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PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

This study involved a systematic, empirically-based examination of campus climate and how campus climate is related to the access and achievement of Black, Latino, Asian and Native American students at the “feeder” schools to the University of Michigan Law School and at the University of Michigan Law School itself. Previous research demonstrates that campus climate is a central determinant of college access and achievement for underrepresented students (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen and Allen, 1999). Specifically, this research shows that students of color and women often underachieve on campuses characterized by hostile racial or gender climates. Beyond this general case, studies of law schools reveal that women and students of color often experience these environments as hostile – they often feel alienated, isolated, devalued and attacked (Guinier, 1997). Where this is the case, whether it be in law school or at the undergraduate level, the educational experiences and educational outcomes for these students are negatively affected (Allen, 1992; Guinier, 1997).

This research focused on the campus environments encountered by students of color both in selected University of Michigan Law School feeder schools and during their law school years. We used a multi-method research design, which collected data from focus groups, personal interviews, surveys, university records, newspapers, natural observations and other sources. Our multi-method strategy was intended to gather extensive information from diverse sources that could then be combined to present a rich, detailed description of campus racial climate at the University of Michigan Law School and at some of the major undergraduate institutions from which the law school regularly recruits.

The general research questions that guide this study are relatively straightforward. We ask:

1. Is the campus climate at the University of Michigan Law School hostile towards female, Black, Latino and other students of color?
2. Are the climates at key undergraduate institutions from which the University of Michigan Law School recruits hostile toward female, Black, Latino and other students of color?
3. Do hostile campus climates have negative effects on academic performance, goals and opportunities of women and students of color who aspire to become attorneys?

While the research questions are simple, the implications of answers to these questions are complex and far-reaching. These research questions respond directly to an emerging orthodoxy that suggests that America is now a color-blind, egalitarian society where racial and gender discrimination are relics of a distant past (Thernstrom and Thernstrom, 1997). If this is true, the society no longer needs to take aggressive steps in order to ensure equal opportunity for discriminated groups. However, if Blacks, Latinos and other students of color continue to be targets of discrimination and are denied equal opportunity to achieve, then there continues to be a need for affirmative action and other programs to promote fairness and equality.

Principal data collection for this study occurred during April and May 2000. The study was primarily focused on four undergraduate institutions that are consistently among the very top feeders to the University of Michigan Law School – University of California-Berkeley, Harvard University, Michigan State University, and the University of Michigan – and the University of Michigan Law School itself. From April 6-9, our research team conducted focus groups with undergraduate and law school students at the University of Michigan. Focus groups with undergraduates from the other four feeder campuses were also conducted during April and May. Supplemental survey data was also collected from students on each campus.

A variety of communication strategies (e.g., newspaper announcements, personal contacts, mass electronic mailings, sign-up lists) were used to recruit study participants. Our sample is non-random and purposefully diverse by gender and race across the different campuses. However, the combined dataset from this study provides the best available information to date for investigating the questions that guide this research. Findings from this study should provide accurate, comprehensive and reliable information about campus racial climate and the access, experiences and achievement of Black, Latino, Asian and female students who matriculate at the University of Michigan Law School.

Campus Racial Climate

Understanding and analyzing campus racial climate is an important part of examining college access, persistence, graduation, and transfer to and through graduate and professional education for underrepresented minority students. For this study, campus racial climate is broadly defined as the overall racial environment of the college campus. When campus racial climate is positive, it includes at least four elements:

- The inclusion of students, faculty and administrators of color,
- A curriculum that reflects the historical and contemporary experiences of people of color,
- Programs to support the recruitment, retention and graduation of students of color, and
- A college/university mission that reinforces the colleges' commitment to pluralism.¹

¹ We define campus racial diversity as a situation where underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (1) are present on the college campus and (2) are equals on the college campus; and where *all* students (3) are willing to affirm one another's dignity, (4) are ready to benefit from each other's experience, and (5) are willing to acknowledge one another's contributions to the common welfare of students/faculty on the college campus.

In its negative form, these elements are less likely to exist on the campus (Guinier, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1999; Carroll, 1998).

Our research approach provides a critical framework that can be used to study how race and racism impact the structures, processes, and discourses within a higher education context (Espinoza, 1990; Brooks, 1993). Utilizing the experiences of students of color as guides, our analysis of campus racial climate also takes account of the intersection of racism with other forms of discrimination, such as sexism and classism. Our approach acknowledges that institutions of higher education often operate in contradictory ways, with their potential to oppress and marginalize co-existing with their potential to emancipate and empower. This qualitative examination of campus racial climate at the University of Michigan Law School is transdisciplinary and draws on many other methodological perspectives. Our study of campus racial climate as a factor in law school access and achievement asks such questions as:

- How do college campus structures, processes, attitudes and dynamics affect the racial climate for students of color?
- How do students of color experience and respond to the campus racial climate?
- How does the campus racial climate affect students of color in their ability to perform academically?
- What strategies for success can we learn from students of color and their experiences?

PRELUDE TO LAW SCHOOL: CAMPUS RACIAL CLIMATE AND THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

It is helpful to envision the steps leading to the successful completion of law school as part of a larger, more complex process. Alexander Astin (1982) has used the notion of an “educational pipeline” to convey this idea while Michael Olivas (1988) uses the notion of a

“river” to convey the same picture. William Bowen and Derek Bok also opted for the analogy of a river (Bowen and Bok, 1998). Whether the analogy is organic or inorganic, the intent is to present successful completion of law school as part of a larger, unitary process. Along the way are discrete steps or stages; associated with each stage are expected attitudes and behaviors that prepare students for the next stage in the process. At each of these critical junctures, the pool of students eligible for the next stage in the road to a law degree is reduced. We need to better understand the process – as a whole and in stages – by which the many is reduced to a few on the pathway leading from the early years of schooling to college graduation and on to law degrees.

In this society, educational experiences are cumulative; educational advantages (and disadvantages) in the early years, and throughout the schooling process, presage educational achievement in the later years or stages. Figure 1 provides a schematic representation of the unitary process leading from the earliest years of schooling through undergraduate college, into law school and ultimately the legal profession.

We first turn our attention to an examination of campus racial climate at four undergraduate institutions that are among the top ten alma maters of first-year law students at the University of Michigan. Our specific concern is to see whether/how the pathways of women and students of color into the University of Michigan Law School entering class are restricted by negative race/gender climate at their undergraduate institutions. Consistently the pattern is one where the proportion of African American and Latino students represented at successively higher levels of educational attainment generally decline compared to their Asian and White peers. This trend continues through college graduation and into doctoral and professional degree levels, ultimately resulting the continued underrepresentation of Latina/os and Blacks in our society’s most prestigious occupations (Wilds, 2000).

The research on student achievement shows that minority students face unique stresses that result in negative college outcomes, including lower college grades and retention to degree objectives (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Olivas, 1986; Nettles, 1991). For many Black and Latino students, these challenges stem from limited social support received on campus from faculty and academic peers (Olivas, 1986; Nettles, 1991; Hurtado and Carter, 1997). The literature suggests that validation from faculty members and peers plays an important role in determining college student success, particularly among students with risk factors (Rendon, 1994). College context is also important: comparative studies of African American students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) reveal that Black males at HBCUs were found to demonstrate cognitive and social development comparable to White males at PWIs, possibly because of leadership and other validating experiences (Fleming, 1984). In a related vein, research by Solórzano (1994, 1995a, 1995b) and others (Wilds, 2000; *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 2000) reveals that HBCUs and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) by far produce the largest numbers of Chicana/o and Black doctorates. Solórzano hypothesizes that these campuses' more positive racial climates can facilitate and lead to important, positive academic outcomes for students of color, such as the pursuit and completion of the doctorate. More generally, campus racial climate has been shown to be a major determinant of academic outcomes for students of color. Hostile or non-supportive campus climates are associated with poor academic performance and high dropout rates among Black and Latino students (Hurtado et al., 1998; Carroll, 1998; Allen, Epps and Haniff, 1991).

In order to investigate campus racial climate at key universities that routinely send sizeable numbers of undergraduates to the University of Michigan Law School, we used a multi-method research design. During April and May, we conducted focus groups and administered surveys on four campuses: University of California-Berkeley, Harvard University, University of

Michigan-Ann Arbor, and Michigan State University. Student participants were recruited via e-mail, newspaper announcements and class sign-ups. The purposive undergraduate sample of 68 focus groups participants and 210 survey participants varied by race, ethnicity and gender.

Focus Group Findings: Undergraduate Feeders to the University of Michigan Law School

Research Procedures and Participants

We used a purposive sampling technique to gather participants for the focus groups. Purposive sampling is defined as “a procedure by which researchers select a subject or subjects based on predetermined criteria about the extent to which the selected subjects could contribute to the research study” (Vaughn, Schumm, and Singagub, 1996, p. 58). We sought a group of African American, Latina/o, Native American, Asian American and White undergraduate students who are currently attending the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Harvard University, and the University of California, Berkeley. Students who agreed to participate in the study, contacted the coordinators of the project to set up a time for their participation in a focus group at their respective campuses.

We conducted six focus groups at the University of Michigan on April 7, 8 and 9, 2000; two focus groups at Harvard University on April 14, 2000; one focus group at Michigan State University on April 6, 2000; and three focus groups at the University of California, Berkeley on May 2 and 9, 2000. Interviews took place in conference rooms at the University of Michigan Student Union, in offices of Burrows Hall at UC-Berkeley, in the Multicultural Center at Michigan State University, and in classrooms in the Barker Center at Harvard University. We also conducted focused interviews with three additional undergraduate students on these campuses. Figure 2 shows the composition of the twelve focus groups.

A total of 68 currently enrolled students participated. All focus groups and interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. Transcripts were made of each taped focus group. The transcripts were coded and subjected to a thematic analysis.

Instrumentation

Focus groups are guided group discussions that allow us to generate a wealth of understanding of the participant's experiences and beliefs about a particular topic of inquiry. Focus groups have four strengths that enrich the research process in that they provide a methodology for us to: (1) explore and discover concepts and themes about a phenomena about which more knowledge is needed, (2) add context and depth to the understanding of the phenomena, (3) provide an interpretation of the phenomena from the point of view of the participants in the group, and (4) observe the collective interaction of the participants. We developed an interview protocol for use in the focus groups (see Appendix A). We slightly modified the interview protocol was slightly modified to fit the racial/ethnic and gender membership of the focus group that was being conducted. The focus group interview covered seven areas of inquiry:

1. The types of racial discrimination experienced by students.
2. How students responded to racial discrimination.
3. How racial incidents affected the students, including their ability to perform academically.
4. The advantages of having a critical mass of students of color on campus.
5. Whether the racial climate for students of color has improved or worsened in the past few years.
6. Whether they would recommend their college to students of color.
7. Advice for the study.

In addition, we compiled extensive field notes, research memos and information from debriefing meetings for each focus group.

Data Analysis

Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to investigate the concept of campus racial climate, we analyzed the focus group interview data looking for:

- Examples of racial/ethnic and gender discrimination,
- The student's response to the different forms of discrimination, and
- The effects of the discrimination on the student.

Specifically, we analyzed the transcripts, research memos and field notes by immersing and systematically analyzing the data for thematic patterns (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This was accomplished by:

- Identifying the types, reactions to, and effects of racial and gender discrimination;
- Determining whether patterns could be found in the type, response to, and effects of race and gender discrimination;
- Deciding if certain types, responses to, and effects of race and gender discrimination could be collapsed into similar categories; and
- Finding examples of text that illustrate the different types, reactions to and effects of racial and gender discrimination.

In this process, examples of text from the interviews illustrating various types, responses to, and effects of racial and gender discrimination were identified, compared across focus groups, and used in the Results section.

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative focus group analysis is used to explain in more detail how students experience the campus racial climate. These focus groups do not represent a random student sample. Instead, a qualitative focus group analysis examines their lived experiences and shows how they can provide a depth of understanding, afford greater insight and be a guide to further research on the impact of the campus racial climate on college students. Indeed, the purpose of a qualitative focus group methodology is to illustrate and elucidate the analytical categories of the impact of campus racial climate.

Results

In this report, we develop a model of campus racial climate. To accomplish that task, the findings are addressed in six segments. Using Figure 3 as a guide, we begin by using the focus group data to make some general comments on campus racial climate by showing how White privilege and entitlement are an important and overarching part of the undergraduate school racial climate. As such, we are defining White privilege as a system of opportunities and benefits conferred upon someone simply because one is White. Indeed, Whiteness is seen as a category of privilege. Next, we examine the types of race and gender discrimination experienced by these students of color. Third, we investigate how these students of color responded to the different forms of racial discrimination. Fourth, we search for the effects of these forms of racial and gender discrimination on the students. Fifth, we explore the counter spaces and voices used by these students to challenge racial incidents. Finally, we discuss the policy implications of these findings for the study of campus racial climate.

Comments on Campus Racial Climate

Before discussing how undergraduate students at these four colleges experience and respond to their campus' racial climate, we first explain the racialized context in which these students go to school. The many overt and covert forms of racism shape the education of Latina/o, African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American and other Students of Color much differently than the education of White students.

Audre Lorde (1992) defines racism as “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance” (p. 496). Manning Marable (1992) also defines racism as “a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color” (p. 5). Furthermore, Chester Pierce (1970) defines racism as a “public health and mental health illness” based on the delusion or false belief, in spite of contrary evidence, that innate inferiority correlates with dark skin color (p. 266). Peggy Davis (1989) paraphrases Charles Lawrence in saying that as “a matter of history, culture, and psychology, American racism is pervasive and largely unconscious” (p.1560).

In analyzing the responses to the twelve focus groups with undergraduate students at the four undergraduate campuses, we contend that the campus climate is one through which racism pervades, albeit sometimes in unconscious, subtle, indirect and covert ways. In general, these undergraduate students described the overall racial climate of their campuses as a place where they feel their presence is questioned and belittled. Furthermore, they indicate that they feel like their universities give lip service to issues of diversity while maintaining an unwelcoming, exclusionary atmosphere where students of color are viewed as unintelligent and taking the place of “more academically qualified” Whites. For instance, a woman of color observed:

“The university promotes this image of being diverse and interested in multiculturalism but I think it’s problematic because a lot of times we don’t take direct action in doing so.”

Another woman of color asserted:

“Although the university tries to promote this ideal of multiculturalism, fostering diversity, and learning about other cultures and other people of different backgrounds, that there’s not enough courses here geared towards that ideal.”

A Latino commented that:

“It seems like the forces to get rid of affirmative action have a much larger voice than the forces that are trying to protect affirmative action and there’s a lot of misinformation fed into the White population about who affirmative action helps and the effects that it has.”

