2013

Exploring the third culture building approach for effective cross-cultural interaction for Black American professionals in predominantly white institutions

Tessa R. Sutton

*University of the Pacific*

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop_etds

Part of the Community-Based Research Commons, Place and Environment Commons, Race and Ethnicity Commons, Social Psychology and Interaction Commons, Sociology of Culture Commons, and the Work, Economy and Organizations Commons

**Recommended Citation**


This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of the Pacific Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.
EXPLORING THE THIRD CULTURE BUILDING APPROACH FOR EFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION FOR BLACK AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

by

Tessa R. Sutton

A Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

School of International Studies
Intercultural Relations

University of the Pacific
Stockton, California

In collaboration with
The Intercultural Communication Institute
Portland, Oregon

2013
Exploring the Third Culture Building Approach for Effective Cross-Cultural Interaction for Black American Professionals in Predominantly White Institutions

by

Tessa R. Sutton

APPROVED BY:

Thesis Advisor: Kent Warren, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Anita Rowe, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Jimena Perry, M.S.

Department Chair: Laura Bathurst, Ph.D.

Interim Dean of Graduate Studies: Bhaskara Jasti, Ph.D.
EXPLORING THE THIRD CULTURE BUILDING APPROACH FOR EFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION FOR BLACK AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Copyright 2013

by

Tessa R. Sutton
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Black American professionals who maintain resolve in Predominately White Institutions. Their discourse and steadfastness, surrounding common institutional racism and arduous experiences, emphasize the perpetual problems people of color face in U.S. contexts. These professionals not only possess effective skills for solving a unique set of circumstances, but also exemplify strength under control in this milieu. Thank you for modeling grace, perseverance, and wisdom for all Americans.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"The fruit of your dream started with a seed" Dr. Plez Lovelady (2012). This thesis would not be complete without grateful acknowledgement to those who supported me in many ways though this challenging journey. I thank God first for the blessings in my life. To my parents, husband, family, and friends: You gave me strength and encouragement when I needed it most—I am eternally grateful; you are the wind beneath my wings. To my thesis committee chair and advisor, Dr. Kent Warren, I appreciate you for your support and encouragement. Your guidance was helpful and appreciated. Your enthusiasm for Intercultural Relations affirms the importance of this work. To my first thesis committee member, Dr. Anita Rowe, my gratitude goes to you for your unyielding guidance, support, and critical feedback throughout this project. Your diversity and inclusion research in the organization setting, as well as your successful consulting practice, broadened my research effectiveness, which resulted in understanding core connections between Third Culture Building, Intercultural Relations, and Diversity and Inclusion. It was your presentation of genuineness at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication (SIIC) that served as an inspirational seed from which this thesis grew. I hope my career may someday be as successful as yours. To my second thesis committee member, Master anthropologist, Jimena Perry, you are an inspiration to me. Your expertise in research methodology and exploratory design provided insightful techniques for presenting information from the Black American perspective as much as
possible. In addition, your lived experiences in global and national cultures brought a unique perspective to this project. I will continue to live up to your high expectations.

And finally, I thank readers who carefully read the manuscript for clarity and consistency during the writing process.
Exploring the Third Culture Building Approach for Effective Cross-Cultural Interaction for Black American Professionals in Predominantly White Institutions

Abstract

by Tessa R. Sutton

University of the Pacific
2013

Professional interactions that are both functional and mutually beneficial are rare. The purpose of this study is to explore an application of a Third Culture Building (TCB) approach, a mutually constructed interpersonal process between two individuals, for Black American professionals (with advanced knowledge acquired from institutions of higher learning), to generate a new space in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). These institutions include settings where the racial composition is becoming consistently more diverse (through past desegregation efforts). Although the U.S. has moved beyond integration and the monumental Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, racism and intercultural barriers that prevent functional cross-cultural communication still exist in these settings.

This research is directed toward answering the question: How might Black American professionals generate a Third Culture space in PWIs through cross-cultural
social exchange? The research builds on my previous study where the TCB approach was found to be conducive for the intercultural barriers faced by Black Americans in PWIs. The research emphasizes the perspective of Black Americans and de-emphasizes the perspective of White Americans, given the body of literature that points to their adaptation and intercultural interactions in the U.S. and in international contexts.

A sample of six Black American professionals (ages 30 to 72; 4 men and 4 women) from my baseline study was invited to take part in this study. Respondents were chosen based on their backgrounds and similarity of race, to learn about their perspectives of the intercultural interactions in PWIs. Participants live in the Midwest region of the U.S.

Using interpretive, critical theory, and other qualitative approaches, the discussions from a focus group and interviews were transcribed and combined with the interviewer’s notes. The participants’ responses were organized around TCB frameworks and the interview questions, and then reduced to codes. Two evaluators reviewed the interview data, codes, and themes.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

GLOSSARY........................................................................................................................................12

CHAPTER

1. Introduction..................................................................................................................................13
   Background......................................................................................................................................15
   Problem Statement.......................................................................................................................... 18
   Black Professionals and the U.S. Adaptation Experience in PWIs..........................20
   Black Professionals’ Adaptation vs. Business Adaptation in PWIs......................21
   Research Purpose .........................................................................................................................26
   Research Questions .......................................................................................................................27
   Importance of the Study ...............................................................................................................28
   Scope of the Research ....................................................................................................................29
   Summary.......................................................................................................................................32

2. Review of the Literature.............................................................................................................33
   A TCB Application .........................................................................................................................38
   Mutual adaption ............................................................................................................................39
   TC behaviors.................................................................................................................................40
   TCB process ................................................................................................................................41
   Summary.......................................................................................................................................44

3. Method .......................................................................................................................................45
   Procedures.....................................................................................................................................48
   Research Method and Design ........................................................................................................49
   Instruments.................................................................................................................................49
4. Results............................................................................................................... 54

Focus Group Description of White Culture in PWI Contexts...................55

Focus Group Perception of an Ideal TC Space in PWIs.........................56

Empathy is the primary requirement for TCB...........................................57

TCB is future-oriented..............................................................................58

TC can assuage the negative effects of racism and exclusion..............58

TC Builders ...............................................................................................59

TCB Approach in PWIs.............................................................................60

Build relationships with White coworkers ...........................................60

Develop awareness of how White culture (through the media) percieves Black culture.................................................................60

Modify communication styles until Whites can mutually adapt............61

Make experiences relatable....................................................................61

TCB Conceptualization..............................................................................62

The group takes priority over personal feelings...................................63

TCB means suspending dominating relationships...............................63

Honesty is a crucial part of TCB...............................................................64

Summary....................................................................................................65

5. Discussion and Conclusions........................................................................ 66

TCB Motivation and Conditions..............................................................67
GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>How individuals shift cultural frames with respect to one’s culture and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>second culture (M. J. Bennett, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation process</td>
<td>A person’s mental and emotional state towards the act of adapting, rather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>than the actual shift of cultural frames (Sutton, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black American professionals</td>
<td>Individuals with a college degree and descendants of African origin,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>including individuals of Caribbean descent who identify as Black. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participants operationally define Black or African American.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Cultural</td>
<td>A comparison and contrast between two cultural groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(J. M. Bennett &amp; M. J. Bennett, 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Learned and shared values, beliefs, and behavior of a group of interacting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>people (M. J. Bennett, 1992), defined as US subcultures and national-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural</td>
<td>When the two (or more) culturally different groups come together, interact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and communicate (M. Bennett &amp; M. J. Bennett, 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWIs</td>
<td>Predominantly White Institutions: workplaces, business settings,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>residential complexes, and neighborhoods, and schools and colleges where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the racial composition is becoming consistently more diverse (through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>past desegregation efforts) (Chavous, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived intercultural</td>
<td>Cross-cultural behaviors that impede positive interactions or communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenges</td>
<td>between Black American professionals and their White counterparts, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>having different value systems and historical factors that hinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adaptation processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell out</td>
<td>An extreme identity negotiation to the point of compromising individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>integrity, morality, and principles in exchange for success in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mainstream (Parker, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCB</td>
<td>Third Culture Building: an interpersonal-focused, mutually constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interpersonal process that is communication-centered. It is the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comingling of culture; i.e., Black and White American professionals’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cultural backgrounds that produces a new and different, blended cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experience (Casmir, 1989).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1. Introduction

Today, many public spaces remain Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), including workplaces, business settings, residential complexes and neighborhoods, and schools and colleges. PWIs are mostly composed of Americans of European decedents, though they are now becoming increasingly diverse through past desegregation efforts (Chavous, 2005). Nevertheless, PWIs represent a space with their own rules and biases. In these contexts, intercultural professional relationships between Black and White counterparts are partially functional and beneficial. New power differentials and intergroup comingling produces interactions that can be misunderstood by either or both parties, and consequently, may be laden with conflict.

White professionals may view situations as frustrating, assuming the playing field is level for their Black counterparts, and be unaware of the nuances of their different professional experiences. Black professionals, on the other hand, are left to consider whether race or personality is a factor for poor interactions in PWI contexts. Black professionals may wonder what part of a failed interaction they are responsible for, what part is due to the assumptions of others, and what part is simply “the way things work” (Livers & Carver, 2003). As more Black professionals participate in these public areas, they are finding that White professionals in PWIs subconsciously or blatantly uphold the exclusionary structures stemming from the U.S. racial heritage, and that mutual cross-cultural adaptation with their White counterparts remains as an intercultural challenge.
Although Edward T. Hall’s (1959), seminal contributions to the intercultural communication field have increased awareness about the complexity of the problems that different cultures have in communicating with one another, the cultural insights did not necessarily address the complexity, either by increasing intergroup interactions, diminishing the adaptation tensions between Black and White individuals, or creating shared values and beliefs. According to Price M. Cobbs (2003), in PWI organizational settings, race is the most unyielding of the many issues that demand the time and energy of Black professionals (p. 27).

This study focuses on Black American professionals in PWI contexts to understand how they approach the cross-cultural intercultural problems that are still pervasive today. When Black professionals create change in the underlying structures that give meaning to the cross-cultural interaction, it can lead to challenges between them and their White counterparts and changes to the professional imperative, which is to function effectively in a broader context. PWIs need to be changed with the communication and adaptation skills of their members to improve business acumen, build new relationships, and access career opportunities. Effective intercultural relationships give everyone in the organization a common platform and approach for their work. The shared outlooks of different professionals can also determine their attitudes, effectiveness, and sense of team. Fred Casmir’s (1989) Third Culture concept addresses intercultural complexity between cultures. He asserted that a mutually constructed, communication-centered space could create shared values for interpersonal adaptation occurring between two individuals. Furthermore, Casmir’s Third Culture Building (TCB) principles, which posit a communication-based, bottom-up, and interrelated
approach, emphasize interactions that are mutually beneficial. Casmir’s perspective approach can create a space involving both systemic and individual-level relationships in the PWIs, as an intentional intervention, which George A. Kelly (1963) argues is crucial to changing institutional discrimination. Casmir’s TCB approach serves as the theoretical context for this study.

Chapter 1 includes six sections. The first section describes the background, and is focused on my earlier unpublished study of Black American professionals’ construal of the adaptation process in PWIs (Sutton, 2012). The second section provides the problem statement; specifically, cross-cultural exchange, a one-way paradigm between Black and White professionals lacks reciprocity in PWI contexts. The third section outlines the study purpose: to explore the interpersonal level of TCB and determine how Black American professionals apply the approach in PWI contexts. The fourth section outlines the research questions. The fifth and sixth sections describe the study’s significance and the scope of the research.

**Background**

In my earlier study (Sutton, 2012), I interviewed six Black American professionals who interacted in PWIs. The research question was directed toward answering the question of how they construed the adaptation process in PWIs contexts. The broader focus was to determine how Fred Casmir’s (1978, 1989) Third Culture (TC) concept might become a mutually adaptive framework for effective cross-cultural communication in PWIs for Black American professionals. The interviews assessed: (1) frameworks for adaptation; (2) conceptions of the adaptation process; and (3) challenges of the adaptation process.
The study revealed that respondents considered adapting to White culture to be a "safe" practice that limited negative reactions to race. They believed that, by being proactive and building relationships with their White colleagues, Black professionals could reduce or overcome tensions. The participants referred to adaptation as "a game" with an end-goal, and considered conforming to a few practices to 'win the game': obtain a degree, gain experience, access new opportunities, or earn a paycheck.

