common response, a fear of offending a member of another race.

This fear of offending others was directly related to the fact that the RRP was advertised in their classes as a “diversity education” component of their course. As such, most students envisioned a lecture-based program that would include some form of
participation, which a few students, all of whom were white, seemed to fear. Some participants in the group interview had a clear picture in their head entering the room of being taught what and how to act. Others had absolutely no expectations, which tied into a general sense of apathy toward their participation in the program; it was a class assignment that they gave very little if any thought to. Very few students pictured the open forum, peer facilitated format used, and those that did had heard from friends about the style of the program. Those that had heard from friends that the RRP involved conversation still assumed that it would include a debate with correct and incorrect answers. Being confronted with race in this way, in that they would be presented with correct and incorrect behavior as well as interaction with professionals in the field of diversity education seemed to heighten a few students’ fears of offending others. An equal number of students felt very little or nothing, other than annoyance, for being assigned to participate in the RRP program.

Experiences:

Not surprisingly, a common response when asked about their experience with the RRP was that the program was, “not what I expected.” Many students shared this sentiment, admitting that the RRP was far from what they thought with some even mentioning that they felt like they had “not even participated in a race thing” but instead, “just had a conversation.” For many students the RRP was their first experience with inter-race dialogue. This was nearly universally true for white student, but minority students added that while they talk about race, it was rarely with a group of multiracial
classmates. Almost without exception, students enjoyed this format for two main reasons. First, that it was entertaining and second that it was not a “class” or a “lecture”.

While the RRP as a program attempts to avoid lecturing and confrontation, the three respondents with the strongest feelings of negativity toward their RRP experience cited a shared theme of feeling threatened and “shut down” by the conversation. A larger majority of those who reported a more neutral experience noted instances of feeling confronted or lectured during their group session. No student reported a positive experience who also felt lectured to during their RRP intervention. While a few students reflected that they had wished, hoped and expected their RRP discussion group to be a debate on race issues, in nearly all cases when debates were held, the impact was negative on the amount of participation that the student recalled giving in their group. Moreover, when topics of contention were mentioned with “right” and “wrong” answers, students recalled negative reactions. Specifically, this was most evident when facilitators corrected participant comments. In all cases of a negative RRP experience, RRP facilitators were seen as aggressive and confrontational.

The facilitators and the manner in which they presented and directed the conversation seemed to be vitally important to the student’s experience. Students with a negative experience had similar tales of feeling confronted, challenged or dismissed in their RRP session by their facilitators, though an overwhelming majority of student respondents claimed that their facilitators were open and non-judgmental. One key factor of a successful group clearly was the ability of the facilitator to be neutral and open-minded and non-confrontational, as was the case in all contrary cases where students experienced bad groups. The effect of a bad group on a student was negative, as students
reported feeling anxiety when addressing issues of race relations, specifically, when they were asked to participate in a second RRP intervention. While these cases were rare, they are in complete opposition to the experience of students who reported positive groups. Students in positive groups overwhelmingly reported that they felt more comfortable about their second RRP session and conversations about race due to their experience in their first RRP session.

The presence and participation of minority peers seemed to be very important to all participants in the program. Despite the RRP attempting to create an equal conversation setting for participants, white respondents overwhelmingly remember (often vividly) the stories of minority students and less readily the stories of other white students. When first asked about their first RRP intervention, the most common answer of white students was to respond to the racial breakdown of their session. For white students, the ability to hear the stories of minority students had more of a lasting impact than hearing the stories from members of their own race. This seemed to work in a similar way for minority students, as well. While half of the minority students responded positively to hearing stories from white people (with the other half not responding in any way to the white people in the group), minority students responded with greater emotion and recollection to the stories of minorities as well. Sessions that were more diverse were viewed more positively and a common response from neutral groups was to note the lack of diversity in the RRP session. Penn State is a predominantly white university and at times groups consisted of all white students with the only minority being the facilitator. These groups often left students wishing that their session was “more diverse” often leading to a more neutral experience.
Effects:

When asked directly, a slight majority of the students thought that their participation in the RRP did not affect their opinions on race relations or diversity and that they did not think any more often about race issues due to their RRP experience. Of the rest, most were unsure but tended to doubt that the RRP had a significant impact while only a few students could directly attribute that their RRP participation directly impacted their opinions on race. As students began recalling their RRP experience and listening to stories of other students in the group interview, some participants changed their opinions noting that the RRP had some, usually minor, impact. Rarely did students respond at the outset that the RRP changed their major views and feelings on race.

