



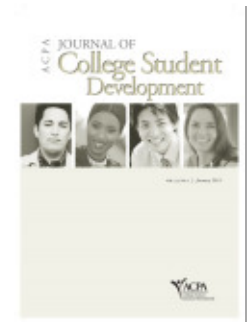
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Interracial Bridging Social Capital Among Students of a Multicultural University in Malaysia

Ezhar Tamam

In this study, the influence of interracial socialization and race on interracial bridging social capital among Malaysian students of a multicultural Malaysian public university was examined. Results reveal a narrowed level of interracial bridging social capital among the students. The minority Chinese and the majority Malays do not differ in their level of interracial social capital, but the minority Indians has a significantly higher level of interracial bridging social capital in comparison. The level of interracial socialization with peers directly and significantly affects the level of interracial bridging social capital for all three racial groups. No interaction effect of race and interracial socialization frequency on interracial bridging social capital is found. The implications of the findings are discussed.

Bridging social capital among students of different races, conceived as an outcome of cross-race socialization, is significant within the framework of personal social development (Arellano, Torres, & Valentine, 2009; Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Goddard, 2003; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005) and unity especially in the increasingly diverse campus environment (Fernandez & Nichols, 2002; Hurtado, 2005;

Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Despite the obvious benefits accorded by these weak ties, interracial bridging social capital among students in multicultural universities in Malaysia seems to be understudied. The term multicultural universities is used hereafter to refer to universities with a diverse student body. This study examines to what extent undergraduates of three major Malaysian race groups in a multicultural university experienced interracial bridging social capital and whether racial identity and frequency of socialization with peers of different races are related to the level of interracial bridging social capital. Because Malaysia is a multiracial and multireligious country governed by race-based coalition political parties, cross-cultural understanding and harmonious cross-race relations are strongly stressed. At the same time, race has been a priority for the various racial groups. The importance of racial identity among Malaysians is evident in the findings of earlier studies. These studies indicated that Malaysians prefer to identify self in terms of racial identity (Haque, 2003; Merdeka Center, 2006; Tamam, 2011). Hence, the Malaysian cultural setting provides a good testing ground for the examination of the influence of race and interracial socialization on interracial bridging social capital.

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INTERRACIAL BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Multicultural university environments offer excellent opportunities for students of difference races to cultivate interpersonal cross-race ties. These cross-race ties are indeed important practices and an important subject of study because the apparent benefits these ties accord. According to the social theory perspective, cross-race ties can have many positive effects because they constitute a form of social capital (Goddard, 2003). Social capital conveys benefits through the provision of information, influence and control, and social solidarity (Sandefur & Lauman, 1998). The literature on social capital has also differentiated bonding from bridging social capital (e.g., Fernandez & Nichols, 2002; Putnam, 2000). The present study is about bridging social capital, which arises from ties among people of difference races. Fernandez and Nichols (2002) and de Souza Briggs (2007) argue that bridging social capital, a form of weak ties, connects individuals to social worlds and resources that exist outside their inner circles. Accordingly, the present study uses the term interracial bridging social capital to refer to social capital that allows individuals to draw on resources from those who are racially different.

The importance of interracial bridging social capital for students can be inferred from the educational benefits deriving from those ties. Cross-race ties enrich the structural diversity that is present in a multicultural university environment. Racial diversity in social ties creates richer and more complex social and learning environments than racially homogeneous ties (Denson & Chang, 2008; Hurtado, 2005). Arellano and colleagues (2009) likewise point out that interaction and socialization among students of different racial backgrounds create a positive environment for cognitive and social development of

students. Gurin and Nagda (2006) similarly argue that in cross-race ties students can use group identities as resources for intercultural understanding and collaboration.

Despite the presumed importance of social capital, not much is known about the extent of interracial bridging social capital among Malaysian students of difference racial groups in a multicultural university setting where there is no “real” majority in the country. Malaysia is a multicultural, multiracial society with no “real” majority (Baharuddin, 2005). The Malays, Chinese, and Indians are the main race groups, the Malay to non-Malay ratio being about 60:40. In a strict sense, according to Baharuddin (2005), there is no real majority or minority in terms of Malay–Chinese relations in the country. This is because, although the Chinese Malaysians are the minority, they dominate the economy, whereas the Malays, who are the minority in economic affairs, have the majority voice in the political sphere. The minority Indians are the least economically advanced. The multiracial setting in Malaysia offers a unique opportunity to examine how students of the three main racial groups in a multicultural public university experience interracial bridging social capital. Thus, within the framework of educational benefits and race relations, the study adds to the literature on interracial bridging social capital among students of multicultural universities in a uniquely multicultural country in Southeast Asia.

RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD CROSS-RACE TIES

Endorsement of multiculturalism and attitude toward racially dissimilar others are certainly important factors influencing cross-race ties (Oetzel, 2009; Verkuyten & Zaremba, 2005). Past studies on majority members’ attitudes toward the minority and minority

members' attitudes toward the majority revealed differential evaluation of each other. Members of a minority group, particularly a lower status group, are more likely to have a greater interest in associating with the majority than vice versa. This is because minorities see the necessity or desirability of such social ties for themselves. This argument echoes the ideological asymmetry hypothesis of the social dominance theory. The hypothesis says that hierarchy-attenuating ideologies such as multiculturalism appeal more to the minority or members of a low status group than to the majority or members of a high status group (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006) observed that minority group members were more in favor of multiculturalism than majority group members, and a stronger endorsement of multiculturalism is associated with having more outgroup friends.

The issue of cross-race ties and how Malaysians experience interracial bridging social capital is worth examining given that race is important to most Malaysians (Haque, 2003); racial issues are not uncommon in the country and continue to be politically exploited by some people. The significance of racial identity for Malaysians is demonstrated in their response to the question of how they prefer to identify themselves. In a recent study, a majority of the Malaysians, particularly the Malay and the Chinese, viewed themselves as members of their racial group first; the minority Indians seemed to do the opposite—a majority preferred to identify themselves more in terms of national identity (Tamam, 2011). Against this race-conscious backdrop, an opinion poll on race relations in Malaysia by the Merdeka Center (2006), which surveyed Malaysians aged 20 and older, found that, although Malaysians were generally quite happy with their race relations, ethnocentric views, mistrust, and misunderstanding remain

quite prevalent. The Chinese were more guarded in their race relations compared with other race groups. This certainly has implications for the ability of Malaysians of the various racial groups to mobilize support and to obtain assistance from others of different race, and yet empirical data on this type of social capital are very lacking.

Because racial identity is important in the country, any social issue related to race is consequential, and how Malaysians of different races perceive the racial issues could affect their attitudes toward cross-race ties and the level of interracial bridging social capital. Fong and Isajiw (2000) have argued that no discussion of race relations and cross-race ties is complete without examining the influence of race or ethnicity. Past studies have observed race differences in intercultural relationship pattern and size (Stearns, Buchmann, & Bonneau, 2009), and cross-race interaction and socialization are affected by strength of identification with racial identity or ethnicity (Gudykunst, 1991; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006). Haluani, Chitgopekar, Morrison, and Dodge (2004) assert that the contact hypothesis operates differently for different racial groups. Racial difference is also observed in Saenz, Ngai, and Hurtado's (2007) study on the factors influencing positive interactions across race for African-American, Asian American, Latino, and White college students.

Racial differences in friendship pattern were also observed in studies in Malaysia. Santhiram (1995), in a study of friendship patterns in multiracial secondary schools in Malaysia, found a polarization of friendship patterns along racial lines. The Malays come out in the findings as highest in the hierarchy of in-group choices. A similar pattern of findings was observed in Jamil and associates' study (2004) and Yeoh's study (2006). Although these local findings provide information on racial differences in cross-race ties, they did not

address the question of the level of bridging social capital experienced by the students from those cross-race ties. More important, in a Malaysian situation where racial identity matters, studies on the extent to which students' experienced interracial bridging social capital should look at the influence of race, if any, on this social phenomenon.