The study also revealed that the professionals saw themselves as shouldering most of the burden in adapting; they were the ones who had to shift their cultural frames. The media (particularly television and music) thwarts efforts toward adaptation in PWIs (Tatum, 1997). Black professionals were frustrated with their White counterparts who not only refused to see them as individuals, and felt that they not only refused to see the nuances of Black cultures. While some White coworkers wanted to adapt, they either lacked expertise or were unable to do so effectively because they were locked into preconceived notions of Black culture that they had absorbed from the media. Moreover, the study revealed that TC could ameliorate the intercultural challenges faced by Black American professionals in PWIs. The TC concept promotes adaptability and the right of people to have different beliefs and practices. The Black American professionals felt that it could be effective for remedying the imbedded racism that attempt to suppress or dominate them culturally (Casmir, 1989). The TC concept had been applied to the Black American professionals, with the sole intent to focus on their perspective. The TC concept was not considered for application to White American professionals in this study (Sutton, 2012).
The baseline study revealed that a third-culture concept could serve as a mutually adaptive frame for Black American professionals to function effectively across cultural boundaries in PWIs. A common theme emerged among the Black American professionals in PWIs. Each experienced direct and indirect prejudice treatment from their White counterparts. The findings supported and illuminated important concepts for interweaving open-mindedness, strength, and the willingness to adjust to difference, on the part of Black American professionals, despite their frustrations with the historical disposition of their White counterparts in cross-cultural interactions (a one-way adapting disposition), who expect other cultures to adapt entirely to their own.

My interest in intercultural relations stems from my belief that developing constructive cultural exchanges and cross-cultural skills is the answer to overcoming the barriers between different cultures and races. The understanding and appreciation that develops can provide access to the different cultural experience of others and enable mutual adaptation (M.J. Bennett & J.M. Bennett, 1998). For this study, I chose the Black culture and the White culture because they represent two U.S. groups with a historical acrimonious relationship. The groups have failed to bridge the invisible partition that prevents cross-cultural dialogue, despite numerous diversity interventions (Deane & Stringer, 2009).

I also chose Black American professionals because they operate with an extraordinary degree of finesse in PWIs, while contending psychologically with countless racially constructed obstacles (Cobbs, 2003). As a Black American professional, I have been affected by the intercultural barriers that PWIs construct at both personal (relationships with family members), and professional levels (relationships with
coliagues). The atrocious bigotry and racism I endured as a child can be described as microaggressions: "pin pricks, a psychic assault, and death of a thousand cuts" (Sue, 2005). After experiencing my fair share of racism and prejudice, every instance of institutional racism I encountered affected my thinking, and rather than withdrawing from the issues, the experiences fueled my desire to confront the injustices faced by Black American professionals in PWIs.

My experiences have been a key impetus for this study. Disparaging stories and the dramatic effect on the lives of other Black professionals motivated my desire to explore adaptive, consultative frameworks for effective cross-cultural interactions in PWIs.

**Problem Statement**

Cross-cultural communication that is mutually beneficial and functional for the interactions between Black American professionals and White American professionals in PWIs is needed to dissipate the currently existing tension and form a single advanced culture. Consequently, all parties would be able to communicate on equal terms, both sides could make an effort to adapt to the other, and common values could bring different groups together to reach their goals. According to Fred Casmir (1989), shared frameworks, value systems, and communication systems that are beneficial for individuals and groups create a greater sense of effectiveness and belonging, and increase team performance and information processing. In the U.S.; however, social constructions (based on race separation and White superiority) conflict with Casmir's communication mutual adaptation framework. These societal strains tend to reverberate within PWIs, and influence how White individuals work to protect a philosophy of Whiteness, which
assumes that their existence is neutral or normal, and reinforces the societal structures that determine access to privilege, power, and resources (Flores, Moon, & Nakayama, 2006).

The mindset of exclusion and race division is in conflict with the changing face of workers. The participation rates of racial and ethnic individuals since the 1960s civil rights efforts have climbed significantly; in 1900, non-Whites collectively comprised roughly 14% of the entire labor force. By 2005, Black Americans comprised about 12% of the total workforce, and by 2050, Black Americans are expected to comprise 14% of the workforce, largely due to the growth of Black American women’s participation (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009; Toossi, 2006). Conversely, Black American professional representation has progressed more slowly in PWIs; White Americans hold 83.6% of all management, professional, and related occupations, while only 8.4% of the same positions are held by Black Americans (Catalyst Census Report, August, 2012).

Even though PWIs are more diverse today than at any other time in our nation’s history (due to civil rights legislation) the legacy of established intolerance in the U.S. endures. With hierarchical social positioning, assumed White privilege, and attitudes of superiority, the integration laws that joined Black professionals and White professionals together in public spaces did little to increase the interactions between cultures or to diminish cross-cultural and adaptation tensions, particularly in the PWI settings (Johnson, 2006). All of the participants in my earlier, baseline study (Sutton, 2012); for example, referred to the challenge of remaining emotionally and psychologically strong amid persistent exclusionary practices. According to the first study participant (B.C.), his coworkers questioned his authority; some directly interfered with his work and he had to
deal with stereotypes of Black culture. He viewed the situation as adversarial and conducted himself strictly by the book so that his coworkers could not find fault with him. In the interview, he said: “My armor was to have all my t’s crossed and i’s dotted. I couldn’t be comfortable and had to watch my back.”

Deane and Stringer (2009) stated that the number one cross-cultural challenge facing individuals in U.S. organizations is mistrust; historically, relationships between Black workers and White workers were filled with “inequality, distrust, mistreatment and exclusion” (p. 1). Clearly, the impact of these historic barriers is still felt. Rather than relying on legal decisions, Black and White professionals need to discover new inroads toward positive change in the milieu of historical discord.

**Black Professionals and the U.S. Adaptation Experience in PWIs**

Cross-cultural adaptation, in the conventional sense, entails moving from one culture to another, and learning the rules, norms, customs, and language of the new culture. Adaptation scholar, Fons Trompenaars (1997) often uses a “riding of waves” culture metaphor to describe the ability of people to adapt to another culture. Some individuals can easily shift from their own cultural frame to that of a second culture. M. J. Bennett (1998) also suggests that some individuals can develop to a stage that is beyond adapting to a specific culture, to the point of becoming interculturally sensitive. These individuals are able to demonstrate respect for their own culture and the second culture. They can function in diverse cultures without becoming stymied in any particular one, and can integrate in multiple cultures. For most Black Americans; however, adapting in the U.S. before the 1964 Civil Rights Act did not involve navigating between one culture and another. Instead, it entailed forced adjustment to a
White society that legally segregated and discriminated against them. Despite legal improvements, these ideologies remain systemic and continue to suppress. In my earlier baseline study (Sutton, 2012), the Black professional participants believed that their White counterparts felt no need to adapt and could not understand what reciprocation might look like. One of the respondents concluded, “I don’t feel they believe they should adapt; [t]hey think others should adapt to them.” Another participant indicated her lack of interest in adapting with White counterparts until African Americans can come to the table as equals. The participants characterized their White counterparts’ subtle refusal to reciprocate and adapt to Black culture as behaviors that created hostile atmospheres in PWIs so that it was impossible to ride the waves. The lack of collegial adaptation becomes evident when Black professionals are positioned to interact with White professionals who are not accustomed to a Black presence. In addition, more resistance toward Black workers develops when they have authority positions, when new Black professionals are vying for positions of authority and power, or when seasoned Black professionals have positions that have been traditionally held only by White professionals (Cobbs, 2003); for example, President Obama’s 2012 election and the Tea Party opposition. Most of the White settings involve concentrated spaces where the legacy of institutional racism has created a chasm between Black professionals and White professionals and a mindset of superiority.

**Black Professionals’ Adaptation vs. Business Adaptation in PWIs**

While most individuals make some adaptations to corporate business culture, a drastic difference is seen in how Black Americans adapt in PWI contexts. In conventional cross-cultural and corporate business adaptation, people move from one
culture to another, typically learning the rules, norms, customs, and language of the new culture. In the PWI context; however, Black American professionals adapt in markedly different ways from typical corporate business adaptations. The workers negotiate oppressive behaviors and make psychological adaptations that extend beyond adjusting to a business culture requiring longer work hours or making sacrifices in their family time.

To fit in at a PWI, Black workers in my earlier study reported having seriously compromised part of their identity (Sutton, 2012). One of the participants described herself as taking on a more reserved persona and dressing more formally: “It’s a front. It works better for [White workers].” The Black male participants specifically mentioned having to tone down their forthright communication style so that their White counterparts would not feel intimidated. They attributed adaptation challenges to stereotyping by their White counterparts. One of the participants said:

When I gave directions, it was perceived as me being [the] angry [Black man]. I don’t sugar coat words any longer. I always had to be mindful of how I said things—such as angry or forceful when I was just having a conversation; I realized I had to tone down my words. Given the history in this country, I should be the one running every time I see a White person.

Another male participant spoke of how the others perceived him: “My tone was perceived as threatening; Black males are considered a danger around women. I usually place my hand in my pocket so I appear safe.” Other participants described adaptations that centered on socializing with their White coworkers after work, which usually involved bars or venues that made them feel “uncomfortable.” Even when trying to relax with White coworkers, one individual spoke of tremendous mental discomfort, “The whole time, I was thinking of White domination.”
The participants’ manner of dress, where and how they chose to socialize, and their communication styles were all considered as intensely personal areas, and because they did not feel welcome to behave as they usually would, in the PWI workplace, a crisis of conscience was the result. One of the male participants commented, “[It feels like my] integrity is being taken away. I invited people to my home; I tried to make them feel safe around me and I used humor.”

What seemed to frustrate the participants the most was not just the process of adaptation, but the refusal of their White colleagues to recognize their efforts to adapt, the unwillingness of the White colleagues to adapt their behaviors to meet the needs of Black workers, and to not see any need for change. Some of the participants also indicated that, even after they had adapted, their adjustments did not reduce the racist overtones existing in the PWI. Furthermore, the lack of progress caused some of them to withdraw from the adaptation process altogether.

When adaptation was a viable option, Black professionals used complex adaptive thinking before interacting with their White counterparts: (1) they felt a need to understand White culture orientations (how White people operate in social or business settings); (2) they took a quiet approach—where they would gauge trust-worthiness before developing a relationship. This approach was attributed to underlying racism and past experiences where White individuals demonstrated subtle, superior attitudes toward them; (3) Black workers adapted because they felt it was a necessary part of life; however, they viewed adaption as a degrading experience and a selling-out behavior, an extreme identity negotiation, to the point of compromising individual integrity, morality, and principles in exchange for success in the mainstream. One participant described the
act of adapting as a degrading experience, comparing the process to a female film character named Kizzy, who is depicted as a docile, peacemaking slave in the 1970s movie "Roots," "I'm not going to be Kizzy. They want me to adapt so they feel comfortable. If I have to sing and dance, White people will continue to treat me as inferior." The Black professionals also described some of the perceived intercultural challenges of adapting in PWI spaces, such as remaining emotionally and psychologically strong amid persistent exclusion and social rejection. The participants identified three challenges to adaptation: a refusal to relate to Black workers as individuals, passive-aggressive racism, and well-intentioned but inept White colleagues. When White individuals in PWIs refused to make any space for their Black coworkers, adaptation was impossible and the only viable solution was to separately persevere. J.M. Bennett (1993) described this mindset as "encapsulated marginality" and indicated that it is associated with high levels of stress.

Fortunately, many of the participants were able to come up with creative strategies to overcome the challenges mentioned above. These included mindfully adapting to White styles, limiting personal disclosure, and being proactive in establishing relationships with Whites.

Some participants found it easier to watch how Whites interacted with each other and to adopt their methods. I developed a list: "Don't be critical, smile when you don't feel like it; surface conversation is welcomed more than having the barriers down." By observing the rules of White culture, the Black workers could perform their tasks within the PWI without creating tension with their colleagues, and could also retain their natural identity outside of the PWI. For participant A.A., this method helped her blend in at the
university without forming deep relationships with White counterparts—she would not invite White associates to her home, but instead relied on the purely Black community there. She was only interested in “playing the game.”

The “quiet” approach, where Black workers gauge their colleagues before giving away personal information, allowed the participants to gain trust, retain a sense of control, and develop friendships with their White coworkers. Participant M. noted that, when he was in a small group of White coworkers, keeping quiet allowed him to feel that the White workers were not in charge of everything. Also, participant N.W. said that she believed a quiet approach helped overcome some of the “boxing in” tendencies of her White coworkers: “I don’t want them to read me 100%; people are quick to stool pigeon you.”

The observation approach and the quiet approach were useful for navigating the White culture, but were not very effective for the situation as a whole. The participants used methods that changed their psychological mindset, but included changes in the environment. Many of the methods were focused on creating spaces for the White workers to feel comfortable and to adapt. Ironically, the White counterparts either had no idea that they needed to adapt or had no interest.

Because of the Civil Rights Act and possibly a White perspective, the interactions between Black professionals and White interlocutors may seem to be equally collaborative and understood. Nevertheless, the initial perception fails to take into account the old rules where the White culture (embedded in institutional racism) expected Black Americans to adjust to Eurocentric orientations. Given these intercultural
dispositions, White professionals fail to notice that Black Americans typically shift cultural frames and that White individuals generally remain Eurocentric.

If the White professionals in PWIs fail to adapt in a mutual way, they will perpetuate the mindset that suggests Black individuals should adapt to them. This superior -race-based notion hinders any possibility for advancing the relationships between the groups of professionals. Moreover, without intervention, little promise exists for improvements that might benefit the cross-cultural interactions between Black professionals and White professionals in PWIs. George A. Kelly (1963) postulated that, for meaningful intercultural exchanges to materialize, skilled mediators must intervene at both individual and institutional levels. He further explained that an intercultural setting is not equivalent to an intercultural experience. In other words, to learn from intercultural environments, more is required than simply participating in events as they occur. Learning emerges from an ability to understand the events and to use that understanding to transform both groups of professionals, Black and White.