However, all students were able to recount details of their group and how they felt before and after their group, including the students that reported that the RRP had no impact on their attitudes toward race. Most students, including those that claimed that the program had no impact, recalled that their participation in the group was a positive experience, while a second large group recalled a very neutral experience. Only three members of the group interview study recalled distinctly negative experiences, with a few others recalling a mixture of positive and negative experiences with their group.

When students did admit a direct effect of the RRP it was commonly in terms of now recognizing segregation either on campus or in their home towns. As one female student put it, “I didn’t even know I was from a white town until my RRP group, but, yeah I am definitely from a white town.” Many students gave accounts of diversity at
Penn State being a topic of conversation during their RRP session and that since this conversation noticed the racial make-up of Penn State differently. While most students now saw their campus as less diverse than they had previously thought, others either experienced no change or felt that their campus was more diverse as well.

A few students admitted that after their RRP session they began to notice the racism of their friends. One student told a powerful story of how she was able to notice that her friend was racist and confront her on the issue.

I went to go visit my friend who attends a private Catholic college, and I never thought she was racist before but I just visited her after and I noticed her mannerisms and how she talked and then she openly used the word nigger. I flat out told her that she was a racist. I was so surprised I did that. We talked a little bit and we are still friends, but I was just really surprised.

Though it was observed that students identified their own prejudices during RRP sessions, fewer students reflected on their own prejudices during the group interviews, though they readily recognized the prejudiced actions of their friends. Some students noticed that they identify with race more, think more about their own skin color, culture and differences but few had moments during the group interview where they commented on or identified their own prejudices.

Many students who reported both positive and neutral first RRP sessions referred to stories of sharing this experience with friends and family members. Over half of the participants recalled specific instances where they brought up the RRP experience in conversations with their roommates and friends. A quarter either called home, or on their next visit home, started a conversation on race issues with their parents. This was not always the case, as a minority of students admitted that they held no additional conversation after their RRP session. Minority students were the least likely to refer to
their RRP conversation but did so in relation to other students who also participated in the groups. Two minority students, specifically, continued a conversation on interracial dating with their parents. One such experience was as follows:

Participant: After the RRP I just had to call my mom and ask her how she felt if I dated a white girl, or an Asian girl, or an Iraqi girl. I just had to know. We talked about it in our group and these three cute white girls asked me how my parents would feel and I was stumped. I thought, well, yeah, they’d be alright but I wasn’t sure, so I called home on my way walking home after my group.

Researcher: How did she feel?

Participant: Put it this way, the conversation isn’t over yet. My mom was like, “what do you mean dated a white girl? You got a white girl I don’t know about? What do you mean an Iraqi, a who?” I think I just confused her.

Researcher: Was this a positive experience for you?

Participant: Yeah, it really was. I mean, we are black, we talk about race and all but I never thought about this, so I guess I’m learning new things.

Students that had positive experiences were nearly all more inclined to participate in a second RRP program. While most still responded that they would rather be doing something other than any out-of-class assignment, there was little of the apprehension or fear related to participation in a racial dialog as there was prior to their first RRP session. A few students were excited and looked forward to their second RRP session, whereas previously for their first RRP session no students responded that they were excitedly looking forward to their group. One white student stated, “when I scheduled my session last week I was kinda’ like, aw man another thing to do, but today when I saw it in my calendar was kinda’ pumped. I had a real good first group and it was fun hearing peoples’ stories, I just looked at it as if I had to go, I might as well have fun with it and I knew it wouldn’t be too bad.” People with negative first groups, however, did not look forward to their second group. One student had talked to friends who had the RRP had positive things to say and she was less scared. “I just figured I would give it another shot,
not like I had a choice. I felt attacked the first group, so I decided that I would just sit and not talk unless called upon and just get it over with… This group is nice, by the way” one female participant shared. Though students denied the group impacted their attitudes on race, generally most participants noted an increased or neutral level of comfort with race issues since the RRP experience while only those with the most negative experiences noted a decrease in comfort.