White Entitlement/White Privilege

Beverly Tatum (1997) writes about the underresearched issue of White privilege, and the fact that “despite the current rhetoric about affirmative action and ‘reverse discrimination,’ every social indicator, from salary to life expectancy, reveals the advantages of being White” (p. 8). She cites Peggy McIntosh’s (1989) article “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” as an example because White privilege often is invisible – it is the norm. Tatum continues, “In very concrete terms, it [White privilege] means if a person of color is the victim of housing discrimination, the apartment that would otherwise have been rented to that person of color is still available for a White person” (p. 9). So while the student of color is still stressed with finding adequate housing, the White student is “knowingly or unknowingly, the beneficiary of racism, a system of advantage based on race” (Tatum, 1997, p. 9).

The undergraduate students of color felt that their colleges are racially charged atmospheres wherein their presence is questioned. On the other hand, they noted that the presence of Whites on campus is not questioned. These undergraduates expressed their frustration that the campus climate normalizes Whiteness and thus marginalizes students of color. In this, the students described a campus climate wherein Whites enjoy a sense of entitlement while people of color face charges of being unqualified, unworthy and unwelcomed.

A Latina revealed her perception of Whites:

“I don’t think White students understand that we have to deal with that. No one ever tells them you can’t do it. Their counselors don’t say, ‘Honey, you can’t go to college.’ . . . This one time, my counselor just told me that I should go home and to raise children ’cause that’s the only think I’m good for.”

A Black female stated:

“Every time I leave my room, I’m conscious of the fact that I’m Black. I’m really conscious of the fact that people are looking at me and going, ‘She’s here on affirmative action.’”

A Latino explained:

“One of the biggest divisions right now is this affirmative action case, because a lot of the White students believe that affirmative action needs to go away. It’s going to make me feel not wanted if my peers feel that I’m not worthy of being here.”

A Latina described:

“I don’t see myself as disadvantaged as sometimes they [Whites students] make me feel. They make me feel like I don’t deserve to be here.”

Another Latina shared how White students have been forthright in insulting her. This demonstrates that stereotypes and microaggressions have multiple layers. In this case, these layers of discrimination made her feel even more marginalized:

“I’m a female and I’m minority. It kind of feels like it’s a double-edged sword, like I have twice the reason not to be here. Some students find it very easy to point that out to me.”

An Asian American male articulated:

“One of the most frustrating things . . . for me in the past four years is when White students are critical of other ethnic groups for sticking to their own. But they can’t turn around and look at their own communities, it’s like probably the most segregated of any.”

A Black female made the following comment:

“Somebody asked me the other day . . . a friend of mine . . . what it’s like to be Black, which was weird because no one actually ever asked me [that before]. . . . I was dumbstruck . . . what kind of struck me was that he really did not understand why . . . we’re so angry about . . . these things that happen, things that go on campus. And in class when we get pissed off and start raising our voices, he really did not understand that. And it seems . . . like people see a few Black folks here and there . . . that little specs of color, that suddenly it’s supposed to . . . mean that racism is gone.”

A Latino expressed frustration that many White students make assumptions about his background and do not attempt to learn about experiences outside of their own:

“They [White students] don’t know what being a migrant [from a migrant farm worker family] is all about. They don’t care.”

Another Latino emphasized the ways in which White students are often unconscious of the unearned privileges they are afforded based on their skin color:

“I think just the fact that they’re White. I don’t think they know the fact that that is an advantage. I don’t think they see it as an advantage.”

A Latina explained that Whites seem to be unaware that educational inequities exist because they themselves did not experience them:

“I don’t think White students understand that we have to deal with that [prior educational inequities].”

Another Latina mentioned that campus racism is often subtle and while White students may not recognize racism, students of color cannot ignore it:

“There’s a lot of ignorance on campus and other [White] students don’t necessarily realize. Their concept of racism is very different. They don’t realize minor things can be considered racist.”

A Latina discussed the constant barrage of insults that she must deal with from Whites on campus. She noted that these insults are steeped in so much ignorance that she must first deal with being insulted and then explain to the White person why the comment or action was insulting:

“They don’t realize they’re being offensive . . . so when I get offended, they don’t understand why.”

A Black female described the place of comfort from which Whites have the privilege to be ignorant:

“They [White people] don’t even know they’re racists. They never even think about a different perspective. They never had another perspective.”

Another Black female explained the pressure she feels to combat racial ignorance:

“I think we have two missions when we come to a university that is predominantly White. One is to learn and one is to educate.”

Stereotypes and Stigma

Because (a) racism is an ideology that functions to rationalize actions according to beliefs of racial dominance, and (b) stereotypes function to justify actions based on exaggerated beliefs within the context of racism, then (c) stereotypes about the dominant group function differently than stereotypes about the dominated groups. The power of stereotypes lies in their function of justifying social relations. For example, stereotypes about Whites being overly organized and Mexicans and Blacks being stupid, lazy, and violent, work to positively uphold beliefs about White superiority and the right to dominance while serving as negative reminders of the naturalness and necessity for racial subordination. Stereotypes solidify a racial dichotomy wherein White is good and non-White is bad. Racialized stereotypes remind students, faculty, staff and administrators that people of color are the abnormal, the marginal, because they stand in contrast to Whites, who are naturally the norm, the center.

Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) study how stereotypes may interfere with Black students' abilities to achieve high scores on standardized tests widely believed to measure “aptitude” or “intelligence.” This research found that when Black students were prompted to indicate their race before taking a Graduate Record Examination (GRE), their tests scores were significantly lower than when they were not prompted to mark their race. Steele and Aronson (1995) describe this as a “stereotype threat,” which is:

A social-psychological predicament that can arise from widely-known negative stereotypes about one's group . . . the existence of such a stereotype means that anything one does or any of one's features that conform to it make the stereotypes

more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one's own eyes. We call this predicament stereotype threat and argue that it is experienced, essentially, as a self-evaluative threat (p. 797).

Steele and Aronson's (1995) stereotype research does "not focus on the internalization of inferiority images or their consequences," but rather examines the "immediate situational threat that derives from the broad dissemination of negative stereotypes about one's group – the threat of possibly being judged and treated stereotypically, or of possibly self-fulfilling such a stereotype" (p.798). In other words, in a high stakes testing situation, Black students are reminded of stereotypes that they are intellectually inferior to Whites, and this depresses their test performance.

We argue that "stereotype threat" can also work in the high stakes game of college grades. The prospect of conforming to a negative stereotype about Blacks or Latinos might be enough to undermine a student's performance in the high stakes game of college grades. In fact, the students in this study told us that they are often seen as the spokesperson for their race, as a representative for their race. In other words, their failure reflects on all Black or all Latinos. On the other hand, if they succeed, they are viewed as exceptions to their race. This means that their success does not reflect on all Black or all Latinos; instead, an academically successful Student of Color is considered "different" and like "those other Blacks or Latinos." Steele and Aronson's (1995) important work reveals that stereotypes are deeply woven into the fabric of U.S. society, yet their daily effects are often misunderstood. The concept of microaggressions extends this research to look at the cumulative nature of stereotypes and their effects.

The daily initiation and maintenance of racism, sexism and classism on college campuses occurs in the form of racial microaggressions. Chester Pierce (1969) explains that

“To be black in the United States today means to be socially minimized. For each day blacks are victims of white ‘offensive mechanisms’ which are designed to reduce, dilute, atomize, and encase the hapless into his ‘place.’ The incessant lesson the black must hear is that he is insignificant and irrelevant” (p. 303).

Pierce further defines and analyzes how offensive mechanisms such as racial microaggressions are (a) cumulative, (b) based on delusions of White superiority, and (c) perpetuate racism in the United States.

Chester Pierce (1989) recognizes the tremendous amount of psychological energy expended on managing and negotiating microaggressions. In fact, as he reflects on his attempts to survive racism since he began his career in psychiatry, Pierce describes going through thirty-three years of stress. He states that “these subtle, minor, stunning, automatic assaults are a major offense mechanism by which Whites stress Blacks unremittingly and keep them on the defensive, as well as in a psychologically reduced condition” (Pierce, 1989, p. 308). Richard Valencia (1991) reveals the underresearched “linkages between race prejudice, resultant stress, and the generally poor academic performance of Chicano students” (p. 13). Our findings explore these linkages between campus racial climate, resultant stress, and academic performance. For example, a Black male shared this experience facing a racial microaggression from a White faculty member:

“I was [in the department] and I was walking down the hallway . . . one of the teacher’s door’s was open. . . . She’s like, ‘Oh, I should have locked the door. My purse is in there.’ I was just [thinking to myself], ‘Wow . . . maybe you should have kept that to yourself or something.’ Like, oh, I reminded you that you should, lock your door.”

A woman of color described a scenario in which she was critiquing stereotypes of Black and Latino males, but her comments were undermined by a White student, who believed the negative stereotypes to be true:

“We were talking about stereotypes of Black males, Latino males. . . . We were talking about how would you feel walking at night and you see there’s a Black man there. And she’s [White student] like “I wouldn’t even want to cross the street.”

A Latina described a nonverbal microaggression:

“When I got here and I would talk to certain students they would say, ‘Well, my friend so-and-so didn’t get in.’ And they would just give me this look, like ‘What are you doing here?’”

Racial Incidents Within Academic Spaces

The undergraduate students of color in this study have been and continue to be ascribed a marginal status in higher education. They have experienced numerous racial incidents in academic spaces within the four campuses. Many of these racial incidents seem to be grounded in the current prevailing myth that students of color continue to be accepted to college based primarily on affirmative action “quotas” and not on their academic abilities (D’Souza, 1991). This is a widely held misperception even though there is substantial evidence suggesting that most students of color are admitted based on the same criteria and standards as majority students.

A recent study of the University of California, Los Angeles’ Academic Advancement Program, the largest student retention program in the country, discovered that less than three percent of Chicano and Latino students in 1991 had been accepted through “special admission” provisions (Solórzano and Associates, 1994; Solórzano, 1995a, 1995b). The percentage of

White students accepted under special admissions was virtually the same, at 2.8 percent. Yet many of the UCLA students who were interviewed as part of the study shared how they felt marginalized because of the stigma of being perceived by many faculty and students as unfit for college-level work, even though their acceptance to UCLA had been based on regular admission criteria. Our findings indicate that the racial climate at the four colleges cultivates similar myths about students of color, and thus fosters a tense racial climate wherein students of color are marginalized. It is important to point out that the stigma of being identified as an affirmative action student does not result from the affirmative action programs but from a racial climate and related racial stereotypes about Students of Color both inside and outside the university. Affirmative action is a means to offset past and current racial discrimination. When racism ends, then affirmative action based on race will no longer be necessary.

Departmental Dynamics

Students' responses provide evidence of a negative racial climate in their academic departments. A Latino explained dealing with being the only person of color in his classes:

“In the College of Engineering, it’s definitely harder because if you’re the only person [of color] in there, it’s hard for other people to relate to you based on your differences, how you look, how you speak, how you act, and what you like to do when you’re not in class.”

An Asian American female also described the multiple layers of discrimination she faced being a woman and a person of color in a traditionally White, male department:

“Being a woman and then being a woman of color was like probably the most horrible experience in [the] College of Engineering. Men have no respect for you whatsoever.”

Another Asian American female also recognized feeling layers of marginality in her department:

“There’s no support whatsoever . . . in the College of Engineering for people of color or for women.”

A Black female described the stigma attached to her achievements within her department:

“There is a perception in the School of Music in general, since there’s so few Black students, that if you achieve anything at all, then it’s because you’re Black.”

Classrooms and Curriculum Dynamics

“By teaching a curriculum that is centered in the lives of whites and men, we legitimate a view of the world for our students which sees men’s experience as central, women’s experience as peripheral, white experience as the norm, and all ‘others’ as deviant or exceptional” (Andersen, 1988, p. 123).

“Among other important reasons for the exclusively Black-white model, sheer ignorance leaps to mind. . . . The exclusively Black-white framework is also sustained by the ‘model minority’ myth, because it distances Asian Americans from other victims of racism. . . . The ‘model’ label has been a wedge separating Asian Americans from others of color by denying their commonalties” (Martinez, 1998, pp. 13-14).

Students’ experiences with racial incidents in academic spaces have been in the context of classroom racial dynamics, course curriculum, and the department climate. In addition, students mentioned that when race is discussed in academic spaces, a Black/White binary

dominates the discussion, ignoring other shades of color, language, culture and experience. Overall, students described a very tense racial climate pervasive in their departments, their classrooms, and in their course curriculum.

As an example of feeling racially invisible in the classroom curriculum, an Asian American female stated:

“If you’re Asian, there’s nothing for you . . . a lot of these classes, it’s always a Black-White, but there’s nothing that talks about other people of color.”

An Asian American male also revealed feeling that his experiences are not important enough to be included in the curriculum:

“I think of at least three classes where I’ve been just so frustrated. Where they’re supposed to be talking about racial issues or like racism, and everything’s strictly Black and White.”

A Latino said:

“I’m not really comfortable . . . being in the classrooms. I know that I’m different and I’m reminded of it every day.”

Another Latino noted:

“Me and those two Black individuals tend to sit together every class session. Everybody else tends to sit away from us.”

A Black female remarked:

“There was a lot of racial tension in my class because I’m the only Black student in my acting classes.”

Another Black female noted that being viewed as a numerical racial minority seems to translate into being ignored in class:

“I think that when the professors see that there’s fewer of you, they’re less likely to address your concerns.”

A Black female student’s comments revealed that departmental racial tension originates from both students and faculty:

“I noticed in the sciences here at this school, many of the people are racist including the students and professors.”

The undergraduate students in this study observed that their experiences as People of Color are omitted, distorted and stereotyped in their course curriculum. A woman of color stated:

“The coursework is very straightforward. If there’s any references to people of color as a whole, it’s very marginal. . . . I’ve never felt that people of color are necessarily incorporated into the material that we actually cover.”

A Latino recalled a racial incident where students of color were stunned into silence by a classroom insult. He explained:

“One time in class we were discussing Maxine Hong Kingston . . . issues on some of her books . . . between Koreans and Chinese people . . . and [the teaching assistant’s] response was, ‘But how can you tell?’ . . . ‘They all look the same anyway’ . . . and so everyone was so in shock, and I don’t think it ever happened to any of us before. . . . No one tried to argue it. Everyone . . . got silent. We didn’t know what to do.”

A Black female noted how racial information was omitted entirely from her course of study:

“I have all science and math classes which go back a great deal to Africa and the origins of Africa, but they [professors] never mention it.”

A Latina felt that Latina/o contributions to U.S. society are omitted because White faculty have little or no knowledge of people of color's histories:

“What I . . . lack is appreciation. . . . I don't think any of the Whites necessarily know about Latinos 'cause we don't get it 'cause we don't have Latino professors.”

A woman of color mentioned the overt ways in which her professor glossed over racial issues in class:

“The teacher is pretty backwards in her way of thinking. She says that racial segregation in Oakland, West Oakland was a sign of harmony. And she said that the Native Americans in California went through a recession, not a genocide.”