TC studies have accentuated themes of synergy and convergence and have developed appropriate models for the stranger-host relationships in different cultures and systems. Nevertheless, more research needs to be focused on the longstanding, interactional issues between Black and White counterparts in PWI contexts. This expanded research scope should include the perspectives of Black American professionals.

**Research Purpose**

The purpose of this expanded research study was to focus on the Black American professionals’ perspective of the TCB approach. Previous TC studies, that have
accentuated themes of collaboration and convergence and developed appropriate models for the stranger-host relationships in different cultures and systems, have failed to focus on the longstanding, interactional issues between Black and White counterparts in PWI contexts.

This study explores a Third Culture (TC) application to U.S. Black American professionals interacting in (PWIs) to determine how they conceptualize phases of interpersonal accommodation to develop an effective, cross-cultural communication-focused framework. The TC bottom-up approach identifies critical success factors for achieving sustainable, long-term relationship-building processes, which are at the root of any cultural construction. This study focuses on the interpersonal level of TCB, not on an intervention model by a third party. While both Black and White theoretical perspectives reverberate in this study, Black American voices have often become subdued in mainstream media outlets, such as social science research, authored books, and television documentaries (Orelus, 2012). An understanding of a Black American professional perspective is considered especially useful for this research study.

Research Questions

Given the cross-cultural challenges of interactions within PWIs, the following research question was explored:

**How can Black American professionals generate a TC space in PWIs through cross-cultural social exchange?**

To address the research question, two TCB frameworks were used in analyzing various themes: (1) Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) TCB (grounded in relationship theory), and (2) Casmir’s (1989) TCB approach (grounded in relational interdependence)
and an element of TC development (Casmir, p. 423). Additional research questions were asked to understand Black professionals’ perspectives of the TCB application in PWIs, derived from their responses to the following questions:

1. What factors motivate Black American professionals to create a TC in PWIs?
2. How can a TC be built in the PWIs?
3. Who would be the builders of the TC? (How can they engage the White professionals to work with them?)
4. How do Black American professionals conceptualize the phases of interpersonal accommodation for achieving their TC goals?

These research questions served as key discussion points for the focus group participants (Appendix A).

**Importance of the Study**

First, the research will provide an understanding of TCB in PWIs from the perspective of Black American professionals, rather than from the White American professionals. Second, the study will support current TCB research, but focus on issues of domestic interaction in the U.S., rather than on international stranger-host relationships. Third, the TCB study will offer a possible resolution for both Black professionals and White professionals who are interested in mutual adaptation, for generating the third space, which would be the catalyst for effective cross-cultural communication in PWIs. Fourth, to assist future research studies, this study will provide baseline information on the current status of cross-cultural interactions between Black professionals and White professionals in PWIs. Finally, the higher education community will be able to use the findings of this study to gain insight about how Black professionals
and White professionals in PWIs can leverage intercultural opportunities for the benefit of all. Black Americans will be able to offer positive influence to the field of intercultural communication by framing a new culture that is outside the historically polarized structures projected on them.

**Scope of the Research**

The TCB theoretical approach is primarily applied to a focus group of nine Black American professionals (focus group selection and representation is discussed in the methodology chapter) since scant literature is available that links historical, institutional racism to the cross-cultural interactional experiences between Black professionals and White professionals in PWIs, or to intercultural resolutions, such as generating a new space. On the other hand, a significant amount of research is available about White American professionals and cross-cultural relations in both domestic and intercultural contexts. The research on Black and White exchanges in general U.S. contexts, such as schools and organizations, typically describes the interactions as being nonexistent or poor (Orelus, 2012).

According to Beverly Tatum (2007), Black individuals and White individuals sometimes communicate or interact with one another because they have an obligation to do so for matters related to sporting events or other activities. Otherwise, they do not willingly mingle. In fact, the participants in my earlier study asserted that Black people and White people might be equals, though some White people seem to refrain from inviting their Black colleagues to their homes for dinner or social gatherings. Likewise, Black people do not invite White colleagues for similar reasons (Sutton, 2012). Practices of separation remain problematic in PWI contexts because they fail to contribute to a
unity of Black and White people (Tatum, 2003). The paucity of interactions often serves as a catalyst, motivating Black American professionals to initiate better relationships with their White counterparts in PWIs.

While maintaining beneficial interactions with the majority White group can place the onus for mutually beneficial relationships onto both parties, and create space for shared understanding, for success in these settings, Black Americans need to preserve and esteem their culture. In addition, Black individuals must discover their rich historic legacy, cultural traditions, and assert their professional and personal needs, which have been repressed by those who strive to sustain White hegemony. Otherwise, Black Americans will continue living up to the standards of the “White world” (Orelsus, 2012). Therefore, the focus of this study intentionally excludes the application of TC to White American professionals, and focuses only on the TC concept for Black American professionals, using a Eurocentric theoretical approach.

I examined Fred Casimir’s concept (1989) of TCB because the model offers promising solutions for overcoming intercultural barriers in healthy, productive ways. According to the TC concept, transformational change must occur in the philosophies of PWIs that have forced Black Americans to adapt (Sutton, 2012), and dictate the organizational behavior in PWIs. This study is particularly relevant for Black professionals because new structures can diminish the vain racial philosophies projected on them by White Americans, while emphasizing their bicultural strength.

For Black Americans, dealing with issues of power and communication in PWIs is part of an ongoing process that needs to be examined further. The power dynamics and the denial of structural privilege operating to advantage certain groups (i.e., White
individuals and White males) (McIntosh, 1988) while further entrenching others (i.e., Black Americans and other ethnic groups) into subordinate roles, supports a climate of victim-blaming and reinforces stereotypes. This can camouflage discriminatory practices and undermine the prospect for true cross-cultural communication (Johnson, 2006).

Although Fred Casmir's (1989) TC concept has not resolved issues of power within the TCB frame, his theory still offers a promising alternative for effective cross-cultural communication.

Generating a third space means the evolution of a new system where individuals change the old ways of interacting. This develops from the one-way adaptation (a superior-inferior system) and begins a new way of interrelating, to two-way adaptation (an equal, deferential communication system). For example, Black Americans and White Americans can use the third space to shift from a stranger-host relationship (where rudiments of institutional racism persist) to a mutually respectful relationship (where Black professionals and White professionals are viewed as equal American professionals, rather than as long-term strangers, such as immigrants, refugees, or sojourners).

Normally, the stranger-host relationship describes various interactions between two groups of individuals, but it can also characterize: (1) interactions between people within a different subculture; (2) interactions with individuals from other cultures in the home culture; (3) interactions with others in the host culture; and (4) interactions with associates or strangers within one's own culture (Fantini, 2001). The stranger-host frame can depict the relationship between Black professionals and White professionals in PWIs.

To create a third space, in a context where resistance to change is evident and where Black American professionals consistently endure the stress of one-way adjustment, a
forum must be available for both cultures to adapt together, with the intention of moving forward.

Summary

This research explores the creation of a TC space in PWIs from the perspective of a Black professional focus group for improving cross-cultural relationships in these contexts. The perspective framework is based on the progressive interpersonal stages for interchange. The study explores factors that motivate Black professionals to build a TC, which included information from Casmir's mutual-needs paradigm (How a Third Culture could be built), derived from Casmir's (1989) voluntary criteria, and Starosta's (1995) rhetorical intercultural and metacultural phases. Finally, the research explores who the builders of the TC would be, and discusses how intracultural and intercultural skills can affect TCB conceptualization; specifically, “What would a successful TC look like?” in applying Starosta's intracultural and Casmir's interdependence and unconstrained outcome criteria.
Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I will briefly describe the work of interrelated TCB researchers who have examined intercultural interactions. Subsequently, I discussed a TCB approach to assuage the problems of ineffective cross-cultural communication, which is one-way and unfair (Sutton, 2012), between Black professionals and White professionals in PWIs.

This study contributed to the burgeoning field of intercultural communication, in particular, TCB. A number of TCB theorists focused on intercultural interactions, to find resolutions to the conflicts between groups in both international and US contexts (Adler, 1980; Bennett, 1988; Casmir, 1989; Starosta & Olorunnisola, 1995). While numerous studies accentuated similar themes of synergy, convergence, and adaptation, and developed appropriate models for the interaction between representatives of different cultures and systems, Fred Casmir's (1989) TCB model emphasized an alternative synergetic, shared model that results in individuals interpreting, creating, decoding, and sharing meaning. Casmir's work expressed a third space based on interpersonal relationships and driven by interested parties, rather than dictated by outside forces (government agencies, mediators, and representatives of nations), given the connection of these forces to historical acts of cultural imperialism (Casmir, 1989).

Many researchers held views similar to Casmir's (1989) TCB concept, but used different terminologies. Gadamer's (1975) "fusion of horizon" theory referred to a person having a horizon that is not limited to what is nearby. Instead, the person can see
beyond the horizon. Broome’s (1992) “relational empathy” asserted similar views to Gadamer’s concept, in that, while individuals can never become another person, people can perceive vicariously through the lens of other people if they build the structure and meaning for it. M. J. Bennett (as cited in Hurstel, 2010) emphasized that when the influential group attempts to adapt, a third culture is the result. He postulated that a third culture is not a fusion, but rather a separate culture in its own right. These authors, informed by a general system perspective, allowed for flexibility and recognized human potential.

Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1991) TCB approach corroborated Casmir’s (1989) TCB approach. The researchers (Starosta & Olorunnisola) aimed to change “frameworks, value systems, and communication systems for purposes of survival, mutual growth, and enjoyment of the life experience.” (p. 420-422, in Deetz, 1993). In essence, both TCB researchers argued that individuals could renegotiate their experiences in various contexts. Casmir’s (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1991) TCB approaches showed potential for individuals in diverse contexts to create and influence the most fundamental components of the human cultural experience.

Casmir (1989) presented the TCB theory as a creative relationship between diversity and unity, and projected the concept useful for individuals or cultural groups who seek to resolve issues of limited resources shared within an environment. My earlier study (Sutton, 2012) revealed that TCB contained elements similar to the participants’ practice of navigating between their own culture and the White culture, such as the ability to shift cultural frames while keeping their sense of identity intact. Thus, the study showed that Black American participants determined to sustain their cultural identity:
“They are free to retrieve their original culture at any time or they can get more distance from it” (Ekelund, 1994). TCB scholars called for a reconsideration of “liberal expectancy,” the melting pot model (Gordon, as cited in Colburn & Pozzetta, 1993) that requires extreme identity negotiation, under the guise of cooperation.

Although Casmir (1989) promoted the sustainment of cultural identity, he also extoled the virtue of mutual cultural adaptation in relationships. However, the TC adaption research stood at odds with multiculturalism research, which encouraged preserving culture and keeping identity unaltered from either relational or external forces.

Asante (1987), a multicultural theorist, argued that language (i.e., use of “synergy” and “intracultural”) advanced by Casmir’s (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) respectively, contributed to a process of obliterating the visibility of ethnic groups or races (e.g., Black Americans and Latin Americans), while increasing the visibility of cohort groups (e.g., White Americans). On the other hand, Casmir (1989) asserted that TCB emphasized the language of “mutuality” and “noncoercion” to assuage legitimate concerns of the multicultural domain. Further, Casmir argued that individuals (e.g., Black Americans) are not negotiating their identity any further through TCB; rather, they are asserting themselves in shared spaces.

While Casmir’s (1989) TCB approach decentralized a direct address to issues of institutional racism facing marginalized groups in dominant contexts (i.e., the denial of structural privilege that operates to advantage White Americans), his approach aimed to reduce the effects of the interpersonal power imbalance that exists, for example, between Black Americans and their White American counterparts in White spaces. Casmir’s (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) TCB approaches emphasized five
elemental features useful for addressing power imbalance and for structuring organizational and personal change:

1. An interdependent and synthetic process that aims to change people and relationships;
2. A voluntary process that is driven by interested parties, rather than being dictated by outside forces (government agencies, mediators, and representatives of nations);
3. Mutually agreed upon (needs-based) affiliation;
4. Unconstrained predetermined outcome; and
5. A gradual process that develops over time.

The TCB researchers advanced many positive features, but some limitations also existed, besides the above-mentioned shortcomings (Casmir, 1989; Starosta & Olorunnisola, 1995) and the aforementioned benefits to marginalized groups. Motivation for the majority groups in PWI contexts remained a key factor for generating a third space. Casmir and Starosta and Olorunnisola discussed that TCB required an inherent need to construct a new worldview; therefore, they asserted that underlying barriers, such as a White privilege mindset, might thwart a TCB approach in majority contexts, (e.g., PWI environments).