The further back the RRP session, the less directly significant it seemed to be on the minds of students and its’ influence on their attitudes toward race, indicating a possible fading of the effect. While many students noted holding direct conversations about their RRP group with friends and family immediately following their RRP session, most noted that after this initial set of conversations they were less likely bring up their RRP experience. A small portion of students confessed that issues of race “never come up,” while a slight majority noted that they only bring up their RRP experience when an issue relating to race occurs, and that these issues rarely come up in their lives. The vast majority of students directly reported less apprehension confronting conversations on race due to their RRP group experience, but direct reference to an RRP itself decreased as more time elapsed. It is unclear, however, whether the positive effects on the perceptions of topics of race persist or fade while the direct references toward the RRP decreases.

While students differed on the frequency of referring to their RRP session, the likelihood of them bringing up their RRP decreased as time went on. When students admitted to holding race related conversations long after completing the RRP program it

24 The focus group itself had an effect on the student participants. Sharing stories about their experiences in the RRP was, for many, a second diversity intervention. Students admitted that new things were learned, opinions were changed, and new stories were shared. This was the most evident with students who had previously had a negative experience, who all left the focus group with a positive experience.
was most commonly with friends and acquaintances who also participated in the program. Multiple accounts of students talking to friends comparing their experience with the RRP were recalled and in many, but not all, of these cases the conversation developed into a wider conversation about race in general. In this way, a sense of shared experience between people who had completed the program seemed to exist, as students noted that it is very easy to pick up on conversation on race when they know the other person has had the RRP.

While many students had stories of self realization, reflection on topics of race, a higher level of recognition of race issues and continued race dialogue after their RRP session, very few radically changed their lives. In fact, only two students were influenced enough to take additional courses on race relations (more admitted to scheduling these courses but claimed they would have even without the RRP experience), and in one case, a student changed his major to sociology (from Earth and Mineral Sciences) after additional courses on race. Two students in education and one in business directly referenced that the RRP experience would be useful for their future career. One female student shared this story:

RRP Participant: I worked in a summer camp for children who needed emotional support and one day was watching two eleven year old boys. One was misbehaving and ran away, I yelled for him to come back. He responded, “You are only saying that because I am black!” It was funny, we actually talked about black children not responding to white teachers in my RRP session. I yelled back, “You know this has nothing to do with your race, now get back over here” and I didn’t have any more problems.

Researcher: How was the RRP helpful in this case?

RRP Participant: I don’t know how I would have responded before the RRP, but I was ready for this.
Conclusion

This qualitative inquiry into the impact and process of the RRP points to some interesting trends. Most notably, the positive effects of the RRP session are directly linked not to simply participating in an RRP group, but to the experience the student had in the group. Positive experiences occur in groups where students felt open to sharing their opinion and a negative impact existed for students who felt threatened or lectured to during their RRP group. While students were reluctant to admit to any direct effect of the RRP program, and often admitted that they didn’t feel like they even participated in a diversity education program, nearly all students could recall specific topics covered in their session, conversations about race that followed their RRP group, increases of comfort with topics of race and other indications that the RRP had an effect on their racial attitudes. Limits on the program’s effect seem to be related to facilitators stepping out of their role as neutral group leaders, the absence of minority students in RRP sessions and diminishing returns overtime from this single, 90 minute program.
Chapter VI. Discussion and Conclusion

It was hypothesized that a peer-facilitated, conversation-based diversity intervention as implemented by the RRP would have a positive impact on students’ associations with race relations. To investigate this, an exploratory study was required to discover the nature of this effect, and how it operated. When the findings of the quantitative analysis are brought together with the two qualitative studies that aimed first to understand the process of the RRP and second to investigate the lasting impact, discoveries were made into the nature and operation of the effect. As a whole, this data supports the hypothesis. A variety of interpretations can be drawn from the data to explain these outcomes.