A White male student commented about the importance of having different voices in the classroom:

I think it is tremendous [to have classes with as] many different people as possible. . . . It's just you wanna bring as many different backgrounds, as many different opinions together as possible because the world is not just clear cut . . . you're going to have to know how to deal with a variety of opinions on subjects and variety of different people as the world gets closer together. . . . So you want as many different things as possible. I don't want everybody in my class to think like me.”

A Black male stated:

“Walking into the poli sci [political science] class and being the only Black person. Then suddenly . . . you have to represent . . . everybody Black [in the class you're in].”

A Latina and Native American described:

“Most of my classes have been predominantly White, and so I’ve noticed that in a few of my discussions, it’s not very obvious, but I’ve been referred to as the person of color in the class for my opinions.”

A Black female remarked:

“In many instances, it’s as if I have to speak up and voice my opinion as an African-American, as if I’m speaking for the whole Black race. And that gets tiring.”

A Black male noted:

“I’m always the expert about Black history . . . I’m always the ambassador . . . I consider myself very intelligent, but it’s just always assumed that you know.”

Faculty/Student Interaction

Students of color also shared their experiences dealing with racial incidents occurring in faculty/student interactions. A Latino described how the constant level of racial discomfort leads to minimized interactions with professors:

“It’s very difficult for me to go up to a professor and ask him questions. I see all the White students just going up to him and asking questions. And it’s so simple for them. And when I try to do it . . . I feel uncomfortable and I think they [professors] do too.”

A Black female stated that professors tolerate racist discourse in the class, which further marginalizes students of color:

“An English girl in my class said that Native Americans are lazy. They didn’t work like the White man. That’s why their land was taken away and they deserved to be in poverty. . . . And I was like, they [professors] don’t say anything

that will [correct them, they just say,] ‘We’ll just get back to that point later.’

They never say anything to stop them.”

Two Black females offered examples where faculty maintained low expectations of students of color even in the face of contradictory evidence. One Black female explained:

“I was doing really well in the class. Like math is one of my strong suits. . . . We took a first quiz . . . and I got like a 95 . . . he was like, ‘Come into my office hours. We need to talk.’ And I was like, ‘Okay.’ I just really knew I was gonna be [told,] ‘Great job.’ But he was, ‘We think you’ve cheated. . . . Well, we just don’t know, so we think we’re gonna make you [take the exam] again.’ And this time, I took it with just the GSI [graduate student instructor] in the room, and just myself. And I got a 98 on the exam.”

Another Black female described:

“What I find is that when I go talk to the professor . . . he was working on his computer. It was his office hours. . . . And then there were these two dumb little boys in the class that we’d never met in our lives, and we were asking [the professor] a question. He goes, ‘Why don’t you [the two students] answer the question for these girls?’ And we were like ‘What?’ And it just blew me away. It just blew me away because I, when I first came here I thought, ‘Okay. This is the University of California at Berkeley. They have certain standards that they uphold.’ And even though I might be a number, if I go in a talk to the professor, I mean, I want my voice to be heard. . . . And it’s not like it’s only happened once.

This has happened throughout . . . my time at this university.”

Ongoing negative interactions with faculty seemed to instill a sense of self-doubt in some of the students of color. For example, a Black female stated:

“They look at you, ‘Oh that’s another dumb Black girl in the class.’ That’s how they make you feel. . . . So you don’t feel like ‘Well, maybe it isn’t me.’ ’Cause you second-guess yourself. You’re by yourself. If you have more African-American students there, then there would be more of a voice, beside your one single voice. Even though it’s very important, if there’s more backup [other Students of Color] there, then you’ll feel more comfortable and you won’t be second-guessing yourself. Then you [won’t] say, ‘Maybe I’m stupid, maybe I don’t understand what’s going on.’

The students of color believed that increasing the numbers of faculty of color may improve the campus racial climate by physically demonstrating that people of color can and do achieve at high levels. Specifically, a Latino explained:

“If you had more minority professors, maybe that would help change the perceptions that White student have over minorities . . . that . . . is really powerful because that person [minority professor] is now a role model. Now that person is in a high position and so, the White students might automatically change their perception because they can see someone who’s intelligent and not think that now the students are also sitting in class who are minorities, may be less intelligent than they are.”

A Latina said:

“There are very, very strong Black professors and female professors who do need to be tenured as role models for students and contribute to the intellectual discussion on campus amongst the faculty in the curriculum.”

A Black female mentioned the paucity of faculty of color:

“As an African American on this campus, I really haven’t had many classes where I had African American professors.”

A Latina noted that current faculty of color are often only found in ethnic studies positions:

“It’s really hard to find any professors of minority race outside that particular study, like Latino Studies.”

An Asian American female observed:

“I’ve never seen an Asian-American faculty member.”

The students cited numerous racial incidents occurring between White professors and students. Students felt that these types of racial incidents might occur less if the departments included more faculty of color. A Black female stated:

“When she [professor] gets to talking about the subject of racism, she doesn’t say racism. And I’m like, ‘No, it’s racism.’ She doesn’t quite understand.”

A Latina mentioned the wall of racial tension she felt between her and White faculty:

“At the College of Engineering, I always had a hard time going up to the professors or even GSIs [graduate student instructor]. The couple of times that I did, the professor gave me a ‘get out of my face’ answer.”

In contrast, a Latino noted that White students seem to interact comfortably with White faculty:

“The White students tend to relate more to the professors . . . they talk, they socialize. Whereas I don’t do all that. Maybe it’s the fact that me and the professor don’t know too much about each other culturally.”

Study Groups

Students of color noted that racial segregation was evidenced in the formation of study groups. For instance, a Latino explained:

“Amongst the White students, you see natural groups form, so you get left out of that process of students naturally identifying with each other because they might be ignorant about who you are.”

A Black male commented on his frustration, feeling isolated because others did not believe he could be Black and still be intelligent:

“[In] a technical field, an engineer, oftentimes you’ll feel like other students don’t want to approach Black students for their groups, especially when [they think] they’re just not technically smart . . . as maybe an Asian student. And, I’ll notice they’ll make some groups, maybe you’ll be the last one asked. So you feel more of a need to establish yourself . . . you need to prove yourself.”

A Black female stated how obvious the racial discrimination is in study group formation:

“I’ve had times when a guy in the class . . . was like, ‘Well, I don’t want to work with you because you’re Black.’ And he told me to my face. . . . And it was upsetting ’cause . . . I came here thinking that it wouldn’t be like this. And that was naïve.”

Student-to-Student Interaction

Many of the racial incidents occurring in student-to-student interactions seem to be demarcated by notions that since Whites are the largest group on campus, students of color are not only demographically less than, but are also academically, inferior. Students of color felt like a numerical minority, but also felt personally diminished as a racial minority due to student-to-student racial incidents. They know that merely “looking like” a person of color can be cause for others to make negative assumptions and lower their expectations. In general, the responses of the students of color suggest they recognize that being stereotyped carries very real

consequences beyond feeling bad about oneself. Students indicated feeling drained as a result of their everyday actions being scrutinized in the context of negative, preconceived notions about people of color. A Black female mentioned the high level of racial tension that interfered with her classes:

“For me . . . my first year was very hard . . . given [that I am a double major in theater and English] . . . what happened to me as soon as I got here is a lot of the White students would say if I [as a theatre student] got cast in something . . . because I was Black. Or . . . if I got a scholarship or something it was because I was Black. And there was a lot of racial tension in my classes because I’m the only Black student in my acting classes, and all my theater classes. . . . My experience here has been that any time I achieve anything . . . nobody really attributes it to my talent or my intelligence. They attribute it to affirmative action or they attribute it to . . . [the fact] that I’m Black. And, nothing, like no amount of talent I could ever have, would justify me getting anything.

Another Black female cited the ways in which the achievements of students of color are belittled:

“She’s thinking about going on to grad school, and then eventually working for NASA. And he [a White professor] said, “You’ll make it, you’re a woman, you’re Black.”

Student Services

As mentioned earlier, justified through layers of stereotypes, the history of racism in the U.S. affects people of color very differently than Whites. The negative actions of a person of color are used to reiterate the deficiencies of all people of color, while the positive actions of a person of color are used to exemplify the rare case of success amidst failure. The Students of

Color in this study felt the need to challenge constructions of their success as “exceptions to the rule.” Too often when a Black or Latino student performs well, Whites do not expect it. These Students of Color are perceived as performing in ways that challenge the stereotype. In response, Whites sometimes seek to explain away this high performance. Therefore, the high-performing Black or Latino must be different. On the other hand, when Black and Latino students fail, they are seen as confirming the stereotype. This places a heavy burden on Students of Color much like Steele and Aronson’s (1995) “stereotype threat” does in the high stakes testing situation. As mentioned earlier, the history of racism in the U.S. affects people of color differently than Whites. The negative performance of a person of color is used to reinforce the perceived deficiencies of all people of color, while the positive performance of a person of color is dismissed as an example of the rare case of success amidst failure. The students in this study are very aware that as people of color, they are not afforded the privilege to be seen as a positive individual in the midst of overwhelmingly negative ideas of their race.

The negative campus racial climate has discouraged these students, even in their attempts to take advantage of campus student services. For example, a Black female explained:

“I decided to go see a counselor because I wanted to do pre-med and I wanted to make sure I was on the right track . . . [the counselor] was very discouraging . . . not supportive at all. She finally said, ‘Well, I don’t think that you should take all of those classes. You’re not gonna be able to do that.’ . . . I personally thought it was because I was African-American.”

A Latina said that students of color do not feel a sense of community as a result of their minimized location within the larger campus’ racial climate:

“We don’t feel there is enough Students of Color. . . . [Latinos] used to be at 5 percent, now we’re at 1.5 percent or something like that and I think the number of Blacks being

admitted has gone down as well. . . . I think that's problematic. It think if there were more Students of Color on this campus, they would feel like . . . there would be a sense of community with among students."

Academic Counter Spaces as a Response to Racial Incidents

Through the process of socialization, those at society's margins have been taught to view themselves and their experiences as negative, to be ashamed of, ignored, or discarded, instead of as a source of strength, knowledge, and pride, to be valued, protected and shared (Espin, 1993). However, David Riesman (1954) suggested that marginality is a place and condition where one's "intellect is at its best" (p. 163) and is related to such positive traits as creativity, insight, and self-understanding. More recently, Patricia Collins (1992) maintains that those at the margin can provide a distinctive angle of vision and states, "rather than reject our marginality, Black women intellectuals can use our outsider-within stance as a position of strength" (p. 36). bell hooks (1990) also contends that while the margin can be a "site of deprivation," it can also be a "site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (p. 149). Moreover, hooks (1990) states:

"I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between the marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility" (p. 153).

Further, Cornel West (1993) introduces the notion of a critical organic catalyst as a person who stays attuned to what the center has to offer with the critical vision of one from the margin. At the University of Michigan and at the other universities in our undergraduate study, students of color create and participate in academic counter spaces in response to the daily barrage of racial incidents they endure both in and outside of their classes. Counter spaces challenge the dominant deficit notions of people of color and promote a positive racial climate.

Academic counter spaces are found in departments, student organizations, students services, ethnic-specific fraternities, and in peer groups. Students of color have created these academic counter spaces to foster their own learning at the university and to nurture a supportive environment wherein their experiences are validated and viewed as important knowledge. (Solórzano and Villalpando, 1998).

Departments

A Black female stated:

“My Ethnic Studies professors have been really good. . . . And they’ve been really supportive of what I do, my plans, and my thoughts.”

Another Black female revealed:

“I keep on going back to my Spanish class, because I mostly have engineering classes, but that’s the only class [where] these kinds of issues [race] really come up.”

Student Organizations

A Black male explained:

“I’m in the National Society of Black Engineers . . . you need to have people around you can relate to, not only on an educational level, but a social level and a cultural level.”

An Asian American female shared the process that pushed her to create and participate in academic counter spaces:

“I didn’t see where I fit in the picture, being Filipino American, being Asian-Pacific American. I had to go find those . . . those communities to participate in myself.”

A woman of color described coalition building between academic counter space groups:

“Unfortunately, at least for the Latino community . . . we are already struggling, but now I think one of the good things is that the different communities of color are reaching out to each other.”

Another woman of color said:

“For students of color, you tend to gravitate towards your respective community.”

A Black female spoke about seeking out an academic counter space:

“I go to the counseling in the CSP office which is Comprehensive Studies, which kind of caters to minority students.”

A Latina explained that students of color create academic counter spaces out of cultural necessity in order to survive a racially hostile environment at the university:

“They don’t see why there needs to be minority groups on campus that have clubs, like *La Voz Mexicana* or groups that are just for that culture. They think that we’re trying to exclude them. It’s not that we’re trying to exclude them. We’re just trying to not lose ourselves.”

Student Services

A Latino recalled participating in an internship that helped him to build a support group of other students of color within his department:

“Before I was a freshman, I went to a four-week summer engineering program and they were both put on by the . . . Minority Program Office . . . that was a

really good experience because when you got here you already knew minorities in engineering.”

Fraternities

A Latino described how his fraternity creates an academic counter space:

“Through a [Latino] fraternity that I’m in, we try to bring high school students into the university and we explain to them the different organizations on campus.”

Critical Mass/Peers

Students also mentioned developing a group of their own peers, a critical mass, to nurture an academic counter space. The focus groups suggested that these academic counter spaces are crucial to the success of students of color. A Latina explained:

“Now that I’ve attracted more Latinos here it just feels so much different now and I think it has definitely helped be to become better adjusted.”

A woman of color added:

“If there were more students of color on this campus, there would be a sense of community among the students.”

A Black male emphasized:

“You need to have people around you that can relate to you, not only on an educational level, but a social level and cultural level.”

A woman of color also mentioned that the paucity of students of color on campus weakens feelings of a diverse academic community:

“It’s difficult to promote a real sense of diversity without actually having numbers.”

Racial Incidents Within Social Spaces

Students of color also experienced racial incidents outside of the academic environment, in social spaces both on and off campus. Our findings suggest that the campus racial climate fosters more covert racism in academic spaces and more overt racism in social spaces.

On-Campus

Social spaces on campus are not necessarily spaces safe from racial incidents. On the contrary, students of color still deal with racial discrimination in the social spaces on the university campus. A Latino discussed how numerous racial incidents led him to begin to dislike and eventually stop participating in college athletics altogether:

“For the past two years I played for the University of Michigan soccer [team] . . . we had one Mexican and one Black player, one African-American player. And it was 27 of us and they always made jokes, racial jokes, and I just sort of got used to it, and I knew they were joking but I also knew they did it on purpose. And I just got used to it and didn’t say anything because there was one of me and 26 or 27 of them. . . . This year we got a varsity team and I decided not to even try out because . . . I don’t enjoy playing soccer because . . . I can’t relate to them and they can’t relate to me.”

A Black male described the overt ways in which students of color are treated as suspects at campus social events:

“With school events, it’s definitely racial, they [school police] regulate and try to shut down [social functions], and make you leave through certain doors.”