Nakayama and Martin (1999) advanced a critical theory approach for understanding white privilege, Whiteness, and unraveling racism. The researchers Whiteness notion emphasized how majority White groups operate to foster and maintain White privilege. Specifically, the researchers framed Whiteness as a political and cultural position, which differed from other theoretical approaches, such as Asante's
(1987) multiculturalism belief, which promoted a legitimate need for understanding the true value of non-dominant cultures. Conversely, Nakayama and Martin (1999) discussed how a White influence operates to enforce a systematic White privilege, such as in educational institutions. Nakayama and Martin (1999) maintained that Whiteness is a universal behavior and maintained that this structural approach contributed to how the majority group, (e.g., White people) view the world. The researchers discussed that communication could address systemic racism.

Nakayama and Martin’s (1999) Whiteness research contributed to the burgeoning TCB discussion, specifically, to Casmir (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) TCB approach; they highlighted how Whiteness operates and linked it to individual and systemic intercultural communication barriers. Nakayama and Martin presented the Whiteness theory as a broad-based assumption and presumed that Whites Americans evasively define White culture to protect their historical power, which is not representative of all White Americans—it is a form of over-generalizing, a latent drawback of the critical theory approach. The researchers’ critical theory (Whiteness) view assumed Whites have a limited capacity to objectively interact with racially diverse others, which can negatively affect building positive intercultural relations, such as TC.

The premise of this study maintained that a TCB approach operated and upheld common values that were inclusive of different views, and respectful of the right of people to practice different beliefs. In my earlier study (Sutton, 2012), I found that Black professional respondents considered inclusive TC factors effective for remedying the historically racial problems that attempt to suppress or culturally dominate them.
Casmir (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) TCB frameworks outlined a useful “model” for the Black American professional participants of this study. While the study focused on Black participants who worked in PWIs, the study also considered the unique quality of each individual and the organizational context. Not all Black professionals felt comfortable with building a new space, or about acts of adapting or synthesizing cultural identity, as was noted in my earlier study (Sutton, 2012) and in the multicultural perspective. This study showed receptivity to the other cross-cultural interactional needs of Black professionals, a principle idea of the TCB approach. In the following three sections, I conceptualize how a TCB process might function in the organizational context by discussing the application, the process, and the behaviors of TCB.

A TCB Application

A TC framework showed developmental potential within organizations at the individual level, based on its application, rather than outcome. Therefore, willing participants can contribute significantly to the changes in their organization and communities (Casmir, 1978). Those involved in mutual adaption would adhere to a process that changes their attitudes, skills, and behaviors, and the developers of the TC facilitate, support, and defend the new space.

The following description conceptualizes the process and implementation of the TC. It indicates the workings of the TC in an organizational setting so that those involved in TCB can recognize the emergence of the new culture.
**Mutual adaption.** The TC view of mutual adaption involves individuals who modify their needs and interests to engage in new interactive relationships. The collaborative relationship goal is to create a respect for diversity. For example, a team composed of U.S. Black, Latino, and White Americans come together to work on a project. As a group, they agree to try to adapt to everyone else (Bennett, 1998). No single culture dominates, nor does the corporate culture dominate in the mutual adaptation, though the organizational values must be respected. Bennett (1998) asserted that a successful mutual adaption could occur when people are generally similar in both their cultural self-awareness and their sensitivity to other cultures. Although self-awareness can shape cultural understanding, it also can create capacity for intercultural sensitivity. However, no culture is much better at cultural self-awareness than any other is (Bennett, 1998). For that reason, intercultural coaching is needed during the developmental stages.

Bennett (1998) presented self-awareness and intercultural sensitivity as progressions of insight and contributed to the broader intercultural communication discussion. He has been recognized for creating the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Bennett described the model, in a series of six stages, as a continuum of attitudes toward cultural differences. The goal is to move from the ethnocentric stages of denial, defense, and minimization, to the ethnorelative stages of acceptance, adaptation and integration. Bennett characterized ethnocentrism as a mindset or attitude that supposes the superiority of one's own worldview, at times without acknowledging the existence of others. Conversely, he explained ethnorelativism as assumed equality and validity of all groups. A person does not judge others by the
standards of one’s own culture. Bennett’s six-stage model may be helpful to individuals or groups interested in new TCB approaches in the future.

Specifically, the model describes:

1. Denial: A person does not consider the existence of cultural difference;
2. Defense: Difference is threatening. Strategies are sought to fight differences to preserve the absoluteness of one’s own worldview;
3. Minimization: Similarity is more profound than cultural differences;
4. Acceptance: Difference is acknowledged and respected. Acceptance is recognizing cultural relativity of nonverbal behavior. Difference arouses curiosity rather than animosity;
5. Adaptation: In the adaptation phase, individuals shift cultural frames through empathy and pluralism. Respect is demonstrated for one’s culture and second culture.
6. Integration: Integration is a dynamic process; individuals function in diverse cultures while not becoming stymied in any particular one.

TC behaviors. The baseline study (Sutton, 2012) and Casmir (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995) research revealed that building the TC involved soliciting participants who subscribe to certain interactional behaviors, including: (1) participation in an open dialogue where parties have no demands and do not know what might result from it; (2) risk-taking and courage; and (3) embracing the open attitude of the TC and what it stands for. Importantly, the participants build a relationship with each other, an interactional process that develops over time (Casmir, 1993).
TCB process. Gardenswartz and Rowe (2010) described a diversity management plan is measurable and comprehensive, and includes cultural dimensions. The essence of generative mutual space, such as the TCB concept, is diversity and inclusion, rather than exclusion. Therefore, the culture-building process must be perceived as a dynamic, continuing mission. The researchers found that a clear plan and structure required more than noncommittal curiosity to create a healthy cultural context. Moreover, they defined the following key actions to secure an effective change process in the organizational context:

Step 1: Executive Level Commitment. The single most important factor affecting the success and endurance of diversity and inclusion work is leadership, especially executive leadership. Although the leader must champion the cause, no single person can implement change.

Step 2: Assessment and Diagnosis. Learn about the current situation and establish a baseline by conducting a climate survey. The results can guide discussions with focus groups (and be used in individual interviews). Assessment and diagnosis will be an ongoing component for ensuring continual improvement. A comprehensive needs assessment can gather data about interpersonal behavior, organizational culture, and the impact of the system on people. The findings will guide the organization’s definition of diversity and TC mission for inclusion.

Step 3: Establish a Diversity Task Force. The TC task force should include a range of levels from the organization (board members, administrators, and faculty, staff, and community members) and represent the ethnic and racial diversities. The team will build relationships with one another and throughout the
organization and community. The TCB team should also establish specific objectives that guide the creation and implementation of the climate survey, the vision and mission statement, and the strategic diversity plan.

**Step 4: System Changes.** Change at the systemic level is the step where organizational change takes place; it is a long-term process, not a short-term goal. Six areas are covered in creating the culture change: accountability, reward, reporting relationships, communication, decision-making, and norms.

**Step 5: Training.** The purpose of the training is to create awareness and help people develop their knowledge and skills. The awareness and knowledge can ultimately result in behavior change throughout the organization.

**Step 6: Evaluation.** Measuring the effects of the culture change plan (process and results) provides credibility by providing data and results, and may also uncover information that can serve as feedback for making ongoing improvements.

**Step 7: Integration.** Managing diversity through the culture change plan is a process, rather than a stand-alone topic, because it becomes part of all operations. The continuous feedback loop keeps the system and the outcomes viable and significant, while also ensuring their relevance.

Gardenswartz and Rowe (2010) asserted that the 7-steps process positioned organizations to include all differences (as long as they did not negatively affect the business); and, the steps assisted either individuals or groups to gain greater support and strategic relevance. Both Bennett (1998) and Gardenswartz and Rowe (2010) presented frameworks helpful in thinking about new approaches in the future. A TCB process
begins with the approach of self-assessment, which in turn, involves choosing a group of individuals who model inclusive behaviors and represent various employees from all groups and organizational levels.

Casmir and Asuncion-Lande (Anderson 1989, p. 295) described the kind of persons needed for generating a TC in various cultural contexts. They posited that individuals needed to be able to suspend cultural identity to create new forms of reality based on human diversity and the changeability of the human condition. The evolving process can be understood from Beesley’s (1995) TCB application to South Africa’s Black and White employees (two divergent cultural groups with acrimonious relationships due to the historic apartheid system, which resembles the history of systemic racism in the U.S.). The employees now work side-by-side in the once race-separated organizations. Beesley’s application process included seven phases:

1. Team selection Phase—Inclusion from all employee levels for greater support and strategic significance.

2. Audit Phase—Measures the environment.

3. Trust-Building Phase—Management cares for the staff.

4. Create the Concept Phase—Compilation of ideas from following an audit. Members search for attitudes and skills that complement a common culture.

5. Consolidation Phase—Conduct a review of the progress after successful completion of the previous stages, and then proceed to a consensus. The concept is shared inside and outside the organization.
6. Introduction Phase—Consists of a series of promotional activities designed for the members of the organization to demonstrate the success of the TC process and evidence of its impact on the members and organization.

7. Monitoring and Feedback—A communication loop where compliments, criticism, and suggestions are accepted. This phase encourages TC growth.

A TCB has its participants acting as agents of change in relational, but also in institutional transformation. For example, the co-workers can build a TC by assisting colleagues to recognize, understand, and act upon the practices and patterns that occur in their shared environment. Casmir (1978) emphasized that change comes from individual interactions. Casmir (1989) considered the agent of change necessary for effective intercultural communication and increased cross-cultural contacts and exchanges (Casmir in Anderson, 1989, p. 295). By applying the TC model to the Black American professionals in this study, characteristics of change-agentry emerged.

Summary

The TCB researchers presented an open-ended concept, with the potential for continuous, future growth; they emphasized that TC boundaries can extend to include both individuals and institutions, especially communication outlets. Casmir (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) TCB research showed concern for the future, marking the beginning of a new, shared progression that is ongoing and evolving. The TCB researchers approach contributed to a standpoint for Black American professionals in this study to renegotiate their experiences in PWIs, and to create and influence the most fundamental components of the human cultural experience.
Chapter 3. Method

The review of the literature demonstrates the need for additional research on cross-cultural interactions and communication between Black and White professionals, as well as other ethnic cultures, in the intercultural relationships in U.S. PWIs (Adler, 1980; Bennett, 1988; Casmir, 1989; Starosta & Olorunnisola, 1995). As intercultural relationships have been increasing in prevalence (Catalyst, 2012; Chavous, 2005; Toossi, 2006), the need for more empirical research and greater understanding is imperative (Orelus, 2012). In addition, the opposing viewpoints need to be clarified about the establishment of a TC and ways of building successful intercultural relationships (Asante, 1987; Foeman & Nance, 1999).

The current research study is a follow-up to my earlier baseline study (Sutton, 2012), which was directed toward answering the question: How do Black American professionals construe the adaptation process in PWIs? The sample population consisted of six Black professionals (mean age = 33.5 years; 4 US-born and raised; and 2 African-born and raised with Middle East and US identities). The study used a purposive sampling approach; respondents were selected according to their similar racial characteristics and first-hand experience working in PWIs (The PWIs are comprised of at least 95% White Americans) from several industry-types: social services, universities, telephone communications, healthcare, real estate, auto industry, and industrial
manufacturing. The baseline study (Sutton, 2012) served as the key impetus for the current study’s focus group.

The primary purpose of the present study was to determine how Black American professionals could generate a TC in PWIs. The study also sought to address the following perspectives:

- Which factors motivate Black American professionals to create a TC in PWIs?
- How can a TC be built in PWIs?
- Who would be the builders of the TC?
- How do Black American professionals conceptualize the phases of interpersonal accommodation for achieving the goals of the TC?

The outcomes for the guiding questions are discussed in the Results and Discussion sections.

In evaluating the literature for the relationships among constructs in terms of TCB, a clear pattern was found. Most studies were qualitative, or non-experimental, in nature. The research methods for intercultural communication do not have a specific form (Beesley, 1995; Casimir, 1978, 1989; Starosta & Olorunmisola, 1995; Hu, 2004; Korzenny & Korzenny, 1984). Intercultural communication comprises many social science disciplines, such as anthropology, psychology, linguistics, communication, sociology, and philosophy (Harman & Briggs, 1991). In any case, the scholars in this integrated field of study use different methodologies for data collection. In general, anthropologists tend to use observation and interview methods for collecting first-hand, holistic data (i.e., qualitative data-collection). On the other hand, communication researchers are interested in exploring theories of intercultural communication. Since
qualitative research is inductive, Chen and Starosta (1997) recommend using research methods that develop philosophies, insights, and understandings from data obtained from interviews, diaries, and recordings to reveal recurring patterns that emerge directly from the data. Seliger and Shohamy (1999) state that the value of qualitative research is in its ability to be adopted to generate propositions, and be viewed as an organic development. To some degree, the process is synthetic and dynamic (Hu & Fan, 2011).

Focus group and interviews are methods of choice in the TCB literature that conceptualize intercultural relations. Most studies use demographic and cultural factors as a means of defining which external and internal factors might influence cross-cultural relationships. The common demographic factors that emerge in the literature include race/ethnicity, age, and economic or political status in the organization. While this non-empirical approach generally results in identifying qualitative relationships between TCB and some of the demographic variables studied, the relationships are not causal, so that methodological refinement and development of a conceptual basis is needed.