INFLUENCE OF INTERRACIAL SOCIALIZATION

Racial diversity in a multicultural university setting alone is not enough to produce an environment that yields the education's benefits that diversity potential offers. Students of the different races must take the opportunity to socialize and build ties with each other (Arellano et al., 2009). Hurtado (2005), drawing on reviews of the contributions of diversity research in tertiary educational settings and on longitudinal studies, reaffirms the claim that frequency and quality of interaction with culturally dissimilar peers is key in producing a host of important education outcomes. The positive impact of interaction and socialization across racial boundaries can be seen also in terms of improvement in interpersonal relations across race (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Saenz et al., 2007). Cross-race socializing, particularly structured intergroup activities, is positively related with the likelihood of friendship (Sias et al., 2008). Moody (2001) similarly points out that successful contacts have been shown to mitigate friendship segregation. Stearns and co-workers' (2009) study of interracial friendships in a college environment found that race of one's roommate, interracial contact in residence halls, and participation in various types of extracurricular activities are most strongly related to the formation of interracial friendships. These cross-race ties are valuable as they contribute to bridging social

capital (Fernandez & Nichols, 2002; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; de Souza Briggs, 2007). Assuming that frequent quality interaction and socialization enhances sociocognitive competencies (e.g., Chang et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2001; Hurtado, 2005; Nelson Laird, Engberg & Hurtado, 2005), breed familiarities and mitigate prejudice and bias (e.g., Pettigrew, 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), it is logical to expect individuals actively be involved in socialization with peers of difference races to experience a higher degree of interracial bridging social capital.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The university under study has a population of about 19,000 undergraduate and 10,000 local postgraduate students in 2010 and is among the premier multicultural public research universities in Malaysia. Ethnic breakdown in the student body closely matches the 5:3:2 ratio of Malay to Chinese to Indian in Peninsular Malaysia. The university also houses about 3,000 foreign students, most pursuing postgraduate studies. The university is not only diverse in its student body, but also in its faculty members. Malay, Chinese, and Indian racial groups are quite well represented among the members of the faculty. With regard to academic offerings at the undergraduate level, all undergraduate programs offered are 3-year programs, except the engineering and medical programs, which are 4-year programs.

A large majority of local undergraduate students of all races live in residential colleges. These residential colleges conduct various forms of activities throughout the year, among which the objective is to provide a positive college environment that fosters close relationship and friendship ties among students of various races and backgrounds.

Given that sustaining harmonious race relations is an important development agenda

for social and political stability, all local students in higher learning institutions in the country, including the university under study, are required to pass a couple of compulsory courses related to race/ethnicity, culture, and race relations. This is an indication that student–student interethnic contact and interaction is strongly endorsed and promoted by the university. It is promoted not only in the classroom through mixed ethnic group assignments but also during co-curriculum activities organized by the student affairs development center, students associations at the many residential colleges, and even at the faculty and department levels. In short, the university under study provides the environment for its students to experience race-related diversity in a multicultural campus environment. Despite this effort by the university, not much is known about the extent to which the students actually experience interracial bridging social capital through cross-race interaction and ties.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

In line with this above discussion and findings of related past studies, the present study addresses the following research question and hypotheses. The analysis in this study also aims to examine whether there is an interaction effect of frequency of interracial socialization and race on the level of interracial bridging social capital.

RQ1: What is the level of interracial bridging social capital of the Malay, Chinese and Indian Malaysian students of the university under study?

H1: There is a significant difference in the level of interracial bridging social capital experienced by the students of the university across the three racial groups.

H2: There is a significant difference in the level of interracial bridging social capital experienced by the students of the university across different levels of frequency of interracial socialization.

RQ2: Is there an interaction effect of frequency of interracial socialization and race on the level of interracial bridging social capital experienced by students?

METHODS

Sampling and Data Collection

The survey data came from a total of 447 students of a multicultural public university located close to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data. Respondents were randomly drawn from a list of undergraduate students obtained from residential colleges of the selected university. Although these colleges were multiracial, they were dominated by Malays—about 60% of the undergraduate students were Malays and this matched the race ratio in the country. First, three colleges were randomly drawn from a total of seventeen residential colleges. These residential colleges were contacted for a list of students and their room numbers. Only Malay, Chinese, and Indian students, the three major races in peninsular Malaysia, were included in the sampling frame. Random sampling was done from the sampling frame and based on the last three digits of the students' matrix number. Trained research assistants met the respondents on an individual basis to invite their voluntary participation in the survey. Those providing consent were requested to complete the questionnaires. The respondents received a token amount for their participation. Out of the 460 students approached for the survey, a total of 193 Malay, 165 Chinese, and 72 Indian students participated giving a survey response rate of 97%. The respondents' ages

ranged from 19 to 27 years with a mean of 21.23 ($SD = 1.432$). There were more female respondents (67.0%) than male respondents (33.0%). The samples represent all levels of undergraduate students—first-, second-, third- and fourth-year students, 29.5%, 35.1%, 30.2%, and 5.2%, respectively. Nearly half of the respondents were Muslim (44.3%), 31.3% were Buddhist, 15.9% were Hindu, and 8.1% were Christian.