A Black female also mentioned the level of disrespect shown to students of color in campus social spaces:

“It’s so annoying that everywhere we go, we’ve got to [be] watched, at the Black parties at the Union, everybody else [other parties] can go [out the front door] . . . when there is a Black party, we had to go out the back door.”

A Latina and Native American female noted the double standard applied to students of color and not applied to Whites in campus social spaces:

“Most parties that were organized by Black organizations or Latino organizations were heavily policed. There was lots of officers in there and more than . . . the White sororities and fraternities were having some sort of party over here . . . they wouldn’t allow us to walk out the front doors of the union. They would make us use the side entrances.”

An Asian American female emphasized that the overt double standard applied to students of color and not applied to Whites in campus social spaces is also upheld by “the law” – the police:

“They [Greek system] can have parties on campus all they want. They can have the music blaring till 5:00 o’clock in the morning. . . . If Black people, Asian people or Latinos have parties, it’s all over . . . they’ll [police] just give you tickets and break it up. . . . If you call the cops on the frat parties, they won’t do anything about it.”

Off-Campus

In social spaces off campus, students of color also experienced multiple racial incidents. Again, many of these racial incidents occurring in social spaces seem more overt than those occurring in academic spaces. An Asian American female stated:

“I experienced a lot of stuff walking down the street . . . somebody would make a racial comment, like Chink or something or like some sort of racial epitaph,

maybe like, go home. . . . I was like . . . this is Michigan. I thought people were supposed to be more open-minded . . . not so ignorant and stuff like that . . . it kind of awakened me . . . that's when I [started] to meet a lot more Asian students like myself . . . and realized that a lot of similar experiences had happened to us.”

An Asian American male recalled:

“A couple of White students spit on us.”

An Asian American male talked about the pervasiveness of racism and racial inequity, reaching into the social spaces off campus:

“In terms of institutional racism, the whole Greek system [fraternities and sororities] . . . they probably get the majority of resources.”

A Black female described the double standard practiced by the police in social situations off campus:

“The police will not stop [fraternity parties]. They will not shut them down, they will not investigate. But they drive down the street and then they see that there's a house. They're anything but non-Whites. Naturally they start to just park in front, and they start to investigate and they start to try to shut that party down.”

A woman of color reiterated this point, stating:

“Up until recently, most parties that were organized by Black organizations or Latino organizations were heavily policed. . . . More than if the White sororities and fraternities were having a party.”

The racial incidents occurring off campus reinforce the negative campus racial climate.

Social Counter Spaces as a Response to Racial Incidents

Students of color at these four colleges are developing attitudes and are searching for resources that assist them to be resilient in the face of stress related to the negative campus racial climate. They are creating and participating in social counter spaces as a response to racial incidents. A Black male described the strains of needing to develop social counter spaces while maintaining a balance in his academics:

“Trying to be involved in all these things [ethnic organizations] and deal with activities to make sure your voice is heard can adversely affect your study habits.”

A Black female reiterated this statement:

“You have to make your choice. Are you just going to brush it off and concentrate on your studies, or are you going to be involved to try to help the environment here?”

A Latino male also added to this discussion by describing how participation in social counter spaces can foster positive academic effects:

“A lot of my friends have told me that it [Latino fraternity] helped them structure their lives or they were falling by a wayside academically, falling into the bad patterns and stereotypes . . . the pledge process provided some sort of discipline . . . sort of like role models type figures, with the older, Latino male students.”

A Black female stated that racial incidents necessitate some sort of participation in social counter spaces:

“You know how you have Black crews, Black fraternities, and so forth. And then my sophomore year here, I was thinking about joining a Black sorority. . . . And she [a White student] was like, ‘Why do you want to join a Black sorority? Are those other sororities not good enough? You think that we’re only White?’ I’m

like, ‘I don’t think they’re only White. It’s just that the, I don’t want to say anti-Black, but I don’t feel welcome in your sorority.’ And she’s like. ‘What do you think we are, the Klan?’ I was like, ‘Okay. We’re not going to go there.’”

Another Black female emphasized the balancing act that many students of color must handle in holding down a job, being involved in community activities, participating in social counter spaces, and also succeeding academically – all within the context of surviving in a negative campus climate:

“I think students of color are the hardest working students on this campus because not only to most of us . . . work jobs and go to school, but be involved in our communities and in our Black student organizations . . . [and] mainstream organizations that are only represented by White Students. And, so we’re trying to do like all this and go to school.”

As a strategic response to stereotypes and microaggressions, these students of color are creating and participating in social counter spaces. These social counter spaces are a means by which students can ease feelings of alienation and discouragement spawned by cumulative racial incidents. Social counter spaces also allow room, outside of the classroom confines, for students to vent frustrations and to get to know people who share their experiences of being racially discriminated against. Balancing between participation in academic and social counter spaces also means having space to offer and receive advice about navigating through institutions such as schools and devising plans of action that incorporate school and community knowledge.

Effects of Racial Incidents on Academic Performance

“Racism disempowers us by infecting individual consciousness with self-doubt...The stigma of prejudice...leaves...a residue of self-doubt in the adult, no

matter what her achievements...It is painful to feel excluded and disturbing to perceive the world differently than those whose discourse dominates. It is difficult not to internalize the sense of otherness as a personal failing” (Espinoza, 1990, pp. 1884-1885).

Alienation

As a response to the negative campus racial climate, Students of Color are struggling with self-doubt and feelings of alienation. This means these students must try to maintain good academic standing while negotiating the conflicts arising from perceptions of oneself as a “minority” within U.S. mainstream perceptions of “success,” “intelligence,” “merit” and “equal opportunity.” A Latino male described how this alienation causes him to be self-conscious instead of being able to focus solely on his academics:

“It really does [affect my academic performance] because I’m not really comfortable just being in the classrooms. Just going to class, I feel the fact that I know that I’m different and I’m reminded of it everyday just by the fact that . . . they hang out in their own little cliques. . . . It would be 60 people sitting on one table, pushing each other off whereas I would be by myself, sitting on my own table . . . it’s kind of difficult to concentrate. I mean, when something like that is in the back of your mind, for three hours, for three-hour sessions, you’re thinking about it the whole time you wonder, ‘Why? Why doesn’t anybody sit here? Is it the fact that I’m different?’”

A Black female explained that in the face of such alienation, Students of Color may feel the burden to try and change the negative racial climate at the expense of their own academic studies:

“Yes [it does affect your academic studies]. You have to make a choice, are you just going to brush it off and concentrate on your studies, or are you going to get involved to try to help the environment here, and do something?”

A Latino male reiterated the difficulty of excelling academically within an atmosphere of racial tension:

“I’m in the Art School. I think I’m one of the only Latinos . . . I don’t want to say the entire school, but I haven’t seen many [other Latinos/as]. Maybe one, two. . . . It’s very difficult to focus really on studying . . . when you can’t really get it out of your mind that you’re different.”

A Black female discussed having to second-guess any assistance she may receive because it may not be genuine:

“It’s not fair on the African American students to be on my guard every time I go in to talk to a professor. Every time I go in and talk to the advisor. Every time I go and talk to anybody. I’m like, ‘Are they here really to help me or are they going to lead me down the path that I don’t want to go down?’”

Discouragement

The ongoing racial incidents experienced by Students of Color promote a tense racial climate that negatively affects their academics. Within this environment, Students of Color indicated being discouraged from succeeding at the university. A Black female recognized that this sense of discouragement pushes Students of Color toward paths they would not have chosen for themselves:

“It’s really discouraging. It seems . . .to me . . . as if the system here at the university is like trying to discourage people of color from going the way they want to go. It’s like, ‘Oh, because you’re Black.’”

Another Black female related her frustrations about the intolerance for diverse opinions on campus:

“They sometimes grade me down if I don’t agree with their opinion. . . . They basically look down on you.”

Racial incidents seem to occur early and to be ongoing for undergraduate Students of Color at the University of Michigan. A Black female stated:

“I hate the fact that I got discouraged so early on. What really hurt me as that I talked to a lot of freshmen here at the university and a lot of them are getting discouraged so fast.”

A sense of discouragement left some students also feeling that they could not perform well academically. One Black female admitted:

“I don’t know what to do. I feel helpless.”

Another Black female said:

“I wouldn’t do anything because I felt as if everything had just collapsed. I wasn’t getting the grade I wanted to get. All the beliefs and thoughts I had coming here were extinguished.”

The sense of alienation promoted by the negative racial climate in study groups led one Black female to reflect on her frustration:

“Why am I pushed to the side, why am I not included in some of these things [study groups]? . . . It makes me feel uncomfortable, it makes me think about race.”

Another Black female revealed that her academic performance may worsen if she senses an even stronger decrease in the number of Students of Color on campus:

“I just hope the numbers don’t go down too much because I don’t want to get bitter and I don’t want to get apathetic.”

Dropped Class

Racial incidents also affected the academic performance of Students of Color in overt ways, such as pushing them to drop a class, changing their major and even leaving the university to attend school elsewhere. A Black female student explained that she reached her limit of dealing with racial incidents in one of her classes in particular:

“I couldn’t take it any more, so last week I went to drop the class.”

Changed Major

A Black female revealed how racial incidents affected her academic decision making:

“I was a MC [mass communication] major too. Just like everyone else in here, I was the only Black student. . . . You feel discouraged. And you feel like you’re not supported . . . I ended up dropping the class, dropping the major completely.”

Another Black female spoke about the accumulation of racial incidents that led to her academics being affected:

“In many respects I was naïve, but now I’m cynical . . . when I took my science courses. I had to fight every day through all the racism I felt. . . . Each time I took a new class, the same thing happened over and over and over and over again. Many times I was the only African-American in the class. People were like, ‘You know what, I don’t think she knows what she’s talking about.’ Or, ‘Well you got

here because of affirmative action, not your grades or your merit.’ And when you try and voice something to somebody, they don’t want to hear it. They’re not about to hear it. And they’re like, ‘Well, you need to be along with your other peers.’ I’m upset. I’m tired of it. That’s why I changed my major to English.”

Changed School

A Black female admitted that the racial incidents she has endured at the University of Michigan have pushed her to make plans to leave:

“I can’t stand this school and I’m ready to leave. And that for me is how I feel. I know this is the real world and I’ve learned that . . . I know how I’m going to take, what I want to do to get what I need to get”

Another Black female shared her friend of color’s experiences with the pervasiveness of racism on campus, explaining how her friend is now transferring to another university:

“She got a ‘B’ in Physics before she came. She took Physics again . . . she did her problems, got everything [in], and got a ‘D’ on her exam. And she looked at her friend’s exam. He was a White person. And he had gotten an ‘A’ and they had the same, almost the same exact answers on the exam. . . . So she went up to the [Graduate Student Instructor] asked him . . . ‘What’s going on?’ He [says] to her, ‘Well, I have not really been around Black people, or people like you before . . . I don’t think you did well on the test.’ So she went up to the professor and the professor didn’t do anything. She went to the Chancellor. The Chancellor had her drop the class. . . . Her parents are the ones who are paying for her education. But see, the first thing [the Chancellor] asked her was whether or not she was on

financial aid. So now she's mad, upset and going to be transferring to Howard University."

Overall Performance

The focus groups indicated that the academic performance of students of color is certainly affected by the negative racial campus climate. These effects include internalized self-doubt, feelings of alienation, being discouraged, dropping classes, changing majors, and even changing schools.

In general, the overall academic performance of students of color is negatively affected by the multiple racial incidents pervasive at the four colleges. Students' responses indicated that they are burdened by more stress than White students because they must try to focus on their studies and working to pay for their education in the face of negative preconceived notions of their intelligence, talent and ability to succeed academically. These stresses contrast those cited by White students, whose greatest stresses are personal, such as difficulty in getting a date (Muñoz, 1986). The stress of dealing with working and going to college can easily affect academic survival and success. In addition, these students also encounter daily stereotypes and microaggressions on and off their college campus. These students admitted that their overall academic performance has suffered as a result of the negative campus racial climate.

A woman of color explained that her academics are affected negatively because there is an overall sense of discomfort:

"Since most of the administrators are predominantly White, [there is] this sense of not connecting with the administration as much as White students . . . it's just not feeling comfortable approaching people."

A Latino male stated that the techniques of racial segregation by White students negatively affects his academic performance:

“I think it [being excluded from study group] makes it a lot harder to learn.”

Another Latino male suggested that racial alienation affects his academics:

“It’s hard for a minority to succeed if they’re one person among a group of people who aren’t like them.”

The negative campus racial climate negatively affects the concentration of this Latino male, who said:

“I think I’m one of the only Latinos in the entire Art School. And it’s very hard to focus when you really can’t get it out of your mind that you’re different.”

Another Latino male said that the campus racial climate is tense, negatively affecting the academic performance of students of color:

“The environment is such that it’s hostile for minorities to succeed because there are, let’s say, 50 people and then there’s 1 minority. And it’s very hard for minorities to succeed in that position because it’s hard for him or her to relate to the people.”

An Asian American female remarked that the campus racial climate stigmatizes students of color:

“In group work . . . they make you feel like you’re the stupidest person there.”

Another Asian American female stated that the campus racial and gender climate negatively affects the academic performance of people of color:

“I think that [for] a lot of women, and a lot of people of color, it hurts them academically to be in an environment like that. I dreaded just going to class everyday.”

A Black female also noted that her academic performance has been negatively affected by the overall campus racial climate:

“It’s kind of intimidating because I’ve had a lot of classes where I’m the only Black person in the class . . . and so it’s been harder for me to participate and get involved in, get interested.”

A Black male noted how nonchalantly others say students of color perform at lower academic levels than Whites, without recognizing the multiple levels of stress that students of color must deal with in the context of a negative campus racial climate:

“Holding down a job, getting involved in an organization, I definitely know that that stuff takes a toll. I think it’s interesting then because the anti-affirmative action people are looking to say, well, look at the minority grade point average.”

Undergraduate Survey Findings

We have sketched intimate portraits of campus race and gender climate at four institutions that serve as major feeder campuses for the University of Michigan Law School. The personal stories and observations are both revealing and compelling. We see how campus race and gender climate plays a critical role in determining whether undergraduates who are students of color and/or women have the opportunity to enter and graduate from prestigious law programs like the University of Michigan. However, it is not unreasonable to be curious about the broader context, to examine student perspectives at another level. Findings from student surveys will supplement and provide a backdrop for our focus group findings.

We collected survey data from students on each campus. Students completed a 28-item survey. The survey asked questions about academic background and future plans, college experiences, campus racial environment, gender roles and attitudes on campus, student opinions,

and other issues. All students who participated in focus groups completed surveys prior to the start of the focus group. The other students who completed surveys were students who had been identified during the recruitment phase for focus groups, but for various reasons did not take part in a focus group (e.g., scheduling programs, focus groups “maxed out”).