As communal spaces and PWIs become increasingly diverse, individuals need to take advantage of the intercultural opportunities. A demand exists for individuals who are culturally competent and who can live and work with others in and from different cultures (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Beesley’s (1995) applied research of a TCB approach to intercultural communication in a South African airline provides a holistic framework for conceptualizing a TC application in an increasing diverse setting, against the backdrop of Africa’s turbulent history and the progression of racial separateness. The authors focused on racial and cultural demographics between the workers. Beesley used qualitative methodologies and found that most White African organizations would benefit
if they adopted TC principles. Beesley stated that TCB is more of a methodology than a theory because its non-exclusionary nature offers a useful approach for the constructive and functional application process. The author pointed out that idiosyncrasies, such as cliques, networks, gatekeeping, bottlenecks, prejudices, and personality clashes, within organizations can be uncovered through qualitative practices and procedures. The International Communication Association (ICA) audit (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996) recommended that an intercultural methodology revolve around a plan of action and data collection through processes that include focus groups, communication experiences, and interviews, for example.

**Procedures**

To recruit participants for the study, I sent focus-group cover letters, which explained the purpose of the exploratory project and the time commitment needed to complete the focus group. The letters also stated the participants’ right to request and receive the study results. The participants were given demographic surveys prior to the focus group meeting, to gather additional information about the participants for informing the study (i.e., respondent’s gender, age, race/ethnicity, type of institution (PWI), and generation status in the U.S. Participants were given copies of the focus group questions. To ensure anonymity, participants were assigned pseudonyms (Bailey, 1994, p. 96). Only the secondary data analyzer and I had access to the completed forms with the demographic and focus group discussion information.

I asked participants for their informed consent, and they were provided with sufficient information for making an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the study or to continue participating. Involvement in the study was both
anonymous and consensual. The focus group session took place on a single occasion, and lasted for two hours. The meeting was audio-recorded, with the permission of the participants.

I took care to safeguard the respondents' identities and places of work throughout the study and in the subsequent documentation. The audio-recording of the focus group session will be maintained for a period of three years. Each participant was given contact information for the primary researcher, in case they had any questions or concerns about the study.

**Research Method and Design**

To gain insight into how Black American professionals can generate a third space in PWIs, a focus group methodology was used in the study design. The qualitative, interpretive, and critical methodologies stimulated in-depth conversation for better analysis. This narrative-based approach served as the primary means for gathering data. Participants were allowed to generally say anything they liked during the session, which was a true-to-life setting. The strategy used to address the research question included a piloted pre-testing discussion with four Black professionals before the actual focus group was conducted.

**Instruments**

Eleven questions were used, derived from Casmir's (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola's (1995) TCB theories (Appendix B). To motivate the focus group discussion, participants were asked to write a description of what White culture looks like in PWIs and what an ideal third space would look like in the same setting. The group
shared their written responses with the other members while the researcher wrote their perspectives and reactions on chart paper. The investigator used the writing activities to prepare the participants for the next steps and to frame the subsequent discussion on TCB.

Krueger and Casey (2000) indicated that focus groups provide researchers with more disclosures, compared to other types of research. This method prevented the participants from being restricted in their choices, as in “A, B, C” survey instruments. In the focus group sessions, the researcher can listen to not only the content of the discussions, but also to the participants’ emotions, ironies, contradictions, and tensions. This simple practice has a major advantage in its construction of insight. The remainder of this chapter describes the research participant recruitment and data analysis.

**Participant Recruitment**

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit 12 Black American professional focus group participants to discuss aspects of TCB in PWIs. While 12 subjects were invited, 9 enrolled in the study (3 males and 6 females; age range of 30-70), including 2 in senior management, 2 in upper-middle management, and 1 entrepreneur. This group size was ideal for analyzing the varied details, for the purposes of this study (Krueger, 1998). Two participants from my earlier study (Sutton, 2012) were participants in this study. Two additional participants from my baseline study (Sutton, 2012) participated in the pre-focus group session; their perspectives on building intercultural relations in PWIs during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement era and in the present era added consistency and generational insight to the study.
Participants were recruited based on the following homogeneous characteristics (Bailey, 1994, p. 96): (1) African American identity; (2) U.S. upbringing (for asserting a level of understanding about the historical and present problems of cross-cultural interactions between Black and White Americans); (3) advanced knowledge acquired from an institution of higher learning; (4) experience interacting as a professional in the majority White spaces in the northern-midwest region of the U.S. (where a steady 95% White American demographic base is maintained in many of organizations); and (5) at least 21-years of age.

In my earlier study (Sutton, 2012), bicultural Black American professionals were included as participants, comprised of individuals who had been raised in Lebanon, or in African or North American countries. The individuals remarked that racism in the U.S. involves subtle nuances that they sometimes overlook, especially when their primary exclusion experience was due to ethnicity or gender, for example. In some cases, the participants were among the majority group in their spaces. In the current study, I found that the African American cultural perspective was useful for understanding the historical nuances of Black and White intercultural, race-related relationships in U.S. contexts. The African American experience connotes individuals who understand progress and perseverance surrounding slavery, Black Codes, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, segregation, and desegregation in the U.S. In the analysis of my earlier study (Sutton, 2012), the participants resonated with comments about similar intercultural racial problems in PWIs, irrespective of their geographic location or cultural upbringing. The participants were from the Midwest (Indiana), Northwest (Portland), West (California), and Southeast (Georgia) regions. In the current study, one geographic region was
considered sufficient. The involvement of two individuals from my earlier baseline study in the current focus group contributed further diversity and expertise.

Participants were contacted using social networking (e.g., friends, co-workers, and organizations) at PWIs, by email, in-person, or phone. The participants were selected from different organizations that were PWIs, such as social services, universities, telephone communications, healthcare, insurance, the auto industry, and industrial manufacturing. Participants were solicited and asked to participate in the study.

Analysis

After the focus group session, the audio-recording was transcribed and coded by two examiners (the primary researcher and a male (White) graduate student) for the analysis. Interpretive, critical theory and qualitative approaches were used to transcribe the audio-recordings, in combination with the interviewer’s notes. The responses were organized around the focus-group questions and then reduced to codes, which were organized according to the TCB theoretical framework and grouped into major themes. The themes were used to expand on the understanding of experiences of Black professional individuals in PWIs, concerning racism and inequity. In general, the focus group indicated that TCB could serve to improve the cross-cultural relationships between diverse groups in the long-term.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to understand how Black American professionals might initiate a TCB approach in PWIs, and how they envision the groups will behave when they meet and decide to build a third space together. TCB can either assist or
impede the success of intercultural relationships in PWIs (Casmir, 1989; Asante, 2006).

A qualitative method was used, with nine focus group participants who have experience navigating the intercultural relationships in PWIs. Factors and themes emerged through the data collection, and in terms of the primary research questions, the analysis revealed the main outcomes, as described in the following Results and Discussion chapters.
Chapter 4. Results

The data used in this study was gathered from a focus group discussion, involving nine Black American professionals having experience with intercultural relationships working in the PWIs. The discussion transcripts were analyzed with reference to the four primary research questions that guided this intercultural study, as framed by Casmir’s (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) research theories. In this chapter, I provide a thematic overview of the focus group discussion, and highlight factors that motivate Black American professionals to generate a TC in PWIs. In general, the group’s perspectives of an ideal third space were juxtaposed with their perspective of White culture in the majority White spaces. The ways in which Black American professionals conceptualize the phases of interpersonal accommodation to achieve the TC goals are also presented.

Many of the focus group participants were working and living in PWIs in the state of Indiana. The Black participants indicated that their geographic location was an important consideration when they decided to participate in the focus group. They also considered their experiences with racism and inequity in PWIs, their belief that TCB can help improve cross-cultural relationships between diverse others, and the opportunity for influencing long-term TC studies.
Focus Group Description of White Culture in PWI Contexts

The focus group participants mentioned experiential and prospective motivations for building a TC in PWI contexts, such as Black American professionals with an African American upbringing in the U.S. When they described White culture, they mentioned a lack of inclusion. The group readily described their experiences with White individuals in PWIs as a one-sided mindset—the White way, or no way. They also referred to the idea of dictatorship: “I tell you and you do it, for example.”

Some participants suggested that individuals are pushy and rude. They described how people talked over them, as though they had a sense of entitlement. They said White people fail to acknowledge the presence of minorities. Other group members said they noticed the emphasis of a group think behavior, where individuals speak and respond alike, where status is very important. Moreover, the focus group concurred that White culture in PWIs tended to assign minorities with responsibilities they did not want—a form of marginalization.

The participants observed that the White culture fails to label their own members, but uses multiple labels for the minorities; for example, light-skinned, dark-skinned, urban, at risk; aggressive, a credit to your race. The group agreed that in some rare cases, the White people describe themselves or colleagues as “my White friend,” considering themselves as the standard for Americanism. The participants mentioned their ability to evade labels was established as a freedom to change or remain the same. Black professionals described the mutually beneficial space as a circular situation, where a person looking from the outside could not tell who was in charge, “It’s an equal collaboration, inclusive effort, and all people are treated as relevant participants.”
The focus group’s perception of White culture in PWIs seemed to be in stark contrast to their description of an idyllic TC space. The focus group stated that their experiential descriptions both motivated and served as a foundation for generating TCB in PWIs.

**Focus Group Perception of an Ideal TC Space in PWIs**

According to the participants, the ideal space would have open dialogue and communication with others (positive and negative). People would feel comfortable to discuss various topics. All individuals would be equal and on the same page, with commonalities and united ideas. They pictured the TC as a space for change in outlook, especially in how individuals interacted, such as viewing individuals as equals, and listening to the opinions, perspectives, and constructive criticism of others. Most importantly, the group referred to a beneficial space for all, where people could belong and maintain their cultural style, beliefs, and values. Casimir’s (1989) TCB model promotes sustaining cultural identity, among other interpersonal accommodations, and extols the virtue of cultural adaptation in relationships. The TCB approach upholds common values that are included in different views, and the right of people to have different beliefs and practices.

A TCB approach could also be useful for White American professionals in PWIs, though this was not specifically examined in this research. An additional question would be: would Whites have to change some of their cultural practices? While the focus group described the ideal TC space, they also indicated a number of key features that would be motivators for improving cross-cultural communication in PWIs.
Empathy is the primary requirement for TCB. The focus group participants suggested that the builders of a TC would initially include the hurt, the hindered, and the harassed, from both Black and White cultures, who understand the need for change. The collective empathetic knowledge would lead to a deeper understanding of the needs and values of the others. For example, the focus group suggested that when individuals gain a holistic understanding of another person, they could begin to interact from that particular perspective. "It is the connection to the human race that propels people to connect with others—eye-contact (heart-to-heart)—and to say, 'I understand where you're coming from. I understand your point of view.' There's hurt on every side." The focus group also asserted that people have to experience a lot of pain, shock, or an internal spiritual awakening to want to see a change.

According to the focus group, empathetic motivation would draw White counterparts in to the idea of building a TC. The group indicated that Whites who are progressive in their experiences with diverse types of people, outside the PWI, would be drawn to TCB. They described the TC as a space for people who are open-minded, as a form of optional participation. The focus group indicated that a TC would not mean that everyone would think or look alike; rather, individuals would possess a mindset of moving forward in a positive direction for the benefit of individuals and the organization.

The participants also pointed to other empathetic motivating factors for building TC:

I also would be motivated by the fact that I would be able to bounce ideas off other people who are progressive thinkers. People won't agree we need a third culture, but if truthfulness stands regarding what they observe in terms of inclusion between Black and White individuals in the PWI setting, people would affirm a need for a TC space.
**TCB is future-oriented.** The concept to a changing nation was an integral part of the motivation for Black professionals in TCB in PWIs, which led to a discussion about future generations. Although the group mentioned a motivation for future generations, the idea resonated especially strongly for those participants who had lived through the 1960s civil rights era. They stood ready for TCB, because they had seen cross-cultural patterns that paralleled their school experiences, in terms of segregation and integration to predominately White schools, where exclusion and racism had been upheld openly during their formative years. The group described the TCB concept as being oriented for future generations:

> Children lack opportunities to freely express themselves and to grow to become their best in this country. These factors motivate me to create a path for the younger ones so their experience in PWIs is not as difficult and they can accomplish more in their life.

**TC can assuage the negative effects of racism and exclusion.** The group’s experiences with racism were motivations for TCB. A theme of inequality emerged from this topic. For example, the group asserted that fair-mindedness was a key impetus for TCB, which would include the negative circumstances they had observed on a daily basis. In particular, the group referred to longstanding issues related to racism and why TCB is important for PWIs. The group members considered racism as an unfortunate ill of society, remaining in the PWIs despite the “post-racial” American idealism, where no-one is supposed to think about race anymore, and where we all just see each other as individuals. One of the focus group members poignantly described the current PWI condition:

> I’ve been through the situations in the past that Black people face today in PWIs (racism and exclusion). I see children facing the same challenges, but I think the current state of affairs is worse because racism is elusive and hidden.
The group identified the above behaviors as motivations for third space building, against the backdrop of an ideal space and their perception of White culture in PWIs. Overall, the focus group felt that TCB could become a progressive approach for advancing intercultural efforts between Black and White individuals in PWIs, and for society as a whole. The participants indicated that an ideal third space could be built with the inclusion of diverse perspectives.