The quantitative data provided four major conclusions of interest. First, the RRP successfully produced significant positive change scores between the pre and post-test. Second, the RRP created positive change scores between the pre and post-test by students circling more positive, but not fewer negative, words from the RTD inventory. Third, the RRP seemed to produce positive effects for sophomores and juniors but did not do so for freshman and seniors. Forth, across the board female students responded more favorably to the RRP treatment than male respondents, indicating a gender difference in the effect of the RRP program. The quantitative data does not stand alone, but when combined with recent literature and qualitative evidence, explanations for these findings emerge as the process of the RRP is further explained.
Producing Positive Results

It was not surprising that regression analysis showed that participants in the RRP had greater positive change scores compared to students from the control group. Evidence from previous research (Whitt, et al 2001, Terenzini & Pascarella 1996) showed that participation in a diversity education program would produce positive outcomes on racial attitudes. Research has also shown that students must continue diversity education in a “non-classroom” setting (Witt, et al 2001, Terenzini & Pascarella 1996, Magolda 1997). The RRP, in being peer-facilitated and conversation-based, provided the space for learning about others and oneself but not in a traditional classroom and lecture setting. Building off the data gathered in the qualitative group interviews, the “education” of the RRP session seemed to come specifically from the RRP being a non-classroom experience. Students’ admissions that they felt that the RRP was not a “real” diversity education program increased its possibility to produce an “out-of-class” feel.

“More Positive”, not “Fewer Negative”

The quantitative finding that the RRP increased positivity but did not decrease negativity is only fully understood when combined with the qualitative exploration into the process of the RRP program. Based on this qualitative study, the finding that students circled more positive words but not fewer negative words is supported by the program’s philosophy of promoting conversation about race relations while avoiding debates and the correction of misinformation. Group-interview respondents echoed these feelings,
recalling negative reactions to being confronted and “taught” by their facilitators, while positive experiences were recalled of participants from more “open” groups.

While students denied that the RRP had an impact on their opinions on race, their actions and accounts of their experience and their significant change scores, suggest otherwise. The RRP was a one-time, 90 minute, out-of-class intervention that most students were not particularly excited about attending. However, nearly all students remembered details from their group discussions (who participated, what was said, etc.) and most recounted a positive experience. Given that participants in the group interview sessions completed their RRP interventions three months to two years earlier, the amount of detail most students recollected was surprising. While most students denied that the program impacted their beliefs, they changed their opinions on recognizing diversity and their views of the prejudices of their friends; increased positive attitudes toward participation in diversity education and race dialogue; and admitted to feeling more confident in diverse settings and less anxiety toward sharing opinions on race.

Statistical evidence does show that, on average, the RRP was effective at producing increased association with positive words, but based on the qualitative data not all RRP experiences were positive. Whenever participants felt that the program facilitators acted as experts directly confronting participants and creating debate, a positive atmosphere was not created, leading to more negative experiences for participants. When openness and equality between the facilitators and group members was established, the format of peer-facilitated, non-confrontational conversation was the vehicle that drove the ability of the program to produce positive effects on outlooks on race relations.
Additionally, the RRP’s success in creating an atmosphere of accepting race conversation was also evident. Many students reported continuing a discussion on race with friends and family after their RRP session, but most notably, when fellow students discovered that their friends also participated in RRP. In this way, the RRP was effective at promoting race as a positive, non-threatening topic of conversation. This is theoretically powerful given evidence that previous research has shown that college students are apathetic and/or apprehensive toward discussing race (Cage 1995, Baxter 1997, Ervin, 2001). Lessening the fear associated with race conversation is an important outcome of increasing positive associations with race relations.

A Positive Sophomore and Junior Effect

This RRP effect did not occur equally for all students. Sophomores and possibly juniors were found to have been positively impacted by the RRP while the effect on freshman and seniors was possibly negative. It is important to note that in most analysis the only significant findings were that the RRP significantly increased the positive scores of sophomores and juniors. The effect on freshman and seniors was insignificant, meaning conclusions cannot be drawn from this data. However, the direction of the effects were negative, which bring up important questions as to what makes freshman and seniors students different than students in their junior and senior years.