Measurement

All respondents completed an eight-item interracial bridging social scale developed for the purpose of this study. The items were specifically developed but ideas for the items came from Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe's (2007) items, which measured an individual's ability to get assistance and mobilize support or action from others. The eight-item interracial bridging social capital scale assesses the extent to which students were integrated in the multiracial environment and were able to mobilize support and get assistance from others of different races. The respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) to the following six items: (a) At this university, getting to know people with racial backgrounds different from my own has been easy; (b) I'm able to find out about happenings in the university from friends of a different race; (c) If I needed to, I could ask my student friends of a different race to do a small favor for me; (d) I would be able to get necessary information from friends of a different race; (e) There is someone of a different race in the university I can turn to for advice about making important decisions; and (f) There is someone of a different race in the university I can turn to for advice in solving a problem. The items were factor analyzed with principal component analysis. All six items of the scale loaded highly on one

factor (loadings ranging from 0.74 to 0.86) with eigenvalues of 4.06 (the percentage of variance explained by this factor was 67.73%). The factor held together well across all three racial groups under investigation. Reliability analyses of the scale provided evidence of the internal consistency of the items ($\alpha = 0.90$) for the entire sample, and 0.89, 0.90 and 0.88 for the Malay, Chinese, and Indian samples, respectively.

Frequency of socialization with peers of different races was measured with a single question: "How frequently do you socialize with peers of a different race in this campus?" The response scale ranged from 1 (*never*), 2 (*less often*), 3 (*once every few weeks*), 4 (*1–2 days per week*), 5 (*3–5 days per week*), to 6 (*every day*).

Respondents were asked to write their year of birth, the number of semesters they had been in the university including the current semester, and mark the appropriate category pertaining to gender, religion, and how they preferred to identify themselves racially. Responses to the question on orientation in self-identification were re-categorized into two components—identity of self as a member of his/her racial group first or seeing him/herself as Malaysian first.

RESULTS

First, descriptive statistics on the sample characteristics are presented in Table 1. The mean age for the Malay and Chinese samples was 21.10 ($SD = 1.45$) and 21.3 ($SD = 1.30$) years with the Indian sample being 21.82 ($SD = 1.42$) years. The three sample groups were also similar in terms of the number of semesters they had been in the university (Malay, $M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.61$; Chinese $M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.74$; Indian $M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.82$). There were more female respondents than male in all three samples; the proportion of females to males in each sample is about the same: 66.8%,

64.2%, and 64.2% females for the Malay, Chinese, and Indian samples, respectively. The distribution of respondents who prefer to identify self in terms of racial identity first is not the same, however. A majority of the Malay respondents identify self more in racial identity terms (57.0%) than the Chinese (38.2%) and Indians (26.4%), $\chi^2 = 24.409$, $df = 2$, $p = .000$. Frequency of interracial socialization with peers seems to differ across racial groups. Close to 33% of the Indian sample reported they socialized with others of difference races every day, followed by the Chinese (32.7%), and the

Malay (17.1%), $\chi^2 = 61.213$, $df = 10$, $p = .000$. Overall, the three samples were quite similar with regard to age, number of semesters, and gender proportion, but significantly different in terms of orientation of self-identification and frequency of interracial socialization with peers.

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to examine the influences of race and frequency of interracial socialization with peers on the level of interracial bridging social capital. Table 2 presents the means of interracial bridging social capital by frequency of socialization

TABLE 1.
Sample Characteristics

Variable		Statistics			
		Total (<i>n</i> = 430)	Malay (<i>n</i> = 193)	Chinese (<i>n</i> = 165)	Indian (<i>n</i> = 72)
Ages (yrs)	<i>M</i>	21.230	21.100	21.130	21.820
	<i>SD</i>	1.416	1.452	1.307	1.416
	Range	19–27	19–26	19–27	20–27
No. of semesters	<i>M</i>	4.180	4.090	4.080	4.630
	<i>SD</i>	1.728	1.612	1.741	1.827
	Range	2–8	2–8	2–8	2–8
Gender (%)	Male	33.0	33.2	35.8	26.4
	Female	67.0	66.8	64.2	73.6
Self-identification as member of (%)	Racial group first	44.7	44.7	38.2	26.4
	Malaysian first	55.3	43.0	61.8	73.6
Frequency of interracial socialization with peers (%)	Every day	29.8	17.1	32.7	56.9
	3–5 days per week	20.2	19.7	21.8	18.1
	1–2 days per week	20.2	24.9	21.8	4.2
	Once every few weeks	10.0	8.3	12.1	9.7
	Less often	6.5	4.9	10.3	8.3
	Never	3.3	5.2	1.2	2.3