**TC Builders**

Besides the above conditions for TCB, such as empathy and progressive thinking, the participants mentioned that the builders of a TC would involve Black and White Americans. They added that TCB should be inclusive, and comprise diverse groups of people. The TC builders would also be empathetic and have an ability to see from more than one perspective.

The focus group recognized that not everyone in a PWI would be interested in building a TC right away. As a result, the group proposed that TCB should begin with a group that would form a separate environment within the PWI, where both Black and White workers could re-negotiate meanings. According to the focus group, the contributing participants could include White workers who have already formed relationships with their Black coworkers, or simply be interested parties:

TCB participants would need to be the gatekeepers because building TC requires a person who knows the mindset of everybody working in the establishment. The individual stands as the “go-to-person”; one with a welcoming spirit, the kind of person you can tell about the situations happening on the job, for example. This is a person who serves as a filter for everyone. As Blacks, we can’t initiate the TC concept alone because our initiative would offend the White culture.
Based on the focus group’s perspective of White culture, the group agreed that the builders of an inclusive, shared space in PWIs would need to include someone from the White culture. Otherwise, Black professionals might seem out of place in the majority White settings. The group felt that this would be especially true for White individuals who might be unfamiliar with Black experiences, or fail to understand why people would want or need to build a third space.

**TCB Approach in PWIs**

**Build relationships with White coworkers.** The focus group highlighted two interactional behaviors that could generate a TC in PWIs. The group indicated that TCB would need the development of both relationships and interest: “Initiate TC concept by starting with one person. Try to form the relationship before introducing the idea.” In my earlier study (Sutton, 2012), the individual interviews reflected a similar idea: “Being open to a White ally is helpful in the adaption process.”

The focus group also emphasized that TCB could be facilitated through interest:

[The supervisor] would solicit participants for developing a third culture idea making the point ‘we want your ideas’. This is for people who are open-minded. This is not a forced situation. It’s completely voluntary.

**Develop an awareness of how White culture (through the media) perceives Black culture.** The group saw a need to deal with the truth about how White individuals characterize them (as in the media):

Generally speaking, White people believe what they see in the media as their reality of Black people. . . . It is critically important that we understand their implicit thinking.
The focus group believed that White culture follows what the media reports (in the news, for example).

The news selects and chooses who they want to put on the television, so the White world sees us as bad. News reporting of Black people is rarely positive.

TCB in PWIs means viewing the world from another person’s perspective and acknowledging those views, but clarifying how the views of Black people contradict the reality. This approach can avoid using excuses for reality, but can facilitate cross-cultural dialogue.

**Modify communication styles until Whites can mutually adapt.** The focus group participants suggested having a plan before talking to White individuals to initiate the TCB approach. They alluded to divergent communication styles, and as an example, the group stated that, in some cases, communication styles in Black culture can seem to be overly strong for White individuals, who appear to have a provocative yet linear, indirect dialogue style. For example: “They want you to move from point A to point B. So when engaging with them, we have to reframe our communication style.”

The group believed that dialogue between Black and White coworkers, dealing with sensitive topics (i.e., race) often provokes emotional responses. The group indicated that passion reactions were the reason:

We need to write things down on paper so when communicating, we go right down the list, attending to the issues at hand rather than go off at a tangent related to past stories of hurt and pain.

**Make experiences relatable.** The focus group members asserted that generating a TC space required them to find ways for the TCB approach to build bridges with their White colleagues that was apart from unfamiliar racialized concepts: “A person
who experienced poverty, for example, would not understand the person who lived a life of entitlement.”

The group emphasized building bridges and they believed they needed to explain their points of views so that they would be all inclusive, with universal approaches, so that all people can understand. To build relationships, their comments cannot focus only on White and Black issues. Their relatable descriptions must include universal conflicts, so their exchange would reach all individuals of either gender, any race, or level of poverty, for example:

People have to be able to connect in their minds (the light bulb comes on for them.) This is how people link their experiences to yours.

The focus group also said that they needed to present specifics that would support White individuals, to make TCB a relatable and tangible concept. The group considered the ability of exchange students to move from one culture to another as a relatable concept for TCB. According to the participants, people have to become a part of others, and successful people have to adapt to change and experience people who are different.

**TCB Conceptualization**

Since the group was able to articulate a purpose and a description of what TC should look like, they proceeded to conceptualize the TCB approach, using specific meanings for the concepts in intercultural relationships. They described indicators for measuring the concepts and the different aspects of the concepts. The participants also defined an ideal TC space, according to the following aspects.
The group takes priority over personal feelings. The participants’ perspectives about TCB were focused on how they characterized the innate sense of community and fellowship of Black Americans. They believed that, in generating a third space, the group would take priority over individual feelings. While discussing the group priority in TCB, one participant mentioned that in the TCB approach,

You have to take your own personal convictions and bury them in order to consider the whole group. Don’t make the space all about you.

Most participants understood that when people draw you to personal stories (even though they may be important), you can become emotional and lose focus on the bigger picture, which is to be inclusive of others and to build a cohesive group. Overall, the group had a common belief that relationship building is based on a basic principle of giving one’s full attention to others, which includes an equity mindset.

TCB means suspending dominating relationships. The participants stated that the third space would look different from a general PWI cultural space. Generally, the focus group described the TC context as being collaborative. It would have to be a circular situation, where someone looking in from the outside would not see who was in charge. The group identified a number of discernible behaviors that would suspend dominating relationships:

- Build an equal collaboration effort where all people are treated as relevant participants,
- Include diverse people in the third culture setting,
- Share the space with individuals of both advanced and general education backgrounds,
- Encourage all people to contribute to the group,
- Create an all-inclusive space for all participants; individuals with doctorate degrees and individuals with general education would contribute to the group,

- Learn how to speak across different cultural and organizational levels.

One of the participants gave her opinion about the TCB concept, stating that members of the TC would need to have great speaking skills. They would need to converse with the elite, have a good understanding, and be able to speak with different levels of people—no one should feel that they are being spoken down to. Overall, the focus group members thought that TCB should follow the above principles and build trusting and honest relationships between people.

**Honesty is a crucial part of TCB.** The participants indicated the need for honesty in building an inclusive TC, regardless of any personal agendas. Much of the discussion was focused on individuals encouraging honest and truthful dialogue. One of the participants said that if people used honest and truthful practices, a third space would be irrelevant for most organizations. She also said that some people may not agree with the TC concept, but if they were honest with themselves, with others, and about what they observed, they would realize the need for a new space. While discussing honesty in TCB, the group emphasized the importance of all TC participants defending the views of others. All individuals would need to empathize with each other. While needing to understand others, they would still need to hold onto their own cultural values. Although the group thought it would impossible to view the world as others saw it, they felt it would be possible to learn skills for using other perspectives.
Summary

The results of this study can be organized into four major themes with subthemes. The participants’ organizational and demographic information was noted, along with their perspectives about intercultural interactions with their White counterparts in PWIs. Perspectives of White culture, an ideal TC space, and the approach and conceptualization of TCB were identified as major factors influencing the focus group’s views about generating a third space in PWIs. Cross-cultural communication competencies relating to knowledge and skill were also discussed. Constructive (trust and honesty) and destructive (dominating relationships) interactions were discussed by the group. The main themes and sub-themes are discussed in the Discussion chapter, in relation to my earlier study (Sutton, 2012) and to Casmir’s (1989) and Starosta and Olorunisola’s (1995) theoretical frames.
Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The fundamental aim of this intercultural qualitative study is to investigate Black American professionals’ TCB approach within PWIs. A focus group discussion and in-depth interviews (baseline study) were conducted with African Americans working in majority White settings, to answer the research questions. In this chapter, I present a more exhaustive analysis of the results, with reference to the literature on TCB and intercultural communication. The study findings point to the existence of racism in the organizational context, motivation for a mutual third space, and conditions necessary for interpersonal TCB approaches that can remedy the institutional inequity existing between Black and White professionals in a business setting. The results also suggest that mutually beneficial cross-cultural relationships in these contexts can be maintained with the practice of empathy (i.e., perspective-taking) and with an enhanced self-awareness in the third spaces. The words, narratives, and nonverbal communication of the focus group participants supported this conclusion.

Based on the theories of Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995) and Casmir (1989), the focus group appeared to have excellent potential for generating a TC in PWIs. The participants were thoroughly familiar with their own culture and the culture of the PWIs, and instinctively understood how they might bridge the differences from both sides. Following Casmir’s theory of emphasizing communication over outcome, the focus group suggested strategies for creating voluntary dialogue groups in the workplace. This idea has the benefit of being both flexible, since such a model could be adjusted to any
number of situations, and practical, since individual groups could address the specific needs of their workplaces. Moreover, the ideal TC space would be a context for those who desire to leverage the benefits engaging diverse individuals in PWIs, or for those who understand multiple viewpoints, raising the possibility for inclusion.

The following analysis is divided into four parts, corresponding to the four research objectives of the project: motivation and conditions to build a TC, how a TC could be built in PWIs, who the builders of the TC would be, and finally, how Black professionals conceptualize the phases of interpersonal accommodation to achieve their TC goals with respect to generating a third space in PWIs. While the focus group provided the guidelines for this project, each section is cross-referenced to my previous study (Sutton, 2012) and to pertinent literature. In addition, the theories of Casmir (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995), which indicate methods that are similar to those of the focus group, are incorporated in the analysis.

**TCB Motivation and Conditions**

While Black professionals would obviously benefit from the freedom of self-expression of TC, the motivations of White workers remains more elusive. The focus group saw guilt as being a powerful motivator for TCB: “Whites have hurts, so it can come out of a source of hurt and pain, but also out of guilt.” While using guilt as a motivator for building TC might seem to be cynical or insincere, the White professionals may sometimes sense that the situation in PWIs is unfair, though neither group has the experience or perspective to change the situation. This trend also appeared in my earlier study, in the individual interviews with Black participants: “If we were traveling someplace, they’d change the music on the radio station,” B.C. said. “They have to
qualify (nice people) ‘race doesn’t have anything to do with it.’” For White sympathizers who feel uneasy with the current system and want a change, guilt would be a legitimate need that a TC could meet. Although such a strategy seems inappropriate to the Black professionals, it could open the door for building relationships and making connections.

The group also believed that White professionals would want to explore other cultures because guilt can produce overwhelming feelings. Nevertheless, TCB could offer an opportunity for empathetic Whites professionals to engage with their Black counterparts and work together for social justice: “You have to find someone in the White culture who shares the same ideals with you.” The participants recognized that not everyone in the PWIs would be interested in building a third space right away, but they also believed that the underlying idea behind TC was equality, rather than race. One of the key discussion points was that Blacks as well as Whites wanted to build a fairer society:

The fact that we are discussing these issues means there is a need for change. This tells me the world is evolving to represent all of us, including me. I think change can manifest now because people are ready for this concept.

One of the key motivations for White workers would be the sense that the company did not treat everyone equally.

Contextualizing the benefits of intercultural relationships to increase engagement from White individuals could prove to be more beneficial to White Americans than to African Americans (Martin, 2010). The types of benefits defy the expression of historical, divergent relationships between Black and White people in the U.S. This depiction serves as a tangible concept to increase engagement from White individuals.
Besides the colleagues who are interested in social justice at an abstract level, TCB could include those who simply reviled unfairness of any type. This perspective is aligned with Gadamer’s (1975) fusion of horizon concept, where vicarious experiences are perceived through the lens of other people, indicating that most people have a structure for understanding injustice. One of the focus group participants stated that the builders of this TC could include the following: the hurt, hindered, and harassed, from both Black and White cultures, since they understand the need for a change. These people would have the freedom of mind to bring about a TC.

Such workers would have both the motivation and the ability to help build a TC. According to Milton J. Bennett (2010), a TC results when the majority groups are also motivated to adapt and support inclusion in spaces such as PWIs. All parties, including the majority group, maintain their separate cultures, which allows for flexibility and fulfillment of human potential. The motivation for a TC is driven by what Broome (1991) calls relational empathy. This perspective-taking approach takes on an inclusive system perspective.

Linking White professional experiences with sexism, ableism, or discrimination of any sort would be an instant link to the experiences described by the Black professionals in PWIs. The focus group recognized the difficulties in building a culture with people who may be only interested in the TC concept out of curiosity, any professionals with global experiences, or mixed pasts, would likely be empathetic for TCB. Casmir (1989) frames TCB as a space for those seeking to resolve issues of inequitable resources or spaces that must be shared by cultural groups within an environment (p. 420, in Deetz, 1993). According to the focus group,
Habits, hurts, and hang-ups are the people who really understand what is going on. . . . In order for someone to be motivated to build TC, something has to happen where you’ve experienced a lot of pain, or your internal spirit awakens you to want to see a change.