The negative evidence that seniors participating in the RRP have higher negative scores as compared to seniors in the control group is not entirely surprising. As evident in the qualitative group-interview data, the RRP was a required “out-of-class assignment” that most students admitted they did not want to attend. There are three probable reasons
why seniors would voice this opinion more strongly than underclassmen. First, seniors in this study were predominantly in their last semester of college and the desire to participate in out-of-class assignments close to graduation was probably small. Second, seniors are the most likely to have had participated in the RRP a previous time in their college careers, given that they have been students for more semesters. Quantitative data was not accurately collected to track and control for this; however, it was hypothesized that students participating in the program multiple times would potentially have negative responses to participating in the same project each additional time. Evidence of this was found in the group-interviews, but analysis was not conclusive if seniors specifically were more negative towards participation. Lastly, the focus of the RRP on pre-college and college related topics may be less relevant to students who were leaving college shortly. A more focused study of this approach of discussing “college topics” with graduating seniors would help determine if this programming is better suited for underclassman earlier in their college careers.

The negative effect on freshman, while insignificant, is still surprising. However, sampling issues may account for the results as there were far fewer freshmen in the control group as compared to the test group making it difficult to get reliable comparisons. Additionally, the data showing that the program may result in negative outcomes for freshman were collected from a very small sample. While we cannot determine if the effect on freshman was, in fact, negative (due to insignificance) it is curious that program did not produce the positive effects that were seen for sophomores and juniors. The most relevant literature may explain this negative or non-effect on freshman. Pascarella, et al. (1996), found students in their first year are greatly
influenced by their pre-college openness to challenge and diversity and also by the perception that they live in a nondiscriminatory racial environment. While these factors also effect second and third year students (Whitt, et al 2001), they may be more relevant for freshman. Conceptually, freshmen are “closer” to their pre-college experiences and have less knowledge of their new campus surroundings to determine if it is non-discriminatory. In addition, students in their first year are being exposed to many new life experiences that could have impact on change scores between pre and post-tests. Simply put, more may be happening in the month between the pre and post test for freshman in terms of influential experiences than for sophomores and juniors. By a student’s second and third years, the “newness” of college has faded and friendship groups are established, usually with those of a similar racial and cultural background (Whitt et al, 2001, Astin, 1993, Levine & Cureton 1998a, 1998b). While providing sophomores and juniors with the RRP intervention was shown to have the expected positive outcomes, more research on freshman is necessary to determine if the non-significant effects observed in this study were due to sampling issues or to real differences in the impact of diversity interventions for freshman as opposed to other classes.

The Gender Difference

In each set of models, differences between males and females were observed. Compared to males, females experienced greater positive change scores on the RTD inventory. This gender difference was not substantively explored, but does lend to interesting questions. Do females respond more positively to conversation-based, peer-
facilitated strategies? Are these differences also seen in other usages of peer-facilitation (Alcoholics Anonymous for example)?

Factors for Successful Groups

The observed increase in positive word association produced by participation in the RRP was found to be dependent on a few major factors. First, the ability of the facilitators to remain in a facilitator role and guide the conversation toward discussion rather than toward a debate was vital. Second, the availability of minority students in the RRP groups creating group diversity was also important. While students in all groups reported similar levels of continuing the dialogue on race after their session, those in more mono-racially White groups recalled fewer details from their RRP session and made less reference back to their RRP session during the group interview.

Impact of the RRP was also limited by fading effects. It is not that lasting impacts were expected because the RRP is a one-time, 90 minute race conversation, and one of countless events that may occur in a student’s life. However, this single meeting did have an effect (both statistically significant and observed qualitatively) and evidence seems to suggest that increased exposure to these topics would be more beneficial than a single, isolated meeting. Echoing this, Whitt, et al., found that:

“a college should implement an array of programmatic experiences for students to fulfill the institution’s commitment to creating a diverse learning community... and a wide range of opportunities for engaging in meaningful interaction with diverse peers on topics that challenge previously held beliefs and ideas (2001, pg 198).

While students displayed many instances of internalizing an effect of the RRP experience, their understanding of their own prejudices and their propensity to discuss race diminished as time away from the program increased, and the further away the
students were from their RRP experience, less direct connection between their feelings on race and the RRP program were displayed. While the initial impact is important, and contextualizing this with the group interview data was useful, it is impossible to know how this meeting may impact students in the long term.