Two hundred surveys were collected from four undergraduate institutions of higher education: University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Michigan State University, Harvard University, and University of California-Berkeley. In examining representation by percentage breakdown for each institution, 36 responses were from students who attended the University of Michigan, 49 were from Michigan State University, 31 from Harvard University, and 84 from UC-Berkeley (Table 1).

For the surveys collected at the University of Michigan, 17 respondents (47 percent) were male and 19 (53 percent) were female (Table 2). The overall racial composition of the students surveyed was 11 Black/African Americans, 6 Caucasian/Whites, 8 Latina/os, 9 Asian American/Pacific Islanders, 1 Native American and 1 biracial/or “Other” (i.e., mixed-race) (Table 3). In regard to class level, there were 6 freshmen, 10 sophomores, 7 juniors and 12 seniors (Table 4).

Michigan State University contributed a total of 49 surveys to the study. The gender breakdown for this institution was 23 males and 25 females (Table 5). With the largest proportional representation of African Americans in the study (32 respondents, or 65 percent), Michigan State also had 1 Caucasian, 3 Latina/o, 9 Asian American, 1 Native American and 2 “Other” undergraduate students (Table 6). Of these respondents, two were 2 freshmen, there were 13 were sophomores, 16 juniors and 16 seniors (Table 7).

Thirty-one surveys were completed at Harvard University, representing 9 males and 22 females (Table 8). The racial composition of this sample was 13 Black/African American, 2

Caucasian/White, 12 percent Latina/o, 1 Asian American/Pacific Islander, 1 Native American and 2 “Other” students (Table 9). There were 10 freshmen, 4 sophomores, 6 juniors, 4 seniors and 7 “Other” (Table 10).

The largest number of surveys were collected at the University of California-Berkeley, with a total of 84. The gender composition of the sample was 29 males (35 percent) and 55 females (66 percent). This diverse sample consisted of 38 African Americans, 14 Asian American/Pacific Islanders, 20 Latina/os and 8 Caucasian/Whites (Tables 11 and 12). As for year classification, there were 19 freshmen, 15 sophomores, 26 were juniors and 20 seniors (Table 13).

When asked to state their grade point average in college, 47 percent of the respondents reported “A” averages, 46 percent reported “B” averages, and 8 percent reported “C” averages. Only 7 percent reported grade point averages of “C+” or lower (Table 14). In reporting highest educational attainment of parents, 34 percent of students’ fathers had graduate or professional degrees compared to 25 percent of mothers (Tables 15 and 16). Asked to report high school grade point average, the majority of these students had averages of “A-” or higher. Sixty six percent graduated high school with grade point averages of “A” (Table 17). Self-reported verbal SAT scores in this sample ranged from 200 to 800; 610 was the median score, i.e., half the sample were above and half were below this score (Table 18). Mathematics SAT scores ranged from 100 to 800; the median score was roughly 600 (Table 19). ACT scores in this group of talented, promising students – the caliber of students that the University of Michigan Law School generally expects to recruit – ranged from a high 35 to a low of 16. The median ACT score was approximately 24 (Table 20).

Asked about the effectiveness of high school preparation prior to college entrance, 60 percent of respondents felt that their high school prepared them “well” and 22 percent indicated

they were somewhat prepared (Table 21). Only 17 percent felt that they had not been properly prepared. In terms of career goals, 33 percent of respondents hoped to continue past their bachelor degrees and obtain doctoral degrees. Another 19 percent expected to earn professional degrees. Fifty-six percent of respondents were completely certain they would earn their B.A. degree from the institution they were currently attending (Table 22 and 23).

In responding to questions which evaluated student experiences and relationships with faculty at their respective universities, 52 percent of respondents indicate they consulted professors when experiencing difficulty with assignments compared to 26 percent who did not (Table 24). Even though the majority of students sought professors' help with difficult assignments, a sizeable 47 percent felt unfairly graded (Table 25). In evaluating how well students fit within the university, the majority of respondents (53 percent) agreed that they considered themselves to be part of the general campus life as far as student activities and government were concerned (Table 26).

Thirty-five percent of respondents agreed that they felt discriminated against on the campus because of their race. Thirty-two percent did not feel racial discrimination was directed at them on campus (Table 27). It helps with interpretation of this finding to be reminded that Whites, the group least likely to experience race discrimination on these campuses, comprise 17 percent of the sample. By comparison, only 13 percent felt discriminated against on campus because of gender (Table 28). Half these students did not feel discrimination because of their gender. Here we should be reminded that forty percent of the sample are males; males are rarely targets of gender discrimination on these college campuses. As it pertains to satisfaction with the university, almost three-quarters of respondents believed they had made the right choice in attending their current university (Table 29). However, a little over one-third of these students had at one point or another considered leaving the university (Table 30).

Arguments opposing race-conscious policies have created a backlash against affirmative action. With the end of special considerations intended to promote individual opportunity based on merit, the initiative that had enjoyed some success in making campuses more diverse is no longer valid in California. Many in California have predicted that the end of affirmative action will spread like wildfire throughout the U.S. We asked students to evaluate campus racial environment and their relations with other students. Rejecting the Proposition 209, anti-affirmative action rhetoric, half the sample neither disagreed nor agreed that different admissions criteria and standards were justified for some racial minority students (Table 31). They chose silence in answering the question. Further, the overwhelming majority (92 percent) disagreed that minority students are given advantages that discriminate against other students (Table 32). Lastly, two-thirds of these students (64 percent) agreed that the greatly increased enrollment of racial minority students would strengthen colleges and universities (Table 33).

Evaluating different races on campus, just under half the sample (49 percent) believed there was some trust and respect among students of different races and ethnicities. However, only 25 percent believed there was a substantial degree of trust on campus across race/ethnicity (Table 34). Moreover, nearly half of the respondents believed there was some degree of racial conflict on campus (Table 35). Regarding segregated communities and tolerance of racial exchanges at their university, some of the respondents (41 percent) believed that open discussion of Black or racial issues were evident (Table 36). Three-quarters of the sample reported there was substantial racial separation on campus (Table 37).

Many view the university administration as responsible for alleviating racial tension and segregation on campus. When asked to comment on campus efforts to promote racial understanding and respect, only 22 percent of respondents felt that the administration made substantial effort (Table 38). However, 39 percent felt that there were at best a slight effort to

promote racial understanding. In regard to open discussion of sex or gender issues and concerns on campus, the assessment was much more favorable: 37 percent believed that there was substantial as well as some evidence of such discussion on their campus (Table 39).

Further evaluating the campus racial climate from a student perspective, students were asked what their expectations about race relations were upon entering the university. Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that their expectation was about the same as what they found compared with 48 percent who had expected a somewhat friendlier campus racial climate (Table 40). When asked to compare the racial climate on their campus to other predominantly White colleges and universities, the majority (49 percent) felt that their university was friendlier. (Table 41).

Relationships with peer students and faculty are essential to the adjustment and academic success of all who attend college. In evaluating gender attitudes on campus, a large percentage of respondents (64 percent of males and 64 percent of females) felt that both male students and male faculty (67 percent of males and 74 percent of females) respected female students' attitudes and beliefs (Table 42 and 43). In addition, in terms of assessing their academic ability, 77 percent of males and 79 percent of females believed that both male faculty and students (74 percent of males and 76 percent of females) respected female students' academic ability (Tables 44 and 45). Although they felt generally that women students were respected at the university, 69 percent of respondents agreed that there were too few female faculty at their university (Table 46).

Concerning sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behavior, 45 percent of respondents disagreed that male students were sexually inappropriate toward female students. However, the majority of students (50 percent) felt this was the case (Table 47). Overall, two-thirds of respondents believed that men truly respected women on campus (Table 48). There was

not much difference between whether respondents thought male students acted sexually inappropriate toward female student. Moreover, 80 percent of respondents disagreed that male faculty behaved in sexually inappropriate ways toward female students (Table 49).

Relationships between peers, faculty, and gender can also affect adjustment, academic success, and sense of belonging within the university. In evaluating relations with other racial and gender peer groups, 46 percent reported excellent relations with Whites, 50 percent had excellent relations with Asians, 67 percent had excellent associations with Latino/as, and 78 reported excellent relations with African Americans. (Tables 50-53). As for associations with Native Americans, 36 percent indicated that they had excellent relations compared to 7 percent who reported good relations with these students (Table 54). Further, 33 percent reported excellent associations with Arab American students compared to 20 percent reported poor relations with this group (Table 55). Lastly, 78 percent had excellent relations with male students while 84 percent of the sample also had excellent relations with females (Tables 56 and 57).

When asked in what ways their ideas concerning race and gender had changed since entering college, nearly half of the students (43 percent) indicated their feelings toward people of other races were about the same as when they first entered the university (Table 58). However, 67 percent reported having gained more positive feelings about the need for cultural diversity since entering college (Table 59). Fifty-five percent had become more positively disposed concerning women's rights, while 40 percent had more positive feelings about the status of women in society (Tables 60 and 61).

The final category, which evaluated student attitudes and opinions concerning racial and gender issues in society, provided information about student backgrounds prior to college, as well as perceptions concerning racial/gender politics within the university milieu. Almost half of

the respondents grew up mostly around people of color, and a little over one-third attended high schools that were Predominantly composed of White students (Tables 62 and 63). Over half the sample (68 percent) had friendship networks on campuses that were mostly or all people of color (Table 64). In general their friends were of diverse backgrounds (Table 65). Further, almost two-thirds of respondents felt that interracial dating and marriage were acceptable. However, a sizeable 34 percent disagreed (Table 66).

In evaluating perceptions about the politics of race relations in society, 40 percent of respondents neither disagreed nor agreed that Whites are trying to keep non-Whites subordinated (Table 67). A whopping 87 percent felt that race does interfere with achievement in our society (Table 68). Along the same lines, 86 percent of the sample rejected the idea that a person's gender does not interfere with achievement (Table 69). Interestingly, almost three-quarters of students disagreed that they prefer to study with students of their own race (Table 70). This is compared to roughly half who disagreed about a preference for being advised by counselors from the same racial background (Table 71). Forty-eight percent of the sample disagreed that they were most comfortable at parties with their own race as opposed to interracial parties (Table 72).

In assessing the overall nature of the university they attended, 84 percent would definitely recommend their university to other students who want to attend college (Table 73). As for the racial climate, 33 percent of respondents indicated that it had stayed the same at their institution over the last few years. However, 30 percent said that the race climate had worsened (Table 74). The majority of students gave their university a "B" grade average in both racial and gender equality (Table 75 and 76). More specifically, 53 percent of students indicated that there had been no significant change in the status and climate for women at the university within the past few years (Table 77).

RACE AND GENDER CLIMATE AT UNDERGRADUATE “FEEDER CAMPUSES” FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our specific goal is to see whether/how the pathways of women and students of color into the University of Michigan Law School entering class are restricted by negative race/gender climate at their undergraduate institutions. We examined campus racial climate at four undergraduate institutions that are among the top ten alma maters of first-year law students at the University of Michigan. In order to investigate campus racial climate at these selected universities, we employed a multi-method research design. During April and May, we conducted focus groups and administered surveys on four campuses: University of California-Berkeley, Harvard University, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, and Michigan State University. Student participants were recruited via electronic mail, newspaper announcements and class sign-ups. The purposive undergraduate sample of 36 focus groups participants and 200 survey participants varied by race, ethnicity and gender. The key research findings from the survey follow:

- White privilege and entitlement are important, overarching features of the undergraduate racial climate.
- Male privilege and entitlement are important, overarching features of the undergraduate gender climate.
- Within the negative campus racial climate, the educational playing field is uneven for students of color compared to Whites.
- Students of color experience numerous instances of racial discrimination both on and off-campus. Racial discrimination seems to be more covert in academic spaces and more overt in social spaces. Together, these subtle and obvious racial incidents make up a negative campus racial environment.

- Students of color and their perspectives are often excluded and undervalued in their departments, classroom discourse, curricula, and pedagogy.
- Students of color and women depend on peers like themselves for social, organizational and emotional support. They create and participate in academic and social counter spaces in response to the negative racial climate. Therefore, it is important for the undergraduate student to retain a “critical mass” of women and students of color.
- Academic performance is negatively affected by the cumulative macro and micro forms of racial discrimination. Students of color appear to be burdened by more stress than White students. While all students must focus on their studies, and some also work to pay for their education, students of color have an additional full-time job of dealing with racial and gender assaults. This is an extra burden that most White students do not face.
- Students of color feel alienated and discouraged as a result of the negative campus racial climate.
- Students of color feel that there is an accepted level of bigotry on their campuses. They also feel that their universities have not done enough to bridge the racial divide.
- Students describe being unfairly stigmatized as “academically unqualified,” while White students’ academic qualifications and standing go virtually unquestioned.
- It appears that the attack on affirmative action not only creates its own stigma but reinforces a societal stigma of People of Color. It is important to point out that the stigma of being identified as an affirmative action student does not result from the existence of affirmative action programs, but rather from a historically negative racial

climate and related negative racial stereotypes about Students of Color – both inside and outside the university.

- As a means to counter the negative effects of their campus racial climate, students feel the need for increased numbers of other students and faculty of color.
- Students' academic performance as measured by grades should be seen within the context of macro and microforms of racism. That is, while grades measure to some degree a student's hard work, creativity, talent and determination, for Students of Color, this occurs within a context of overcoming tremendous odds, racial affronts and racial burdens.
- While reported college grade point averages were strong across the study, there are substantial racial differences between students in terms of their economic backgrounds. The parents of White and Asian undergraduates have significantly higher educational achievement than do the parents of Black and Latina/o students.
- The high academic achievement of Latina/o and Black students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds represents a jarring rejection of hypotheses from Thernstrom and Thernstrom (1997) and others that suggest that these students are not equipped to compete successfully in challenging high-caliber universities like the four represented here.
- While students report at times substantial racial separation, conflict and tension on their campus, they also describe trust, communication and multiracial interaction/understanding across the divide. Students of color are much more likely to describe the campus racial climate as hostile; they more often report encounters with racial discrimination and are more likely to have a sense of alienation from campus life and less close relationships with their predominantly White faculties.

- Sizeable numbers of students report that female students are subjected to sexual harassment by their male peers and to a considerably lesser degree by their mostly male faculties. There is also some suggestion that women's academic abilities and opinions are not equally respected compared to those of their male counterparts.
- These students achieved near unanimity across race, gender and campus in their support for special admissions programs in order to assure broad racial representation at universities.
- These students reject the idea that affirmative action programs unfairly penalize Whites.
- The students report that attending a diverse university has changed their attitudes toward race and gender for the better.
- These students are nearly unanimous in their belief that multiracial, multicultural diversity greatly enhances the environment for teaching and learning in higher education.

CAMPUS CLIMATE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL

We have examined campus racial climate at the undergraduate feeder institutions from which the University of Michigan Law School routinely recruits. These findings tell us a great deal about the racial climate of these undergraduate institutions that the University of Michigan Law School students attended as they were preparing for law school. We now turn our attention to a systematic examination of the campus racial climate within the University of Michigan Law School. As before, we are interested in the overall campus racial environment.

