Diversity Among University Students in the U.S.: An Analysis of Student Ethnic Group Preferences and its Impact on Campus Diversity

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Introduction

- Can campus cultural groups, historically considered safe spaces for cultural celebration, have unintended consequences on who we choose to interact with?
- We examined if and how friendship composition and intergroup anxiety mediate the relationship between ethnic identity, ethnocentrism, cultural group involvement, and intergroup bias.
- Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT) states that prejudice across groups can be reduced by having them engage in contact under specific conditions. However, research by Halulani et al. (2004) suggests that **intergroup contact does not occur much among students of color.**

Methods

Participants

- Using Prolific, we recruited students of color that are currently enrolled or have attended university within the past 4 years who are/were involved with a student cultural group.

Ethnicity   **Gender**

N = 183,
M_{Age} = 30.99,
SD = 9.11

- Asian/Asian American (23.5%)
- Black/African American (51.9%)
- Biracial/Multiracial (3.9%)
- Hispanic/Latinx (19.1%)
- Native American (1.6%)

- Female (56.8%)
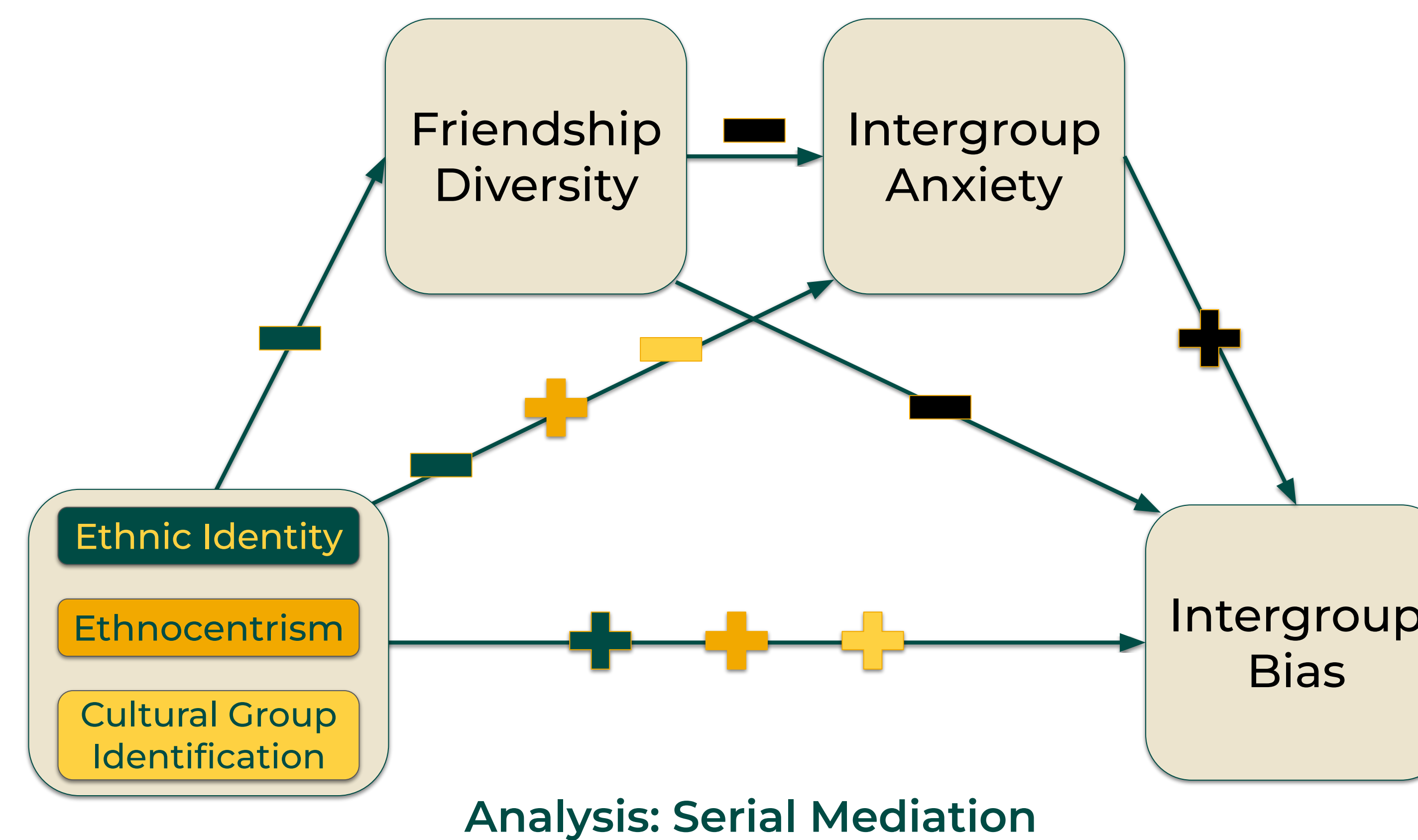- Male (42.1%)
- Non-Binary (1.1%)