Research Limitations

It is important to remember that students’ racial attitudes are cumulative and can never be attributed to one experience (Whitt et al, 2001, Hurtado, 1992, Pascarella & Terenzini, 1996). Participation in an RRP group, while significant, only explained at most four percent of the variance in most models. Standing alone, the size of the effects was not “large,” which raises legitimate questions about the depth of the impact. Little research exists evaluating such a program, and that which does uses qualitative rather than quantitative methods (Alimo, et al., 2002). This study went further, combining both qualitative and quantitative data, however the quantitative data lacked in several major areas.

The survey instrument failed to measure many aspects possibly relevant to students’ change scores on the RTD testing instrument, directly contributing to a low R square. For one, questions and scales were not created to measure institutional outlook of the university which had been shown by to be an important factor in a students’ attitude on race (Whitt, et al., 2001). This is relevant because participation in a large, multi-day survey project have had an effect on students’ institutional outlook. The first survey may have triggered some personal reflection (are race issues important to me) or institutional
reflection (are race issues important at my University) that would give reason for a student to adjust their attitude and impacting their responses.

Also, quantitatively capturing a student’s pre-college exposure to members of different races, or the level to which they have racial diverse acquaintances, was also not accurately recorded. Without a clear sense of what it means to be diverse in the pre-test, students were not able to accurately gauge the level of diversity in their hometowns or high school. These self reports were not accurate and were omitted from use as control variables in this study. Though these factors were largely accounted for by controlling for pre-test attitude through the use of change scores between pre and post tests, a better understanding of students’ prior exposure to diversity would have been a useful potentially interacting variable in this analysis. Another related concept, openness to diversity and challenge, was also not accounted for. Research has shown that a students’ openness to being challenged in all aspects of college life would make a student more receptive to new ideas, such as diversity education (Whitt, et al 2001). This could act as an important predictor of which students would be most positively affected by the style of programming presented by the RRP.

The survey design also presented some challenges. Student pre-test and post-tests were matched using a series of non-identifying questions which resulted in a larger than anticipated percentage of unmatched surveys (469 out of 702 surveys were matched with pre and post tests). This could also be due to students being in attendance during only one of the test sessions (either the pre or post test, but not both). Also, a few questions seemed overly confusing for students, including one important question that sought to determine if the student had participated in the RRP for a prior course. As it was
originally theorized that students participating in the program for the second and third time would exhibit a different effect from the program than students experience the program for the first time, the inability to accurately record and control for this was disappointing.

Analysis based on comparisons between students from the test groups with those in the control groups also presented a problem. Some students in the test group may have skipped or missed their RRP session while some students in the control group may have participated in the RRP through a different course. Simply put, being a member of the “test group” does not guarantee RRP participation just as being a member of the control group does not guarantee that the student did not participate in the RRP through another course. Questions on the survey designed to control for this were found to be ineffective and removed from analysis. While this is limiting, it was assumed, and I am confident, that a vast majority of people in each group represent participation in the RRP or not participating, however, this inadvertent “mis-coding” could affect the results. This issue was not large enough to prevent the appearance of effects in the data but may have muddled and lessened some of the predictive power, partially explaining the lower than expected R square values.

Lastly, small sample sizes in some segments of the population caused some comparison issues. A lack of minority students prevented a detailed look into the effect of the program based on race distinctions while a lack of freshman in the control group may have led to some inconclusive results. While no evidence of an interaction was apparent when race was included in regression analysis, this may be a result of “clumping” all minority groups into one category which was the only strategy possible to
maintain a large enough number to include any race distinction as part of the analysis in this study. Research would seem to suggest that minority students react more positively to diversity education than White students, but this was not found here perhaps due to a low number of minority participants (Cage 1995, Baxter 1997, Ervin, 2001).

In the end, participation in the RRP was still significant in increasing positive scores on the RTD inventory. However, if a more accurate testing instrument was used, incorporating more relevant controls, these effects may have been larger and more accurate in depicting the program’s effect.

**Future Research**

For many students, the RRP was their first experience with race dialogue. In these cases the RRP seemed to have a powerful initial impact on accepting race as a positive and beneficial topic of conversation. While students may display less direct reflection on their RRP groups over time, once experienced it is hard to tell what lasting effect this positive experience will have on students. The presence of a fading effect was observed but the nature of this is not fully understood by this study alone. A larger, qualitative expansion of the group interview research directed at these questions would begin to uncover how and why this fading occurs.