TABLE 2.
Means of Interracial Bridging Social Capital¹ by
Frequency of Interracial Socialization by Race

Frequency of Interracial Socialization ²	Malay (<i>n</i> = 193)	Chinese (<i>n</i> = 165)	Indian (<i>n</i> = 72)	Total (<i>n</i> = 430)
Low (<i>n</i> = 128)	19.03 (3.821)	18.31 (4.001)	22.46 (3.563)	19.21 ^a (4.013)
Moderate (<i>n</i> = 174)	20.67 (4.179)	20.44 (4.347)	23.31 (2.960)	20.83 ^b (4.212)
High (<i>n</i> = 128)	22.24 (4.500)	20.91 (3.753)	24.17 (3.612)	22.30 ^c (4.128)
Total (<i>n</i> = 430)	20.31 ^a (4.242)	20.09 ^a (4.180)	23.63 ^b (3.490)	20.78 (4.288)

¹ Higher means refer to a higher level of interracial bridging social capital.

² Low = never / less often / once in a few weeks; moderate = 3–5 days per week / 1–2 days per week; high = every day.

Different superscripts are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

with peers of different races across racial groups. The two-way analysis of variance did not violate the homogeneity of variance assumption. The Levene's test of equality of error variances produced nonsignificant results, suggesting that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups, $F(8, 421) = 0.974, p = .455$. With regard to the first research question, mean scores of interracial bridging social capital range from 6 to 30 with a mean of 20.78 ($SD = 4.29$). The results showed that there is a large variation in the dependent variable, and overall the level of interracial bridging social capital is not very good. The mean score is slightly above the theoretical midpoint of 18.0. There was a significant main effect for race on the level of interracial bridging capital, $F(2, 421) = 15.753, p = .000$. Therefore, H1 was supported. The effect size for race was moderate (partial eta square = 0.07), using Cohen's (1988) criterion. Similarly, the results also supported H2. The main effect for frequency of interracial socialization with peers was statistically significant, $F(2, 421) = 9.981,$

$p = .000$; however, the effect size was small (partial eta square = 0.05). The interaction effect did not reach statistical significance, $F(4, 421) = 7.085, p = .777$.

Post hoc comparison across different levels of interracial socialization frequency using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores for the high and moderate frequency of interracial socialization groups ($M = 22.30, SD = 4.12; M = 20.82, SD = 4.21$, respectively) were significantly higher than those of the low frequency group ($M = 19.21, SD = 4.01; p = .000$), but no difference was found between the high and the moderate interracial frequency group ($p = .073$) in the level of interracial bridging social capital. Comparison across racial groups indicated that the mean score for the Indian sample ($M = 23.63, SD = 3.49$) was significantly higher ($p = .000$) than the mean score for the Chinese ($M = 20.09, SD = 4.18$) and the Malay ($M = 20.31, SD = 4.24$) samples. There was no difference between the Malay and the Chinese samples in the level of interracial bridging social capital ($p = .000$).

DISCUSSION

This study was carried out to determine the level of interracial bridging social capital among the Malay, Chinese, and Indian Malaysian undergraduate students at a local multiracial and multicultural university, and the influence of race and frequency of interracial socialization with peers on the level of interracial bridging social capital. The impetus of the study comes from the gap in the local literature on interracial bridging social capital as an outcome of cross-race socialization. The first research question was: What is the level of interracial bridging social capital of the Malay, Chinese, and Indian Malaysian students of the selected studied university? The findings clearly show that the level of interracial bridging social capital among the students is not good enough and more needs to be done to improve the situation. The pattern in the findings reflects that the students are not really racially integrated, despite the continuous calls for them to mingle on a regular basis. This less racially integrated student community also means that many are not capitalizing to the fullest on the diversity opportunity presented by the multiracial university environments for personal social development and greater interracial understanding. The findings of the present study provide additional evidence on the lack of or shallow racial integration in the country (Jamil et al., 2004; Merdeka Center, 2006; Santhiram, 1995; Yeoh, 2006).