University of Michigan Law School Focus Group Findings

Research Procedures and Participants

We used a purposive sampling technique to gather participants for the law school focus groups. Purposive sampling is defined as “a procedure by which researchers select a subject or subjects based on predetermined criteria about the extent to which the selected subjects could contribute to the research study” (Vaughn, Schumm, and Singagub, 1996, p. 58). We sought a group of African American, Latina/o, Native American, Asian American, and White undergraduate students who were currently attending the University of Michigan Law School. Students were approached via electronic mail and through advertisements in the student newspapers. Students who agreed to participate in the study were contacted by the coordinators of the project to set up a time for their participation in the focus group. We conducted five focus groups and one interview on April 7, 8 and 9, 2000. Interviews took place in conference rooms at the University of Michigan Student Union. Figure 4 shows the composition of these five focus groups.

In addition, we conducted an individual-focused interview with one African American male. A total of 31 currently enrolled University of Michigan law students participated. All focus groups and interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. Transcripts were made of each taped focus group. The transcripts were coded and subjected to a thematic analysis.

Instrumentation

Focus groups are guided group discussions that allow researchers to generate a wealth of understanding of the participant’s experiences and beliefs about a particular topic of inquiry.

Focus groups have four strengths that enrich the research process in that they provide a methodology to: (1) explore and discover concepts and themes about a phenomena about which more knowledge is needed, (2) add context and depth to the understanding of the phenomena, (3) provide an interpretation of the phenomena from the point of view of the participants in the group, and (4) observe the collective interaction of the participants. We developed an interview protocol for use in the focus groups (see Appendix A). We slightly modified the protocol to fit the racial, ethnic and gender membership of each focus group. The focus group interview covered seven areas of inquiry:

1. The types of racial discrimination experienced by students.
2. How students responded to racial discrimination.
3. How racial incidents affected the students, including their ability to perform academically.
4. The advantages of having a critical mass of students of color on campus.
5. Whether the racial climate for students of color has improved or worsened in the past few years.
6. Whether they would recommend the University of Michigan Law School to students of color.
7. Advice for the study.

In addition, extensive field notes, research memos and information from debriefing meetings were compiled for each focus group.

Data Analysis

Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to investigate the concept of campus racial climate, we analyzed the focus group interview data looking for:

- Examples of racial/ethnic and gender discrimination,
- The student's response to the different forms of discrimination, and
- The effects of the discrimination on the student.

Specifically, we analyzed the transcripts, research memos and field notes by immersing and systematically analyzing the data for thematic patterns (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This was accomplished by:

- Identifying the types, reactions to, and effects of racial and gender discrimination;
- Determining whether thematic patterns could be found in the type, response to, and effects of race and gender discrimination;
- Deciding if certain types, responses to, and effects of race and gender discrimination could be collapsed into similar categories; and
- Finding examples of text that illustrate the different types, reactions to and effects of racial and gender discrimination.

In this process, examples of text from the interviews illustrating various types, responses to, and effects of racial and gender discrimination were identified, compared across focus groups, and used in the Results section that follows.

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative focus group analysis is used to explain in more detail how students experience the campus racial climate. These focus groups do not represent a random student sample. However, a qualitative focus group analysis examines their lived experiences and shows how they can provide a depth of understanding, afford greater insight and

be a guide to further research on the impact of the campus racial climate on college students. Indeed, the purpose of a qualitative focus group methodology is to illustrate and elucidate the analytical categories of the impact of campus racial climate.

Results

The findings from this study are addressed in five segments. We begin by examining the types of race and gender discrimination experienced by these students of color. Second, we investigate how these students of color responded to the different forms of racial discrimination. Third, we search for the effects of these forms of racial and gender discrimination on the students. Fourth, we explore the counter spaces and voices used by these students to challenge racial incidents. Finally, we discuss the policy implications of these findings for the study of campus racial climate.

In this report, we develop a model of campus racial climate. Using Figure 5 as a guide, we use the focus group data to analyze and show how White privilege and entitlement are an important and overarching part of the law school racial climate. As such, we are defining White privilege as a system of opportunities and benefits conferred upon someone simply because one is White. Indeed, Whiteness is seen as a category of privilege. We will incorporate and discuss examples of White privilege and entitlement throughout the findings. We begin by exploring the themes that emerge in the law school itself. Specifically, we are looking for overt and covert examples of racial incidents, how students responded to those racial incidents, how the racial incidents effect the students, and how these students use counter spaces and voices as a response to the campus racial climate.

Types of Racial Incidents in the Law School Environment

Overt and Covert Racial Incidents

Students experienced numerous overt and obvious types of racial discrimination, but a large portion of their comments indicated that many of the racial incidents culminating in an overall negative campus climate actually originate from more subtle, covert racial incidents. For example, an Asian American woman talked about the less obvious forms of discrimination that seems to be an undercurrent in the law school:

“A lot of the discrimination that we see in the law school is subtle. And it’s not blatant in your face. So a lot of people think it’s not there. And I think that’s dangerous.”

A Black female reinforced this point:

“But I think that people here are very sophisticated. People are very careful. Like hidden bigots.”

A Latina commented that covert racial discrimination can come in the form of lowered expectations for students of color. She explained that non-minority students and faculty perceive academic abilities based on race:

“I have to show that I’m smart enough to be here . . . I feel I have to justify. . . . People are impressed if I do extra work because of the fact that they don’t expect that [amount and quality of work] from somebody who’s Hispanic.”

In addition, a Latino spoke about the link between widely accepted beliefs of minority inferiority and subtle, discriminatory behaviors enacted by some of his fellow law students:

“He [White student] wouldn’t have a minority student in his study group because he didn’t think minority students deserved to be at the University of Michigan and I know that caused a great deal of polarization.”

Students made it clear that because many racial incidents appear subtle, non-minority students and faculty are unaware of how they contribute to a negative racial climate, wherein students of color experience cumulative, daily insults. In frustration, a Latina made the following statement:

“You can’t explain to Whites what they can’t see.”

In addition to dealing with ongoing subtle racial put-downs, many students indicated being racially singled out to explain how all people of their race think about a certain issue. For example, they are called upon in and out of class to give and defend the “minority” opinion on racial topics. Also, they are asked to serve on campus committees that relate to diversity and affirmative action. Many of the students of color feel a burden of having to be the spokesperson of their race. A Latina also talked about the burden of being perceived as the spokesperson for the race:

“You don’t always want to be the voice of the minority in their section.

Especially ’cause I don’t feel like I’m very good at playing that role. . . . ‘Can I just deflect you to somebody who’s more eloquent than I am?’”

A Black male continued this discussion of being the person to carrying the race on one’s shoulders:

“I think had I gone to a Black law school, I definitely would have been much more comfortable because I would have just felt that I represent me. . . . I don’t have to carry the race on my shoulder every time, every hour that I’m in class.”

An Asian American female added another angle to this discussion:

“I don’t want to get into a debate with that guy. Because if I lose, then that’s very damaging to both myself and the minority viewpoint.”

Many of the students echoed this sentiment because they believe that they are responsible for representing their race every time they succeed or fail. They feel that they are not afforded

the privilege to be seen as a positive individual in the midst of overwhelmingly negative ideas about their race. In addition, they feel that many of their White colleagues never have the burden that their failure represents the failure of Whites (McIntosh, 1989; Tatum, 1997).

Inside the Classroom

“Despite a significant Latino student body, Latino perspectives were largely left out of the law school classroom. . . . I cannot name one legal issue of special significance to the Latino community discussed in my three years of study at Harvard. . . . Not coincidentally, the Harvard faculty failed to include a single Latino professor. In fact, Harvard has never had a full-time, tenure-track Latino professor” (Johnson, 1999, p. 25).

Within the law school environment, the classroom plays a critical and central role in students’ socialization. Indeed, like UC-Davis law professor Kevin Johnson (1999), students’ most frequently cited experiences with racial incidents were those originating inside the classroom. Students’ comments identified various contexts to racial incidents occurring inside the classroom. Specifically, they mentioned a negatively racialized climate in the classroom discourse, curriculum, pedagogy and demographic space.

Classroom Discourse

Students revealed how race-related issues were either excluded from the classroom discourse or, if included, dismissed from the discussion as being unimportant. What also concerned students of color was the way in which the discourse used “racial codes.” These racial codes are subtle uses of the language that mask an undercurrent of racism. They are a

mechanism that protects the user of the coded language from being called racist and frustrates the recipient of that form of linguistic discourse because it is commonly understood how the coded language is being used. For instance, a Latino stated,

“People learn different ways of speaking. Kind of a code. To not talk about it [race], talk around it. And then that’s equally as scary.”

Another Latino continued:

“People tip their hand, that’s where the code breaks down...and people learn, ‘Oops, I stepped outside the boundary.’ ‘I shouldn’t say that.’ ‘I could think it but shouldn’t say that out loud.’”

A Latino shared another form that these codes can take:

“I don’t see a lot of people making deliberately discriminatory comments, but at least what I get a lot are comments where people tip their hand . . . where they’re trying to be polite, trying to see everything . . . but something will slip out.”

Furthermore, when issues of affirmative action arose in classroom discourse, cultural deficit theoretical explanations were most often used by faculty and other students to explain the educational and social failure of minority students. Indeed, there was a real sense among students of color that if they succeed, they succeed as individuals; however, if they fail, they fail as a group. When they do well, they are not like the “other Mexican Americans” or “Blacks.”

For instance, a Latino commented

“They no longer consider you part of the whole, which is disappointing. They say, ‘Oh, but you’re different. You’re not like some of the other Latinos.’”

Classroom Curriculum

Students noted that their classroom curriculum omitted or distorted issues of race and gender. For instance, a Black female commented that even when the case directly addressed racial or gender issues, such discussions were avoided in the classroom:

“Because there are some cases where . . . race is a factor . . . instead of talking about it, you just ignore it.”

A Latino also mentioned how the curriculum was manipulated in ways to not talk about race:

“I remember trying to bring up the relationship with race, the torts issues, and those sorts of issues being minimized . . . and people not wanting to talk about those issues, those issues were being put under the rug.”

A woman of color continued:

“In criminal law more than anyplace else, there’s race issues. And, he [professor] would avoid them at all costs.”

Students sensed an atmosphere where the discourse on race, through the classroom curriculum or otherwise, is minimized or dismissed. For instance, a Latina shared her experiences:

“I get this feeling in classes when issues like race . . . do come up, a lot of people say things like, ‘But we’re all really just the same. Why can’t we just be the same?’ Instead of saying, ‘Well no, there are differences, and embrace that.’”

Classroom Pedagogy

Students indicated that pedagogically, the faculty were neither prepared nor inclined to teach about racial issues. On the rare occasion when race was brought up in classroom discourse, faculty called on students of color for their opinion on how Black or “Hispanic” or

minority people felt about race-related issues. Faculty were perceived to be too willing to “move on” from issues around race. For instance, an Asian American female commented:

“In terms of race in the classroom, I . . . can think of at least two instances where race was an appropriate topic. It was very related to what we were discussing. What we should have been discussing. And the professor shut down that conversation and moved on very quickly.”

A Latina stated her opinion on the faculty members’ use of race and gender in the classroom discourse:

“As far as the faculty is concerned, I always get the sense of condescension and paternalism towards race and gender.”

Students mentioned that in the law school environment, a person’s name is an important part of the discourse in and out of the classroom. It is especially important that the professor know one’s name. In this context, the misidentification of students of color was a meaningful issue. A Black male referenced another Black student in the class when explaining,

“If he raises his hand, sometimes he gets called on with my name.”

A Latina described her experiences with professors making dismissive comments about their forgetting or mistaking the names of students of color:

“I can give you a faculty sort of example . . . they get the names of the people of color mixed up so much more than they do anybody else. . . . They’ll be like, ‘Oh, you know, Moreno, Morales, same thing.’”

An Asian American female also gave her illustration of the name issue:

“I’ve seen professors in classes calling people of color by the wrong names. It might seem minor, but after a while it starts to really get to you. And you see it more than once. You start to think, ‘Gee, it doesn’t just happen to me.’”

Classroom Demographic Space

Students of color were an obvious minority in the classroom. In many classes, they were the only Black, Latina/o, Asian American or minority. They rarely had the opportunity to see faculty of color or female faculty teach the class. On the rare occasion that they did have a woman or faculty of color, they recalled incidents of disrespect toward the faculty member. For instance, a Latina commented about her few experiences in a class taught by a woman:

“I’ve had two female professors in my years here. . . . And she would try to bring in the feminist sort of perspective. And it was funny, because it would be met with lots of hostility by a lot of people afterwards. They [said], ‘She really needs to get out of that feminist crap, and we need to get back to learning property.’”

Recalling an incident in class, an Asian American male shared the following account:

“This female Korean American professor. I was in the class and it seemed like people really didn’t respect her at all. People attacked her all the time, much more than other professors. People didn’t really take what she took seriously.”

A Black male reflected on the unbalanced racial demography in this way:

“The lack of seeing other Black faces in the classroom actually bothers me.”

Outside the Classroom

Outside the classroom, students of color still encountered racial incidents. These incidents seemed to take place through electronic mail, in the dining hall and at social events. For instance, electronic mail was a vehicle where some students carried on the racial discourse outside the classroom. In this context, it was much easier to use less racially coded language in response to a discussion in class. Students also mentioned the law school dining facility as a

space where racially coded language was used to continue a classroom conversation. An Asian American female shared her experiences in the following example:

“I think it is usually the conservative side that doesn’t get vocalized [in the classroom]. It started out in e-mail and that’s kind of like a safe haven for their viewpoints.”

A Latina talked about her experiences with the Minority Alliance Program (MAP), an academic and social support program for underrepresented students in the law school. She stated:

“Someone didn’t know I was going to MAP. And they [said], ‘I thought you were just a regular [student].’”

She went on to mention that the White student did not have a clue that she had offended her.

A Latino commenting on the expectation that all minority students should continue into public interest work after law school had this to say:

“He [White student colleague] said, ‘And that’s not the point of affirmative action. You’re [minority students] supposed to be here to do public interest work and help you’re friends. And that’s why, if you don’t, there’s no good point in having affirmative action.’”

Another Latina had this encounter with a White law student:

“And I showed it [brochure] to her and she stopped for a minute, sort of looked me up and down and gave me a very strange look saying, ‘Wow, I forgot that you’re one of my minority friends.’”

There was a clear feeling among many of the students that they had to justify being in law school because they were taking the seat of a better qualified White applicant. A Latino had this experience at a social function at the law school:

“One of the students jokingly, but in front of everyone, implied that I didn’t really deserve to be in this law school and I was invited for affirmative action reasons.”

A Black male also commented on a student newspaper column:

“He [another student] wrote something about affirmative action that made it sound like every single African American student here was wholly incompetent, and had no reason to be here.”