The group was motivated by the chance to expand relationships with their considerate White counterparts: “I also would be motivated by the fact that I would be able to bounce ideas off other people who are progressive thinkers.” One of the major themes of my earlier study (Sutton, 2012) was that Black professionals were not able to build what they felt were trusting relationships with their White colleagues. Even in situations where Black professionals were relaxing with Whites, they still felt that they needed to maintain a facade. When talking about bonding with coworkers after work, participant B.C. said, “My subconscious was thinking about White domination.” Both T.J. and N.W., who made efforts to reach out to their White colleagues, reported that they were never fully as comfortable with their coworkers as with their Black friends. T.J. commented, “Not quite adapting even with them in my physical space. . . . Always felt boundaries with them.” In addition, N.W. stated, “

I don’t want them to read me 100%. People are quick to pigeonhole you; I like to keep my options open; particularly with my White counterparts. With my Black counterparts, there is more trust in that relationship.

The focus group appeared genuinely excited about the prospect of a third space that would allow them to form better diverse and cross-cultural relationships in their PWIs. In conclusion, TCB would be mutually beneficial because it would offer a channel for an already-existing feeling among White coworkers. The group concurred that some White colleagues sensed that something was wrong, but they did not know how to go about making the company more equal. In any case, the desire to form deeper relationships was taken for granted on both sides, and through these relationships, a TC would form.
TC Builders

As discussed in the previous section, White professionals do not typically examine either themselves or others in a cultural engagement: “It is the Eurocentric process. I’m forced to be a sociologist and psychologist because of the majority group... They don’t study themselves” (B.C.). The task of initiating TCB would therefore fall to the Black workers, which the focus group deemed to be unfair, though they acknowledged it as part of the setting in PWIs. Although TCB would comprise a joint effort by interested White and Black parties, Black workers would need to provide skill and direction at first. TCB must be driven by an intrinsic and interdependent need to construct a new worldview. Casmir (1989) defined interdependence as:

the beneficial continuation of the process [that] becomes dependent on relationship and trust-building during mutual efforts to organize an ongoing communicative interactional process, involving... [l]earning, over time, how to employ dialogic aspects of communication (p. 111)

The members of the focus group showed that they were already well equipped for the first two stages of TCB, as defined by Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995). The first phase (Intrapersonal Intracultural) requires potential TC builders to understand their own culture as well as how it affects the cultures around them. Starosta and Olorunnisola state, “The ideal TCB mindset examines both the self and the other before initiating contact” (Starosta, 2010, p. 1). The participants expressed their Intracultural understanding through the analogy of the media. They believed that the media was responsible for many of the negative impressions that White colleagues (especially those lacking exposure to different cultures) hold about Black cultures, and in some cases, their colleagues were misinformed rather than deliberately aloof. The focus group stated, “They view it literally... what they see is their reality of us as Black people.” In
addition, the group claimed that the media was the way in which White coworkers were learning about Black cultures. For them, watching television was the equivalent of a cultural engagement. Nevertheless, a focus group participant said,

I think seeing something from someone else’s view is to study the culture. That’s one reason White people don’t understand our culture; they follow what the media reports (news, for example).

In the individual interviews, several participants reported that media representations of Black people negatively affected building relationships in the workplace. In contrast to the high level of Intracultural awareness, demonstrated by the focus group, most White workers would likely be surprised to hear the descriptions of White culture given by the group, such as “pushy and domineering”. The focus group was well grounded in who they were and how others saw them.

Understanding how White coworkers saw Black persons also helped the group identify potential trouble areas in TCB. The consensus of the group was that Black individuals should have a plan before talking to White coworkers about sensitive issues: “This is an intense discussion with White counterparts, so it’s going to be personal if the discussion involves race. If I explain my experiences from a personal perspective, I must have a plan before going into the conversation.” The focus group’s self-awareness is highlighted by Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) Intrapersonal Intercultural communication stage where TC participants engage in intense dialogue and acknowledge their culture and how it affects those around them. The focus group expanded on this idea: “You have to watch your passion level,” and “If individuals go into the TC with [a bitter] type of mindset, they become combative rather than communicative with others. Watch the silent body language.” The focus group also mentioned that anyone who was
going into a TC would need patience, compassion, and reflective listening. The participants seemed to be universally sensitive to how their particular culture would influence their White coworkers.

**TCB Approach in PWIs**

Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995) divide TCB into five phases: (1) Intrapersonal Intracultural; (2) Intercultural Interpersonal; (3) Rhetorical Interpersonal; (4) Metacultural; and (5) Intracultural. Before building a TC, the potential builders must be aware of their own culture and how it influences the cultures around it. This Intracultural phase was discussed in the section above. The initiation and early stages of the TC represent the Interpersonal Intercultural, Rhetorical Interpersonal, and Metacultural stages. For these phases, the group indicated that Black professionals would still need to provide direction—it would be a period of blending both sides into a single unit and finding ways to present cross-cultural challenges in a PWI so that all members can understand.

Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995) asserted that the Interpersonal Intercultural phase is marked by unfamiliar interactants making contact (the first interactant represents a stranger to the other), and the uncertainty among the parties. The lack of acquaintance will reduce over time with the assistance of information that was learned by the first interaction during the stage of unilateral awareness (p. 429). The stage of “unilateral awareness,” of course, would be the Intracultural or self-awareness phase, mentioned above. Once relationships develop over time, Black professionals could consider these stages as foundational for generating a TC with their potential White allies.
The focus group unanimously agreed that a TC would originate with an open-minded and agreeable group, since not everyone in a PWI would be interested in a TC right away: “This is for people who are open-minded. This is not a forced situation. It’s completely voluntary.” Not only does this satisfy Casmir’s (1989) requirement for a TC to be voluntary, but also Casmir suggests that one of the best ways to redefine culture is in a separate environment:

Humans have again and again demonstrated that they can adapt to almost any new situation by re-negotiating meanings. In that process they even may make use of escape routes provided by culture, or rather built into the culture by human beings, to avoid onerous rules. (p. 106)

A voluntary dialogue group would be an excellent way to make such a separate environment.

Although the focus group considered the idea of having a supervisor initiate the group, they also suggested that Black professionals could approach White colleagues they already knew personally, as a variation of the Quiet approach: “You have to find someone in the White culture who shares the same ideals as you. . . . Try to form the relationship before moving forward with the TC idea” (Sutton, 2012). While building a third space from the top-down might be advantageous in some cases, such as in cases of egregious violations of human rights, Casmir (1999) argued that a successful TC needs to be built from the bottom up (p. 103). Furthermore, the relationship approach would be more likely to attract the sort of like-minded thinkers that were represented by the focus group’s original motivation: “[A Third Culture] would look like my goal and my ambition to help change the world. I don’t mean everyone would think like me, they would think, however, in order to go forward.”
Once the initial TC participant group is formed, the members would move into what Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995) characterize as the Rhetorical Intercultural phase. Participants would become more familiar with one another and discuss issues that affect the workplace. The focus group was realistic in discussing the difficulties that would likely arise in honest, open communication with their White counterparts, no matter how well intentioned they might be: “I believe that White people are naïve in the sense that most don’t believe what we’re talking about or that we experience the challenges we describe with regard to racism or adaptation in PWIs.” Other White colleagues may even believe that they are not part of the problem at all—inadvertently offending their Black counterparts who are highly conscious of racialized space. “The two-way is not taking place,” T.J. complained. “I am aware of it; they are not.” A White person should wake up in the morning and say “I am White.” the same way that in the morning, when I wake up I say, “I am Black . . . be aware of who you are and who I am.” This raises an interesting idea. What if race is not salient to either, and each wakes up without thinking about it at all? Or what if each recognized that race is salient and the question becomes, how does the difference in race affect this situation? One of the first major challenges in building a new TC would be to incorporate White colleagues who want to relate to their Black coworkers, but share none of the same negative experiences, because of the PWI context or their race.

To overcome this difficulty, the focus group recognized that Black members would initially have to adapt their communication approach to White norms, to initiate a TC perspective. The participants indicated the different general communication styles of Black and White culture, making general reference to Blacks as direct communicators.
Thus, adapting that style to be closer to White culture (described as a linear dialogue style) might be useful. “They want you to move from point A to point B, the group said. “So when engaging with them, we have to reframe our communication style.” The reason for this adaptation goes back again to the Intracultural mindset that the White colleagues largely lack. The failure to see the world from a Metacultural perspective can be attributed to what Nakayama and Martin (1999) assert about Whiteness, which is a combined system of practices, contributing to the structural approach that usually escapes concentration on how White influence operates. Since the majority White culture can choose to adapt to other cultures, the Black professionals are willing to make allowances if opportunities are available to build an inclusive environment. Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995) maintain that both cultures will develop mutually beneficial interactions over time.

The next step, Metacultural, is when both cultures begin to recognize common ground and begin to merge. Although the White workers would likely not have had negative racial experiences, they may have had negative experiences. The Black participants in the focus group suggested using terms that their colleagues might be able to relate to: “The TCB approach goes back to building bridges,” one focus group speaker argued. “A person who’s never gone through poverty would not understand the person who has had a sense of entitlement.” A consensus emerged from the group that if White counterparts were oblivious to concepts of race, they might be able to understand the impacts of exclusion and inequity from the perspective of their Black coworkers:

It must be a universal conflict so that you can explain it so the conversation reaches all—gender, race, poverty, for example. People have to be able to connect in their minds (the light bulb comes on for them.) This is how people link their experiences to yours.
From this, the TC would emerge. Casmir’s (1989) TC model suggests that a successful TC would meet the needs of both sides, but while the Black professionals wanted to be able to express themselves freely, the challenge would be to secure the participation of their White counterparts in the TCB process to realize their needs and help the company progress. One of the focus group participants emphasized the need for a common group:

Once you gain some understanding, you can begin to deal with the person from that particular standpoint. When you do this, you can go back to the person with eye-contact (heart-to-heart) and say, I understand where you are coming from. I understand your point of view.

The language would shift from race, which could breed an “us-versus-them” mentality, to empathy and understanding. Once the members of the group are on the same page, the conversations among the TC group could sustain further conversations about race and PWIs, and expand to other topics of diversity and inclusion, such as gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and organizational status topics, for example.

**TCB Conceptualization**

Casmir (1999) stated that cultures are “dynamic, changing, developing processes” (p. 91), rather than end-states; since it is an unhindered predetermined outcome, it is difficult to speak about a final result. Nevertheless, the focus group identified a few key features that would characterize a successful TC:

1. Communicate honestly across all levels of power in the organization. This approach aligns with Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) final criterion, the intracultural phase.
2. Form groups where individuals of the TC space operate in dual cultures and establish the understanding and ability to treat cross-cultural relationships differently (Starosta & Olorunnisola (1995)).

3. Work together to assuage exclusive workplace policies that affect the organizational and group success, and to maintain relationships based on mutual needs.

One of the chief points made in my earlier study in the individual interviews was that White people claimed to want diversity in the workplace, but their claims were insincere. Insights from Beesley’s (1995) TCB application to Black and White South Africans revealed that the preparation for a TC environment was to establish the atmosphere of trust, which is perhaps the most important objective (p. 11).

The focus group implied honest communication meant that a TC would be a space where Black professionals, along with other diverse groups, could wholly participate in an inclusive work environment, where shared values and relationships are mutually beneficial (Casmir, 1989).

In the article, “Black and Brown in the 21st Century,” Tatum (1997) commented, “Black and Brown people are generally expected to be either compliant or super agreeable and feel that they have outperformed their White counterparts to receive the respect that they deserve.” In contrast, Casmir’s TC perspective would mean that no one group is dominant over another, and both cultures would be adapting to the differences. The opinion of each participant would be valued regardless of education, background, position in the company, and of course, race. “In a third culture setting, diverse people are present,” the focus group noted.
Importantly, the final result would mark the beginning of the redirectional phase (Starosta & Olorunnisola, 1995). The members of the dialogue group would fully merge and begin working as a single unit. “Everybody would be on the same page,” the focus group agreed. “You would see people attempting to make a change.” S.H., one of the interviewees, defined what mutual adaptation would look like in simple terms: “Two people engaging in conversation, meetings, brainstorming, with the ability to adapt to change and people who are different from you.”

Finally, the new TC would create an atmosphere of trust within the workplace. In the individual interviews, the Black professionals mentioned that they relied on Black communities outside of work for support and friendship. Participant A.A. discussed that she could go home and neighbors worked in the university, which felt comforting. Not having the outlet and escape, the constant anxiety would have been overwhelming had she been away from a support base. A component of the TC space would be the inclusion of these supports within the company for leveraging the benefits of diversity, at least partly. Instead of one or two Black professionals attempting to reach out on their own, a large number of both Black and White professionals would be working together to include all people. Generally, the focus group expressed a hope that the TC would not only change their lives, but would cause a much broader change. “Everyone has to change,” the group concluded.