The issue of narrow interracial bridging social capital among students in the university studied is compounded by race factor. H1, predicting a significant difference in the level of interracial bridging social capital across race groups, is supported. The findings clearly show that the minority Indian students had a better level of interracial bridging social capital, whereas the Malay students, who are

the majority in number, had the lowest level of interracial social capital. The findings are consistent with the theoretical explanations in previous studies that a minority group, particularly one with low social status, is more likely to integrate into a multicultural environment (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006).

The different levels of interracial bridging social capital across the race groups may be attributed to a host of factors. The present analysis focuses on the influence of frequency of socialization with racially dissimilar peers. H2, predicting a significant difference in the level of interracial bridging social capital experienced by the students of a multicultural public university across different levels of frequency of interracial socialization, is supported. Those in the high and moderate interracial socialization frequency groups are more likely to experience higher levels of interracial bridging than those in the low frequency group. The findings provide further evidence on the positive role of interracial socialization found in past contact and intercultural relations research (e.g., Arellano et al., 2009; Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Hurtado, 2005), and thus underscore the theoretical and practical significance of socialization across race.

Mirroring the findings of previous studies (Merdeka Center, 2006; Tamam, 2010), race is significant to Malaysian students. The findings indicate that the pattern of identifying self as a member of one's racial group first is still prevalent among students of higher learning institutions, particularly the Malay and the Chinese. The Indians, however, being the minority who lag in economic achievements, prefer to identify self more in national identity terms. This perhaps explains the differential level of interracial bridging social capital across racial groups. The differential racial effects on the level of interracial bridging social capital found in this study not only corroborate past

studies on the influence of race (e.g., Fong & Isajiw, 2000; Saenz et al., 2007; Stearns et al., 2009; Tamam, 2011) but, more important, underscore the issue of the existence of racial gaps in important social outcomes if this differential factor is not taken into account in the formulation of policy and the design of intervention programs aimed at improving cross-race relations.

Critical factors facilitating or constraining interracial socialization among students of higher learning institutions need to be identified and should be dealt with accordingly. More important, these factors may work differently for different racial groups. This is worth attention, because the effect size for the direct main effect of race is much greater than the direct main effect of frequency of interracial socialization. The present analysis did not provide adequate explanation of the differential effects of race on the level of interracial bridging social capital. This is a shortcoming of the study.

Nevertheless, the analysis in this study provides further evidence on the value of frequent positive interaction across race for students' learning. The study also presents these outcomes and their applicability to the university under study. Hence, what the university can do to reasonably shape and enhance interracial interaction and socialization among students must go beyond generic interracial interaction in the classroom. Drawing from other pertinent studies in U.S. university settings (e.g., Arellano et al., 2009; Bowman, 2011; Chang et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005; Saenz et al., 2007), increasing the representation of minorities in student organizations, extracurricular activities, and in the classroom is a necessary condition for promoting greater interaction and socialization across race. More important, rather than leaving cross-racial interaction among students to chance, the university should provide

students with many and varied opportunities for cross-racial interaction whenever possible, both in and out of the classroom. The interaction should be structured, regular, and ongoing, and the contact must occur in an environment characterized by cooperation and inclusiveness. As Chang and colleagues (2004) aptly point out, although structural diversity is a necessary condition, the frequency and quality of cross-racial interaction are also enhanced by conditions specified in the Allport's contact theory. In addition to diversity coursework, service learning, and participation in interracial dialogue, the university should provide formal mentoring programs where students are matched with peers and instructors of differences races.

At the same time, a favorable perception toward campus racial climate must be secured and barriers to participation in interracial interaction and socialization must be removed. As Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998) argue, structural diversity and regular and ongoing opportunities for interaction across race should be accompanied by efforts to make the institutional climate a fair and just one. Hence, clearly stated policies and procedures must be in place to help the campus community confront and manage interracial issues better and more efficiently.