An Asian American female commented on the first appointment of a Chicana as Editor-in-Chief of the *Michigan Law Review* in its 100-plus year history:

“A Latina has just been appointed Editor-in-Chief [of the *Michigan Law Review*]. And I’ve heard some comments that the only reason she got a position was because she’s Latina and not because of her merit.”

Another Latina shared her experiences at the law school dining facility:

“For weeks on end, I didn’t even want to eat in the dining hall because I knew I’d go to the dining hall, I’d sit down, someone would sit across from me from my section who would inevitably say something sexist, racist and/or homophobic.”

A woman of color shared her experience at a law firm where she was working as a summer intern:

“I’m wearing my most expensive suit trying to look as professional as possible. . . and, this White older gentlemen stopped me and . . . [asked me] to make a copy for him. And, I looked at him, like you think I’m a paralegal or a secretary.”

This same student recalled a similar incident at a law school recruitment dinner:

“So I come in there and . . . one of the older gentlemen thought that I was a waitress.”

An Asian American female related an exchange with a White student about the Basement Groups, which are the offices of law student organizations housed in the basement of the law library:

“At the law school, there are these Basement Groups, because a lot of the People of Color Students have their own groups. . . . And I’ve had my White friends, people that are close to me say, ‘Oh, you basement groups. You get all the perks. Or you have these offices and . . . you guys have outlines and study aids.’”

A Black female recalled an incident in the law school:

“One of the students had put signs around the hallways that ranked the University of Michigan Law School faculty in terms of diversity among the top ten [schools]. And Michigan was last. Someone wrote ‘who cares’ on the signs.”

A Black female shared an experience in the administrative offices of the law school:

“I was in the Student Activities Building going to pick up something in one of the offices. And . . . a White girl . . . was in line in front of me. And when she went to pick up whatever she was picking up, the lady just asked her for her name, and she gave her the document. And then when it was my turn and I did the same thing, she asked me for Social Security Number, ‘You have your UM I.D.?’ Like I wasn’t . . . a student.”

Summary

Understanding the pervasiveness of racial incidents inside and outside the classroom begins with acknowledging the subtle, yet stunning, insults endured by students of color on a daily basis. These insults are racial and gender microaggressions (Pierce, 1995). Microaggressions are cumulative in nature and can cause undue stress to students of color, while privileging Whites. Any one stereotype or microaggression may contain various layers of

discrimination. The stress related to deciphering these layers and responding or not responding to each microaggression falls on the student of color. Indeed, Chester Pierce (1995) states, “In and of itself a microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence” (p. 281).

Responses to Racial Incidents by Students of Color

Students indicate responding to racial incidents in and out of the classroom in various ways. Specifically, these responses include maintaining strategic silence, separating themselves from uncomfortable situations, working hard, being motivated to prove others wrong, and engaging in confrontation.

Choosing Silence

Students of color and White students perceived choosing silence differently. White students might perceive the silence of students of color as lack of preparation for class or a discussion, their unwillingness or inability to participate in class or discussions, or the result of incompetence. On the other hand, students of color view silence as a way of protecting themselves from a hostile environment in and out of the classroom. They also described various forms of strategic silence. That is, choosing to be silent at one point in time can be a strategic move so that their voice is heard at another point in time. They also viewed silence as a form of protection, as an avoidance of conflict mechanism, and as a form of comfort. For instance, an Asian American female talked about silence as form of protection:

“By my not speaking out, it does have an impact. But I still don’t do it. I still stay safe and quiet.”

A Black female considered silence as a response to helplessness and isolation:

“So it’s just isolation and just helplessness sometimes. It’s just ‘why even try,’ ‘why even speak up,’ it’s so ridiculous.”

A Latino observed silence as avoidance of conflict:

“I was . . . the only Latin in that class, and I didn’t really talk, so therefore no comments were aimed at me.”

An Asian American female referred to her silence as avoidance of conflict and protection for later job opportunities. She described a letter that had written after a bad experience at an interview for a summer internship:

“And so I wrote this whole letter. It was pretty good. I showed it to a couple of people. It wasn’t too reactionary or anything. But then in the end, I realized I can’t send this. Because I’m going to be working in the legal community. And I don’t want to put out a bad name for myself. Maybe one day, down the line, in three years, or four years or whatever, I’m going to want to go get a job at that firm.”

A Black female viewed her silence as both comfort and protection from wasting her time with racial incidents in class:

“There were a lot of times when I would just talk to [student’s name] in class. And, people say, ‘You guys are always talking over there, why don’t you say more stuff in class?’ It’s like, ‘Why should I? Why should I waste my time? You’ve obviously made it very clear that this is your class and the rest of us are just allowed to be here.’”

A Black female saw silence as a reaction to being perceived as the spokesperson for the race:

“I felt bad like I had sold out for not saying anything. But why should I be the one to have to say something.”

A woman of color regarded silence as the result of not caring what took place in the class:

“I wasn’t engaged. I never really wanted to talk in class because . . . I didn’t care what they were talking about.”

Another woman of color viewed silence as a strategy for survival:

“I’ve always felt like I’ve had to pick my battles.”

An Asian American female spoke of her silence in this way:

“In class, I definitely have felt the strong desire to say something and then I don’t. I can safely say that I hardly ever speak about race issues.”

Choosing Separation

“I gravitated toward students who also felt alienated from the elite. . . . My alienation, no doubt, was counterproductive. While more sophisticated students spent their three years at Harvard building networks for future social climbing, I kept mostly to myself. . . . Though this was partly my fault, Harvard did nothing to break down the barriers between a big, impersonal institution and outsiders like myself who were convinced they didn’t belong” (Johnson, 1999, p. 18-19).

Again, Professor Johnson (1999) leads us into a discussion of the social network function of the law school environment. Choosing to separate or disengage from various functions of the law school is another example of the student response to racial and gender discrimination. For

instance, a Latina talked about her choosing to separate herself as an individual from the debate around race:

“So I think I separate myself ’cause I choose to. As much as these people [White students] choose to ignore the fact that race is an issue.”

An Asian American female mentioned the Asian Pacific American Law Student Association (APALSA) office as a space to separate or get away from others in the law school environment:

“But in reality, it’s, it’s like the only place that . . . I can go where I feel totally comfortable with hanging out in the office, and with people of my own race.”

A Latina addressed the choice to separate out of weariness of having to deal with negative racial talk:

“Even if they’re saying that we isolate ourselves, it’s just because we get tired of hearing the same things . . . their jokes or their comments.”

Another Latina chose to separate with a group to seek out a space of comfort:

“It’s a lot of work, it’s a lot of stress, and I’m just going to do the things that I enjoy and the things that make me happy while I’m here. And if that’s going out with my minority students, my minority friends . . . that’s what I choose to do.”

A Latina female discussed choosing to separate as an individual because of the discomfort and its effect on her humanity:

“I dread going to class. It’s just shaken my sense of humanity or my sense of faith in humanity. I really don’t feel comfortable in the situations. I feel like I don’t have a lot in common with a lot of these people that go to law school . . . I don’t necessarily mean to consciously separate myself. I feel so uncomfortable in

that situation that I don't want to have to endure it for longer than I normally do during the week.”

Summary

Choosing silence can be safe, as it minimizes the chances of being admonished for one's comments. In choosing to be silent in class and separating themselves from racially uncomfortable situations, students of color are also creating their own spaces where questions and critiques can be expressed relatively safely. Strategic silence in response to certain racial incidents can also help students to conserve their energies for future situations.

The concern remains that perhaps choosing silence comes from feelings of self-doubt and from being silenced. Students of color may doubt that their experiences are valid, that they have anything intelligent to add to the conversation, or that they could possibly bring new knowledge to others. Students' silence may also negatively effect their access to traditional forms of assistance, such as going to professors' office hours.

Students seemed to choose silence and separation in response to their position of marginality. Marginalized students are often familiar with being silenced in a classroom or having their personal experiences and beliefs discounted (Solórzano and Villalpando, 1998). These experiences in the classroom are in addition to the cultural deficit discourse pervasive throughout the campus, characterizing people of color as stupid, lazy, and dependent on Whites.

Nonetheless, in maintaining silence and separating themselves from racially uncomfortable situations, students of color appeared to be utilizing silence on their own terms. Indeed, as these students navigate successfully through law school, they demonstrate that strategic silence can be strong – stronger than words many times.

Effects of Racial Incidents on Students of Color

“I have no memory of ever speaking out again to explain facts from my perspective as I had done that one day in Criminal Law...While I was at Harvard, my voice was not heard again in the classroom, examining, exploring or explaining the life situations of either defendants or victims. Silence accommodated the ideological uniformity, but also revealed the inauthenticity implicit in discursive assimilation. As time went on, I felt diminished and irrelevant. It wasn't any one discussion, any one class or any one professor. The pervasiveness of the ideology marginalized me” (Montoya, 1994, p. 25).

“Alienation among Latinos at Harvard was rampant” (Johnson, 1999, p. 26).

Professors Margaret Montoya (1994) and Kevin Johnson (1999) help us frame our discussion on the effects of micro and macro forms of racial discrimination in the lives of students of color. Indeed, students of color at the University of Michigan gave us numerous examples of being silenced in and out of the classroom, which led to their feelings of helplessness, feeling less confident about their ability to perform in law school, and disengaging generally and in the classroom in particular. They also described feelings of isolation and alienation from the mainstream culture and social networks of the law school. In regards to helplessness, a Black female recalled her experiences in the law school classroom:

“It's just isolation and just helplessness sometimes. Why even try, why even speak up.”

A Latina described her feelings this way:

“I also think it's learned helplessness at some point.”

As far as being less engaged, a Latino shared his thoughts:

“At this point, I don’t feel like engaging in any of that.”

A woman of color offered this example of the effects of being marginalized in the classroom:

“Being marginalized in class just definitely had an effect on me. I wasn’t engaged.”

An Asian American female recalled:

“The only way I think it might effect mine [academic performance] is that I feel less engaged and less interested.”

Being silenced also results in students feeling less confident about themselves and their work. A Latino provided this example:

“The notion of privilege intimidates me. When I allow myself to realize that these people are privileged, it intimidates me . . . I’m not as confident in my work.”

A Black female law student recalled this experience in her first year of law school:

“The first year and first semester is so intimidating...you feel that you really don’t have a place in this classroom. It’s obviously a classroom for White men. . . . But when the person you’re talking to doesn’t look like you and the people sitting around you haven’t come from where you come from and don’t look like you, it just makes the whole thing a little bit more intimidating.”

An Asian American female remarked on her feelings of being silenced and not speaking out on a topic when she probably should have:

“Now I kind of feel like I’m really just a coward.”

These racial incidents also resulted in feelings of isolation for many of these students of color. For instance, a Black female shared this example:

“I think in law school more than anywhere else, I have never felt so isolated. And I’m not the only one.”

A Latina female echoed that comment in her response:

“You interact less because of those reasons. And then you’re by yourself more often. And then you just feel alone.”

Another Latina female recalls how the incessant comments and joking effected her:

“Even if they’re saying that we isolate ourselves, it’s just because we get tired of hearing the same things, their jokes or their comments.”

In the final analysis, these racial incidents affected students of color in their classroom participation and their grades. A Latina recalled this experience:

“It’s [points for participating in class] supposed to be objective. But when it gets to that point, it’s no longer objective when they’re looking at your grade and saying, ‘You know, am I going to bump them up or bump them down based on their participation.’”

A Black female spoke about the perceived value of her ideas and work:

“When you’re writing an exam you know that your voice or the way that you write and think was never valued all along.”

Another Black female mentioned the effects of not speaking in class:

“The teacher [said], ‘You didn’t really speak up much in class and that probably played into it [grade].’”

In some more examples of the effects of racial incidents on academic performance, a Latina expressed how a racially polarized classroom environment affects her participation:

I skipped class last week because I knew what the conversation in the classroom discussion [on race] was going to be like and I was so upset by even the thought of it. I knew I couldn't go.

A Black male revealed how racial incidents act upon him:

“You often are kind of fearful that you have to carry the flag and defend things.”

An Asian American female shared the larger picture of the effect of racial incidents on her participation and ultimate post-law school opportunities:

I think that definitely White students are privileged in the clerkship process . . . because you have to get recommendations . . . but if you don't speak in class, how is the professor going to know you. How are they going to write you a letter of recommendation? If you don't have a recommendation, you can't get a clerkship.

Summary

Students of color seem to be worn down by the need to engage in ongoing strategies in order to confront the inherent stresses that accompany a negative campus racial climate. Law school can be stressful all by itself. However, these students balance school and work responsibilities while also facing racialized notions of people of color being “lazy” and “unintelligent” (Rodríguez, 1997). Paulette Caldwell (1995) explains that:

stereotypes, and the culture of prejudice that sustains them, exist to define the social position of black women as subordinate. . . . Negative images are . . . indispensable to the maintenance of an interlocking system of oppression based on race and gender that operates to the detriment of all women and all blacks (p. 272).

We extend Caldwell's (1995) statement to say that this "interlocking system of oppression" functions to the detriment of all people of color, and especially women of color. We also emphasize that the students of color in this study are pursuing higher education amidst multiple layers of oppression based on race, gender, class, immigration status, phenotype, surname and accent.

As mentioned above, Chester Pierce (1988) describes that a few or even one microaggression may cause serious emotional and physical stress. An accumulation of a lifetime of microaggressions and their corresponding stress may cause lowered self-esteem and health complications, which can diminish these students' quality of life and even shorten their life span. Pierce's (1989) work examines the large amount of energy expended by people of color in anticipating and dealing with microaggressions.

So far, it seems that students are developing attitudes and searching for resources that assist them to be resilient in the face of stress. Indeed, despite the negative effects of working in a negative campus racial climate, these students demonstrate that they are survivors. They have become very adept at navigating their way through the law school by "picking and choosing their battles" wisely. In response to the constant strain of defending themselves in face of individual and institutional forms of racism, these students just work harder.

*Counter Spaces and Voices as a Result of the Campus Racial Climate*²

One of the ways in which students of color navigate their way through the law school is to seek out other students for emotional or instrumental support. They seek out others who are experiencing the same incidents or who can serve as allies in the struggle to overcome the negative racial climate. For instance, these students described certain classes where faculty were

² Some quotes are repeated here in order to exemplify a concept.

able to include and not be dismissive of issues related to race and where these issues were discussed in an open and constructive manner. An Asian American female recalled one such class:

“In [professor’s] class . . . she said she’d never seen so many students of color in a class, and she’d never seen so many students of color speak up.”

Indeed, classes of this sort are counter spaces to the silencing that appears to take place in other classes in the law school. In spite of that, we also have examples where that negative racial climate entered the classroom. For example, a Latina commented on her experiences in a law school class:

“I’ve had two female professors in my years here. . . . And she would try to bring in the feminist sort of perspective. And it was funny, because it would be met with lots of hostility by a lot of people afterwards. They [said], ‘She really needs to get out of that feminist crap, and we need to get back to learning property.’”