Procedure

- Participants responded to a one time online survey
- Measures:
  - Ethnic Identity Scale (Umana-Taylor et al., 2004)
  - Ethnocentrism Scale (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997)
  - Cultural Group Identification (Adapted from Hogg & Hardie 1991)
  - Adapted Friendship Index (Aberson et al., 2021)
    - Assessed participants' friendship composition and contact frequency
  - Intergroup Anxiety Scale (Stephan and Stephan, 1985)
  - Intergroup Bias Scale (Wright et al., 1997)

Hypotheses & Results

Based on the ICT framework, we hypothesized that:

- **H1-9:** High levels of ethnic identity, ethnocentrism, and cultural group identity are related to less diverse friendships, higher levels of intergroup anxiety, and higher levels of intergroup bias.
- **H10:** Increased friendship diversity is related to lower levels of intergroup anxiety and lower levels of intergroup bias.
- **H11:** Increased intergroup anxiety is related to higher levels of intergroup bias.
- **H12:** Friendship diversity and intergroup anxiety mediate the relationship between predictor variables and intergroup bias.

Analysis: Serial Mediation

- **H1-3:** Ethnic identity is *negatively correlated* to friend diversity (b^* = -.18, p < .05), intergroup anxiety (b^* = -.55, p < .001), and *positively correlated* to intergroup bias (b^* = .21, p < .05).
- **H4-6:** Ethnocentrism is *not correlated* to friendship diversity (b^* = -.001, p = .95) but *positively correlated* to intergroup anxiety (b^* = .45, p < .001) and intergroup bias (b^* = .20, p < .05).
- **H7-9:** Cultural group identification is *not correlated* to friendship diversity (b^* = .004, p = .96), *negatively correlated* to intergroup anxiety (b^* = -.38, p <.001), and *positively correlated* to intergroup bias (b^* = .17, p < .05).

Results (cont.)

- **H10:** Friendship diversity is negatively correlated to intergroup anxiety (b^* = -.13, p < .05) and intergroup bias (b^* = -0.16, p < .05).
- **H11:** Intergroup anxiety is positively correlated to intergroup bias (b^* = .18, p < .05).
- **H12:** Friendship diversity and intergroup anxiety did not act as mediators (b^* = .18, p = .13).

Discussion

- The support for our hypotheses was mixed.
  - Friendship diversity and intergroup anxiety did not mediate the relationship between the IVs and intergroup bias
  - Surprisingly, cultural group identification and ethnocentrism were not correlated to friendship diversity.
- Limitations
  - After running a power analysis, it was determined that the sample size was underpowered and therefore was not large or representative enough to appropriately test some of our hypotheses.
  - The scales chosen for our study might not be appropriate to measure the constructs we were targeting, or may benefit from being combined with similar scales.
- Our findings suggest that cultural constructs of identity along with friendship diversity may influence intergroup anxiety and bias among BIPOC college students.
- Future studies should explore the relationship between these constructs using more comprehensive forms of analysis, such as social network analysis (Bracegirdle et al., 2022).