People's prejudice and negative metaperception (a perception that other racial groups [the majority or the minority] are prejudiced toward them) are possible candidates for the limited interracial social capital because these two factors are among the key barriers to interracial mixing (Finchilescu, 2010). Although prejudice is an established reason for a lack of racial integration, it remains unclear how predictive this factor is in the Malaysian context. At the time this paper was written in August 2010, the prime minister was reported by the national media to have recalled the government's "zero tolerance" policy on racism

(Su-Lyn, 2010). This reminder came amid escalating racial tension after recent racist remarks or actions by individuals: For example, two schools had cast racial slurs against the Chinese and the Indian communities. Additionally, the idea of inclusiveness implied in the 1Malaysia concept promoted by the prime minister for greater harmony and unity in this multiracial, multireligious, and multicultural country is being challenged by a Malay right-wing group claiming that the 1Malaysia concept has been twisted; the 1Malaysia concept is not about equality (Su-Lyn, 2010). This Malay group has slammed the Chinese for calling for the removal of the 30% Malay or *Bumiputera* equity quota. This recent development could create more hatred, mistrust, animosity, and antagonism among the people of various racial groups. The extent of a retaliatory element (“I think you do not like me, so I do not like you”; “I do not like you, so you probably do not like me”) in race relations in Malaysia is unclear. Concern about how the other racial groups view one is a real barrier to interracial mixing, perhaps more so than negative attitudes toward each other’s group, as Finchilescu (2010) argued. Therefore, it is important to explore this argument and its implication for cross-race ties and bridging social capital both in university campuses and among the general public.

In addition to these perceptual and attitudinal factors, a host of personal or background variables influencing frequency and quality of interracial communication and socialization have been identified. The lack of language and cross-racial communication competencies are among the important ones limiting interracial interaction and socialization (e.g., Arellano et al., 2009; Chang et al., 2004; Saenz et al., 2007; Yeoh, 2006). Hence, students’ competencies for interacting across race must be enhanced through the rigors of formal and informal education

and training programs not only during their first year of undergraduate programs, but also during their matriculation years before commencing the undergraduate program.

Is there an interaction effect of frequency of interracial socialization frequency and racial identity on the level of interracial bridging social capital experienced by the students? There is no interaction effect between interracial socialization frequency and racial identity on the level of interracial bridging social capital. This means that the differential effects of racial identity on the level of interracial bridging social capital are independent of the influence of interracial socialization frequency.

Racial diversity in campuses in itself or by itself would not have much impact on the students. Given that in natural settings racial groups tend to self-segregate (Finchilescu, 2010), systematic structured and unstructured interracial socialization programs need to be implemented widely in the campus to improve interracial social capital. A compulsory race relations course introduced by the university about 5 years back, in addition to a number of other relevant race- and culture-related courses, meant to improve interracial understanding among the students in the university studied, but does not seem good enough to enhance cross-race ties and interracial bridging social capital. In the light of the present and past research findings, what is needed is increased interactional diversity among students in a setting of greater structural diversity. Interactional diversity must be strategically promoted beyond classroom and course-related interactions. Formation of non-race-based student associations and clubs with activities appealing to many, if not all, racial groups is one approach to increase potential for interracial interactional diversity. To promote non-race-based student associations and clubs incentives should be put in place. A policy of inclusion should be firmly institutionalized to

provide maximum opportunities for students to engage in interethnic socialization.

Although efforts to enhance interethnic socialization should be tailored to suit the context of the particular country and university in question, Luo and Jamieson-Drake's (2009) suggestions on key practices to promote inclusion are relevant recommendations to student services staff of Malaysian universities for how they can maximize the amount and benefits of interracial socialization. These recommendations include (a) communicate a positive message about diversity and inclusion as institutional values and policy, (b) open student development programs to all students, (c) make ethnic-related diversity engagement more attractive by offering incentive to the participants, (d) make students work together in a structured environment to solve shared problems through community services, and (e) strengthen the positive campus climate to encourage students to socialize and build relationships across ethnically diverse student communities.

All in all, this study has demonstrated that the level of interracial bridging social capital among students of a multicultural public

university in Malaysia is affected by race and level of interracial socialization. Although this study is a step toward raising important questions and revealing major findings about interracial bridging social capital among students at one major public multicultural university, the generalizability of the findings is limited. The present study was carried out in a public university with predominantly Malay students. A similar study should be replicated in private universities where the Malays are the minority to see whether the patterns of findings could be replicated. Future studies should look at the patterns of interracial socialization and include other important variables (personal variables and contextual institutional variables) to gain better understanding and accordingly develop a model of drivers of and barriers to interracial socialization and bridging social capital in an increasingly diverse campus environment.

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