During the course of this case study it became clear that a few instructors in science courses were representing the RRP to their students in a negative way. A comparative study between students whose teachers promote the RRP (or any race intervention) positively and those whose instructors represent the RRP negatively would
be useful. Also, Expanding this research, both quantitatively and qualitatively into different academic departments would allow for the investigation of students from different backgrounds and would further increase our understanding of diversity educations impact on subsets of the student population.

While a positive impact was found of the RRP compared to the absence of any race intervention, the RRP was not compared directly to other diversity education programs. While diversity programs have been shown to produce positive racial attitudes, a detailed comparison of two different diversity programs, one lecture based and the other conversation based, using similar quantitative and qualitative tools, would better assess the effectiveness of each style of programming. As a first look into this style of intervention, this study provides evidence that such a detailed, comparative investigation would be of value.

Conclusion

Through this multi-method study, a greater understanding both the process and outcomes of this program was gained. The positive effect of the program, that student participants in the RRP groups circled more positively associated words than their peers in the non-intervention control group, can be attributed to the style of conversation and the ability of the facilitators to promote issues of race in non-confrontational and non-judgmental way. Addressing a wide variety of topics on race with a wide range of the student population, the RRP is able to overcome apathy and apprehension in creating an effective race dialogue experience. The RRP’s use of peer-facilitated conversation to promote positivity while avoiding political debates and issues of social justice was shown
to be an effective strategy at producing the discovered positive effects. While there were limits to the quantitative testing instrument, the qualitative exploration helped build upon and contextualize the findings in a way that deepened our understanding of the process and the impact of participation in the RRP.

In a broader context, this study is more than a program evaluation of the RRP. Diversity interventions are widely employed yet rarely studied. Moreover, peer-facilitation as a component of diversity interventions is utilized in varying degrees and forms but has also received little research attention. This study has not only helped us understand the RRP, but has also expanded our knowledge on peer-facilitations role in diversity education and the outcomes it produces.
References


## What is the RRP checklist

**Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent was this part of the conversation?</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Pre College Experience
- General / specific story
- High school
- Parents / family
- Hometown demographics
- Other (use margin to explain)

### Macro Issues (non personal)
- World Events
- Religion
- Homosexuality
- Racial Profiling
- The Media
- Affirmative Action
- Politics
- Policy
- Other (use margin to explain)

### Inter-Personal Issues
- Double standards
- Pop culture
- Stereotypes
- Language barriers
- What does it mean to be...
- Marriage / dating
- Other (use margin to explain)

### College Experience
- General / specific story
- Current events (local)
- Campus racial climate
- Parties / social scene
- Fraternities ad clubs
- The Hub and commons
- Other (use margin to explain)

Rank from 1 (the most) to 4 (the least) which categories was addressed

- Pre College
- Macro Issues
- Inter-Personal Issues
- College Experience
## APENDIX B: RTD Testing Instrument

**Reaction to Diversity Inventory: as implemented in the RRP survey**

_Circle_ the words you associate with conversations on race relations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compassionate</th>
<th>Fight</th>
<th>Insecurity</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resentment</td>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Enrichment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Cooperate</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Sensible</td>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Unnecessary</td>
<td>Clashes</td>
<td>Justified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Grateful</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stubbornness</td>
<td>Rewarding</td>
<td>Unjustified</td>
<td>Rivalry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useless</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
<td>Confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>Understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
<td>Worthless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resist</td>
<td>Immoral</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Patronize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeplessness</td>
<td>Unnatural</td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Advancement</td>
<td>Merit</td>
<td>Useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>Unfriendly</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Proper</td>
<td>Apprehensive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: Crosstabulation of RRP Participation with Background Characteristics

Table 14. Crosstab RRP x Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>non-white</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 422)</td>
<td>(N = 47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = .683 \quad p = .260 \]

Table 15. Crosstab RRP x Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 273)</td>
<td>(N = 196)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 1.074 \quad p = .176 \]

Table 16. Crosstab RRP x Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N= 208)</td>
<td>(N=147)</td>
<td>(N=80)</td>
<td>(N=34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 113.0 \quad p < .001 \]