Limitations

Because this study is purely qualitative, it has a limitation by not having any quantitative component (a possible opportunity for future studies). Additional research,
using a mixed methodology, could expand the depth of understanding and further validate of the analysis of a single culture and intercultural mindsets.

While the number of participants (n=9) in the focus group was appropriate for the purposes of this study, an ideal size of a focus group is 10 to 12 members, and it would have been advantageous to compare these results to those of other groups (Krueger, 1998). Therefore, the focus group here yielded informative results; however, the results lacked comparative, patterned outcomes. Consequently, fewer conclusions could be drawn from the data. An expanded focus group study could also be used for an additional target population in future TCB research studies and give rise to stronger conclusions. Despite the focus group size limitation, one of the major conceptual findings—building relationships is the first step in TCB, based on individuals who have an intercultural mindset toward cultural differences—is in accordance with the theories of Casmir (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995).

**Strengths**

This study, in keeping with my earlier study (Sutton, 2012) provides an analysis of how Black American professionals construe the adaptation process and approach TCB in PWIs. The two studies applied different methodologies (personal interviews and focus groups) and found similar results for the groups of Black professionals. The theory of TCB has been described in the literature in numerous sociological studies, though few authors have used examples of Black and White professionals in U.S. PWIs. Because of the paucity of comparative studies, this study provides an opportunity to compare and contrast the results between similar focus groups, to expand and strengthen the findings.
Recommendations

The study has two major recommendations:

1. First, as the results provide opportunity for understanding TCB from the Black American perspective, at both group and individual levels, they also lead to suggestions based on the outcomes. Future research might include a quantitative, placement study for both Black and White professionals, using M. J. Bennett’s (1998) Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The DMIS examines how people experience difference. The DMIS can serve as a tool for targeting a range of personal and group development efforts, such as TCB, in organizational settings. The model also can be used by core team members for building self-awareness and for managing diversity in the business context.

2. Second, as alluded to in the Results section, participants asserted that TCB requires individuals to practice inclusion of all participants and use cross-cultural communication skills, which points to the study’s themes of trust and relationship-building. It would be interesting to replicate the research and include building a cohesive TC team. Thus, those who desire to institute positive intercultural relationships both within the group and across cultures could learn to partake in effective self-reflection and build diversity and inclusion skills for the organizational setting. This opportunity is based on Gardenswartz and Rowe’s (2010) “7 Steps to Managing Diversity.” The structural frame defines a process for managing diverse teams. In addition, it empowers individuals who desire to create a systemic change that addresses inclusion and cross-cultural adaptation challenges of an organization’s evolving diversity, such as the emergent cultural difference in PWIs:
Correspondingly, individuals would work to gain executive commitment and to create and support systems that change individual and organizational behavior.

The structure of an organizational plan should sustain relevancy for professional development and for cultural challenges; however, the TC team must be able to make all of the diverse points of view applicable to the task, while considering the variety of communication styles that might be used for implementing change. Even though the management plan approach may be the most appropriate for building relationships within the TC group, individuals must demonstrate commitment to the TCB principles (Casmir, 1989), which represent inclusion of ethnic and cultural worldviews.

**Summary**

The focus group members showed their complexity and ability to endure under staggering burdens in PWIs. They seemed to have a concrete vision for initiating TCB in the workplace and the cultural expertise for implementing it. TC would begin with the formation of a small group of willing participants, both Black and White, who want to change the relationship between Black workers and their White counterparts for the sake of reaching common goals. As the group members discuss their needs and concerns, they would begin to form deeper relationships across the diverse intercultural spectrum, representing the whole organization, not just a select few.

The participants fulfilled several of Casmir’s (1989) criteria, most importantly, that TCB be communication-based rather than outcome-based. The focus group understood that White coworkers did not feel the same need to adapt and were less likely to navigate between both cultures as they did. Consequently, the Black professionals would generate a TC space by making initial adjustments to support the cross-cultural,
personal, and organizational goals. While being realistic about facing the challenges of Whiteness and its systemic barriers, the group was largely positive and ready to engage the difficulties to begin what they considered a real possibility for intercultural effectiveness in PWIs. The question arises about what could be learned from the White individuals who would be part of the initial group. How would they differ from the others? Would they be able to understand, care about, and support a TC effort?

Conclusions

This study analyzed Casmir’s (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) TCB application approach to nine Black American professionals who work in PWIs in the state of Indiana. The study also examined how these professionals would generate a third space with their White counterparts in the PWIs, for a cross-cultural communication-focused approach. The following key principles reinforce the study and form a framework for generating a third space in PWIs (Appendix C). For those trying to develop a TC, the following principles of TC were reinforced by the focus group results:

1. Broad intercultural experiences, racism and inequity, and opportunities for influencing future generations motivate Black American professionals to build a TC space in PWIs.

2. The TC is an all-inclusive, participant group that can negotiate common goals and meanings.

3. A TC can be built in PWIs through non-dominating relationships.

4. TCB requires individuals to practice empathy, or perspective taking, and it is a future-driven perspective.
5. Mindful dialogue between interlocutors can be enhanced through awareness of self and of other cultural views.

6. TCB involves modifying communication styles to encourage mutual adaption.

7. TC participants should make personal experiences relatable so that others can understand difference.

8. In TC contexts, a group perspective takes priority over single perspectives.

9. In effective TC spaces, the group suspends dominating relationships.

10. Honesty promotes true dialogue between parties and expands the TCB process.

The findings of this study benefit the field of intercultural communication, the TCB field, and the study participants. As mentioned previously, research on the TCB intercultural relations between Black and White professionals in PWIs has been lacking. This study confirms that all people make adaptations in the organizational context and that relationships include conflict. This study also concludes that race is the most unyielding of the many issues that demand the time and energy of Black professionals in PWIs. The PWI milieu can create polarized structures between Black and White colleagues, and despite the challenges faced by Black American professionals when navigating in the U.S. PWIs, the coping mechanisms usually involve engaging the system, rather than disparaging it. Building relationships with both leadership and counterparts can effectively generate a third space that has respect for diversity and inclusion, and where interactions can have an impact on the workforce of divergent workers. Given Casmir’s (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) TCB theories, and the qualitative findings of this study’s focus group, a question remains to be asked about whether or not Black and White professionals will be motivated to achieve the
same TC goals. In addition, in most cases, cultural participants fail to see the need for a third space, because of their ethnocentric worldview (Bennett, 1998). In the words of Edward T. Hall (1959):

Culture hides more than it reveals, especially from its own participants. The real challenge is not to understand foreign culture but to understand one’s own, to make what we take for granted stand out in perspective. This can be achieved mainly through exposing oneself to foreign ways, through the shock of contrast and difference (pp. 29-30).
References


APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP GUIDING QUESTIONS

How might Black American professionals generate a TC in PWIs through cross-cultural social exchange?

1. What does White culture look like to you as a Black professional in PWIs?

2. *How would you build a TC in PWIs?
   a. What would be your approach?
   b. What would “building” a TC look like to you as a Black professional in PWIs?
   c. What would an ideal TC look like to you as a Black professional in PWIs?

Motivation

3. *What factors motivate Black American professionals to create a TC in PWIs?

4. Who would be the builders of the TC; (How do they engage White professionals to work with them?)

5. *Who would be the builders?

Intrapersonal Intercultural (inside yourself)

6. Which intrapersonal accommodation skills are needed for generating a new culture in PWIs?

Interpersonal Intercultural (early/initial contact)

7. Which interpersonal skills are required for creating a new culture in PWIs?
Rhetorical Intercultural

8. What kind of a mindset would be useful for engaging in intense discussion and for sharing knowledge with your White counterparts in PWIs?

Metacultural (based on the culture of others)

9. How would you develop a metacultural perspective, the ability to see the world as your White counterparts do?

10. Which intercultural skills do you think would help you in moving between dual cultures (e.g., Black culture and White culture) where you treat the relationship differently?

11. Tell me about any times when you have observed the mutual adaptation between Black and White counterparts in a PWI setting.
   a. What initiated the exchange to occur?
   b. What did you do to develop a relationship?
   c. What did your counterpart do develop a relationship?
   d. What did the organization do for the changes materialize?
APPENDIX B: CASMIR’S (1989) TCB CONCEPTUALIZATION FRAMEWORK

| Interdependent and synthetic process that aims to change people and relationships. | Voluntary process. | Mutually agreed upon (needs-based) affiliation. | Unconstrained predetermined outcome. | Gradual process that develops over time. |
APPENDIX C: GENERATING A THIRD CULTURE FRAMEWORK

The TC construction graph below resulted from the current study and an earlier study (Sutton 2012) involving a focus group and independent interviews comprised Black American professionals. The diagram defines interpersonal behaviors useful for generating a third space in PWIs, resulting in a TCB communication-focused approach; both studies align with Casmir’s (1989) and Starosta and Olorunnisola’s (1995) TCB Models.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture A Behaviors</th>
<th>Culture B Behaviors</th>
<th>Third Culture Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The third culture construction is what happens when people from cultures A and B take cultural perspective: • Initiating dialogue</td>
<td>Cultures A and B trying to adapt together through mutual adaptation, thus leads to the value of the third context.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and debate</td>
<td>Making the connections between parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing the whole among parts</td>
<td>Inquiring into assumptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the connections between parts</td>
<td>Learning through reflective inquiry and disclosure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiring into assumptions</td>
<td>Generating shared meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning through reflective inquiry and disclosure</td>
<td>Breaking matters into parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating shared meaning</td>
<td>Understanding distinctions between parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking matters into parts</td>
<td>Justifying/defending assumptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding distinctions between parts</td>
<td>Persuading, selling, telling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifying/defending assumptions</td>
<td>Attaining agreement on one meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuading, selling, telling</td>
<td>Maintaining culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Taking the perspective—not position of the other person through empathy and sympathy:**

“How does she feel?”

- The synergy of working together to enjoy the differences, which is the true value of diversity.
APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

Exploring the Third Culture Building Approach as an Interpersonal Communication Framework for Effective Cross-Cultural Interaction in *Predominately White Institutions*

Researcher: Tessa R. Sutton

Date:

Name:

Pseudonym:

Gender:

Racial Identity:

Circle your age group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>0-10</th>
<th>10-20</th>
<th>20-30</th>
<th>30-40</th>
<th>40-50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>70-80</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hometown:

Years in United States:

Primary Language(s):

Where do you work or live?

- Name:
- City and state:
- How long:
APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT

Exploring the Third Culture Building Approach as an Interpersonal Communication Framework for Effective Cross-Cultural Interaction in Predominately White Institutions

You are invited to participate in a research study which will involve a focus group session discussing an interpersonal, communication-focused framework. My name is Tessa Sutton, and I am a graduate student at the University of the Pacific, School of International Studies. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experience in working in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (work, colleges, schools, neighborhoods, etc.) and your identification as an African American in the U.S.

The purpose of this research is to explore the following concepts:

1. Factors that motivate Black American professionals to create a third culture in PWIs;
2. How a third culture can be built in PWIs;
3. Who would be the builders of the third culture;
4. How Black American professionals conceptualize the phases of interpersonal accommodation to achieve their third culture goals.

If you decide to participate, I will ask you to: (1) sign this consent form and fill out a demographic sheet; and (2) review a set of questions being used to facilitate the focus group discussion. The group discussion will be recorded for later analysis. Your participation in the focus group session will last approximately 1.5 hours; however, the full amount of time the study will take is 2.5 hours.

There are some possible risks involved for participants. These are the risks associated with this research. (1) The discussion involves a race-based research topic that can trigger an unwanted emotional response; (2) A minimal sociological risk exists if names are used because the focus group topic involves questions related to your profession; and (3) A loss of confidentiality can not be guaranteed. In a focus group setting, it is always a possibility that some may breach this trust. There are some benefits to this research, particularly that Black Americans will be able to positively influence the field of intercultural communication by framing a new culture that is outside the historically polarized structures projected on them. The research will provide an understanding of the Third Culture Building in Predominately White Institutions from the perspective of Black American professionals. The benefit to the higher education
community will be in the knowledge gained about the ways in which Black and White Americans in PWIs leverage intercultural opportunities for the mutual benefit of all parties involved.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at 574.264.9929, or my advisor, Kent Warren, Ph.D., at 209.946.3903. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project please call the Research & Graduate Studies Office, University of the Pacific (209) 946-7367. In the event of a research-related injury, please contact your regular medical provider and bill through your normal insurance carrier, then contact the Office of Research & Graduate Studies.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Measures to insure your confidentiality are reminders that all participants not to share the information discussed in the focus group and that the information discussed during the focus group needs to remain confidential. A secure location will be acquired for storing paper files, and other removable medium, computer disks, or recording equipment. Only the principal investigator will have access either through a physical or electronic key. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be maintained for a period of three years.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time with out penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. Finally, with your permission, by signing this document, we plan to disclose the information obtained from the focus group session using pseudonyms in all of the reporting.

(If you would like to obtain a copy of the research results, please send an email to tessasutton1@cs.com.

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

_________________________  _______________________
Signature                      Date