An Asian American male recalled an incident in class shared the following account:

“This female Korean American professor. I was in the class and it seemed like people really didn’t respect her at all. People attacked her all the time, much more than other professors. People didn’t really take what she took seriously.”

Even in these presumed counter spaces, there seemed to be an atmosphere where the discourse on race is minimized or dismissed. For instance, a Latina shared her experiences:

“I get this feeling in classes when issues like race . . . do come up, a lot of people say things like, ‘But we’re all really just the same. Why can’t we just be the same?’ Instead of saying, ‘Well no, there are differences, and embrace that.’”

Again, revealed here is the professor's inability to incorporate race into the curriculum. However, if race is included, there appeared to be an inability to engage students in ways that encourage the fruitful and critical discussion of race in the different domains of legal education.

Legal clinics are a space where students could deal with some of the racial issues in spaces outside the law school and in the practice of their developing craft. In discussions after and outside the focus groups, many students commented on the critical role of legal clinics in their legal education. In many of these settings, issues of race were clearly relevant and played out in the real time of legal practice. Students did not receive the conceptual and theoretical foundation for dealing with many of the racial aspects of clinic work in their regular law school curriculum.

Perhaps the most important counter spaces to the negative racial climate are the so-called Basement Groups. These are the offices of law student organizations generally and the ethnic student law organizations in particular. For instance, they include the Black Law Student Association, the Latino Law Students Association, and Asian Pacific American Law Students Association. Students also mentioned the Minority Alliance Program. These counter spaces are seen as a critical space for minority groups to come together for academic and social support. For instance, an Asian American female referred to the APALSA office as a place to seek refuge or a safe haven from the law school environment:

“But in reality, it's, it's like the only place that I can go, sometimes I feel like the only place I can go where I feel totally comfortable with hanging out in the office, and with people of my own race.”

Another Asian American female discussed the importance of APALSA:

“I really like my APALSA friends because I can, like I’ll have a story that I think nobody else would even understand. . . . Like all these people know exactly what I’m talking about. If I didn’t have them, it’d be really hard.”

Still another Asian American female pointed out the rationale for working with MAP:

“I have friends that were involved in it and they have really good things to say about the program. They’ve made a lot of good friends the first year. Another thing that is good about MAP is that it combines people of all races.”

Students also described the peer group support that exists both within and outside these organizations. These peer groups are not necessarily race-specific and indeed many mentioned the racial diversity of many of their peer groups. These peer groups serve multiple functions such as support, comfort and intellectual stimulus. An Asian American female mentioned one very important purpose:

“So it’s . . . good just to talk to them [her social group] and feel like I’m not crazy.”

Another Asian American female related her reasons for consciously interacting with peers:

“But it’s just to talk to other people who understand.”

A Latina recalled the rationale for deciding to work with her peer group:

“It’s a lot of work, it’s a lot of stress, and I’m just going to do the things that I enjoy and the things that make me happy while I’m here. And if that’s going out with my minority students, my minority friends . . . that’s what I choose to do.”

Finally, students discussed the importance of working in service programs both inside and outside the university as a space to counter the negative racial climate of the law school. They mentioned the importance of involvement in off-campus tutoring programs and giving back to communities of color. However, in spite of the importance of this work, a Black female law

student recalled how racial incidents make their way into that experience in the following incident:

“We do tutoring at a local middle school. And there were two young African American boys after school like standing on the fence. As we’re driving down the street, one of the guys [a White student] made the comment, ‘Oh, drug dealers,’ or ‘Is it a drug dealer?’”

She chose not to confront the student but recalled the anger and hurt she felt regarding this incident.

Still another Black female revealed this experience on her way to do an off-campus service. A young African American girl whom she tutors told her how a grocery store clerk always asks for her mom and the little girl responded:

“‘They’re just assuming that I don’t have a dad and it’s racist, they’re all racists.’”

University of Michigan Law School Survey Findings

We have provided detailed accounts of the experiences of students of color in relation to the campus racial climate at the University of Michigan Law School. The personal stories and observations presented are both revealing and compelling. However, it is not unreasonable to be curious about the law school’s broader context beyond the personal, circumscribed experiences reported thus far. Toward the end of presenting a broader, supplemental perspective on campus racial climate at the University of Michigan Law School, we now turn to results from survey questionnaire studies.

Research Procedures and Participants

Survey questionnaires were administered to law school students currently attending the University of Michigan. The questionnaires consisted of 27 items that asked students to answer a series of questions about family background, academic experiences, student attitudes and opinions, campus racial climate and interpersonal relations on campus. The law students were surveyed prior to their participation in focus groups organized by these researchers. A copy of the survey and tables can be found in the Appendix.

Results

Of the entire sample, 12 respondents were male and 19 were female (Table 78). Ten African Americans completed surveys, followed by 7 Whites, 7 Latina/os, and 7 Asian Americans (Table 79). The majority of the sample (14 students) were first-year law students, 7 were in their second year, and 10 were third-year students (Table 80).

Comparable numbers of these students reported law school grades in the highest and lowest categories: 8 said their grade average was “A” and 10 said “B-” (Table 81). Grades were comparable across race, gender and ethnicity for this group of students, all of whom were performing at acceptable levels in this rigorous law program. Of 31 students, only 3 reported grade point averages of less than “B.” Predictably all but one of the 31 students felt “completely certain” that they would earn a law degree from the University of Michigan (Table 82).

Asked to indicate how well their undergraduate institution prepared them for the rigorous academic competition of law school, 22 of 31 students felt extremely or fairly well prepared (Table 83). Their reported grade point averages as undergraduates showed them to have been outstanding students (Table 84). Seventeen of the 31 students had undergraduate GPAs of “A-”

or better. The scores on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) reported by these students ranged from high scores in the 170s (5 students) to low scores in the 150s (7 students, one who scored 149) (Table 85). Consistent with the observed patterns of high academic achievement and goal setting in this group of students, 22 of 31 planned to earn an advanced degree in addition to the law degree. Specifically, 16 respondents indicated plans to later earn doctoral degrees to complement the J.D. (Table 86).

As close as these students were on measures of academic achievement and goals, they were racially separate on measures of family background and socioeconomic status. Whites and Asians were nearly twice as likely as Blacks – and nearly three times more likely than Latinos – to have fathers who had earned graduate or professional degrees. Further, characteristic of longstanding gender barriers and biases in our society, these students’ mothers for the most part had less education than their fathers. Comparable numbers of these students across race reported mothers with “some” college training.

The survey next asked respondents various questions concerning their experiences as students at the University of Michigan Law School. The majority of students surveyed (17 of 31) reported that they consulted professors when having difficulty with assignments (Table 87). This was true in roughly equal percentages for African American and White respondents (70 and 71 percent, respectively). Latina/o and Asian students were less likely to consult professors about difficulties in the course. This was especially true for Asian students: 4 of 7 (57 percent) said that they did not approach professors to request assistance with difficult assignments.

On another measure of student relationships with professors, a majority (42 percent) felt that they were fairly graded by faculty (Table 88). However, 10 of 31 students (nearly one-third) felt that they did not receive fair academic evaluations from professors. Interestingly, near equal proportions of Blacks and Whites reported unfair grading by faculty (40 and 43 percent,

respectively). Asian and Latina/o students were less likely (29 percent and 14 percent, respectively) to report having received grades that they thought were unfair.

Being included, involved and satisfied with campus activities can influence academic outcomes at the professional school level. For law students in this sample overall, nearly half (48 percent) felt that they were part of the general campus life as far as student activities and government in the Law School Quadrangle were concerned (Table 89). However, there were significant and specific differences by race in the degree to which students reported “feeling part of campus life.” While around 60 percent of Whites and Asians were involved and were a part of campus life (as experienced by law students at the University of Michigan), only 40 percent of Black and 43 percent of Latino/a students felt the same way.

Academic achievement, college satisfaction and retention have been shown to be negatively influenced by campus environments that are racially hostile or discriminatory. When asked whether they had ever been targets of racial discrimination at the University of Michigan Law School, roughly equal numbers answered “no” (10 students) and “yes” (9 students) (Table 90). Eleven of the 31 students chose the neutral response, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement “I feel discriminated against on this campus because of my race.” In a paradoxical twist, more Whites and Asians claimed to feel racially discriminated against (both 45 percent) than was true for Latinos and Blacks (11 and 29 percent, respectively) – the two groups most often presumed to be targets of race discrimination on the nation’s campuses. In trying to decipher and interpret these findings, it is important to note that the majority of Black (56 percent) and Latina/o (57 percent) students chose to “neither agree or disagree” with the question of whether they felt racial discrimination on campus. They opted to remain silent on this potentially explosive question.

Similarly, the largest number of students in this majority female group (13 students, or 42 percent) reported not feeling discrimination because of their sex or gender (Table 91). The proportion of students who reported feeling gender discrimination was higher for Whites and Asians (both 2 students, or 29 percent). Only 1 of 8 Black students and no Latina/o student answered “yes” to this question. As was true with the question about race discrimination, a substantial number of students (11, or 36 percent) chose the neutral response category. Nearly three-quarters of Latina/o students reported feeling no gender discrimination, by far the highest proportion of any racial subgroup.

Of the entire sample, over half (68 percent) were sure they made the right choice in attending the University of Michigan compared to 13 percent who second-guessed their decision (Table 92). Specifically, three-quarters of African American males and all the African American females thought they made the right choice compared to three-quarters of White males and 33 percent of White females who felt the same. Further, all Latinos and Asian American males were certain they had made the correct choice compared to 50 percent of Latinas and Asian American females who felt they did not make the right decision. Taken together, the majority (77 percent) never seriously considered leaving the university (Table 93). Contradictory to the majority of the students surveyed, three-quarters of African American males had considered leaving the university and 67 percent of White females felt the same.

Next we turned to the racial environment and race relations at the University of Michigan, choosing to examine these issues through a series of questions. An overwhelming majority of respondents (27, or 87 percent) strongly agreed that different admissions criteria and standards are justified for some racial minority students (Table 94). Further, 29 students (94 percent) rejected the statement that minority students are given advantages that discriminate against other students at the University of Michigan Law School (Table 95). Finally, this group

of law students again approached consensus in their acceptance of the idea that increased minority enrollment strengthens colleges/universities and the educational experiences of students (26 of 31 students, or 84 percent, agreed with this statement) (Table 96).

Students were asked to rate the extent to which interpersonal relationships between different races were characterized by openness and trust at the University of Michigan (Table 97). When asked to evaluate the degree of trust and respect among students of different races and ethnicities, 17 of 31 respondents (55 percent) felt that there was some trust. Six of 31 felt that there was substantial trust and respect among students of different races/ethnicities at the law school, so three-quarters of the sample responded positively to this question. Interestingly, all 7 Whites were most positive of all groups in response to this question, answering “some” or “substantial” trust. By contrast, 30 percent of African Americans, 29 percent of Latina/os and 43 percent of Asian Americans opted for the somewhat more negative response of “slight.”

An overwhelming majority of the entire sample (87 percent) indicated that there was some degree of racial conflict on campus (Table 98). Seventy-seven percent answered “some” while another 10 percent felt there was a substantial degree of racial tension at the University of Michigan. Specifically, all African American males and females indicated that there was some racial conflict compared to half of White males and all White females who felt the same. Further, 68 percent of Latinos and 75 percent of Latinas indicated that there was some degree of racial conflict in comparison to 33 percent of Asian American females who agreed that the conflict was substantial.

In regard to open discussion of Black or racial issues, 14 of 31 students (45 percent) believed that the discussions were few, followed by 29 percent who felt that there were some discussions, and 26 percent who believed there were substantial instances of open discussions (Table 99). Seventy percent of African American students indicated that such discussions were

slight in number compared to 43 percent of Whites who believed that there was substantial discussion of racial issues on campus. Forty-three percent of Asian American students answered “slight.” No student in this group answered “none.”

Two-thirds of the sample (21 of 31 students) reported a substantial degree of racial separation on the campus (Table 100). Seventy percent of African Americans, 71 percent of Latina/os and 71 percent of Asian Americans said there was substantial racial segregation on campus compared to 57 percent of White students.

Many believe it is the responsibility of the faculty and administration to alleviate racial segregation as well as gender tensions on campus. In evaluating campus efforts to promote racial understanding and respect, 48 percent (15 of 31 students) thought there had been some effort by official representatives of the university to advance the goals of racial understanding and racial respect (Table 101). However, only 6 of 31 students (19 percent) felt that the university and law school had made substantial efforts along these lines. African Americans were most negative in their evaluation of campus efforts to promote racial cohesion: 60 percent described campus efforts as “slight.” On the other hand, Whites were most positive in their evaluation of campus efforts to promote racial understanding and respect – 43 percent judged these efforts as “substantial.”

A majority of students surveyed (12 students, or 39 percent) noted that the campus made some effort in encouraging open discussions of gender-related issues and concerns (Table 102). Thirty-six percent of students (11 students) in this group felt that the university made “substantial” efforts on this front. So in total, 23 of 31 students felt that there was “some” or “substantial” open discussion of sex or gender issues and concerns on the Law School Quadrangle. This was a much more positive assessment overall of how the campus was

addressing issues related to sex/gender versus how issues related to race/ethnicity were being handled.

Prior to enrolling at the University of Michigan Law School, 19 students (61 percent) expected the level of racial tensions that they found on campus (Table 103). As a result, their expectations about campus race relations were not significantly out of line with what they experienced once they arrived on campus. However, 9 students (29 percent) did expect to find a friendlier racial climate on the Law School Quad than what they in fact encountered. Asked to compare the racial climate at the University of Michigan and other predominantly White campuses, 55 percent of students believed that the same racial tensions were present at other schools (Table 104). Twenty-six percent of the sample thought Michigan was actually a “more friendly” campus than other predominantly White campuses.

Students were asked a series of questions pertaining to gender climate and attitudes concerning males and females on their campus. A majority of respondents (58 percent) agreed that male students respected female students’ attitudes and beliefs in the University of Michigan Law School Quadrangle (Table 105). However, a substantial 42 percent of students disagreed and felt that their male peers did not respect women students’ beliefs. Interestingly, the majority of African American (75 percent) and Latino (100 percent) males disagreed that women student opinions were respect by male students. By contrast, all of the White and Asian American males (100 percent of each group) believed that male students in the law school respected female students’ worldviews. Even more interesting was the fact that the overwhelming majority of Asian American female law students (83 percent) felt that men did not respect their attitudes and beliefs. On the other hand, majorities of Black, Latina and White female law students felt that male law students respected their opinions (83, 100 and 67 percent, respectively).

Concerning gender relations with faculty, 84 percent of these University of Michigan Law School students agreed that male faculty respect female students' attitudes and beliefs (Table 106). Specifically, 75 percent of African American males and 100 percent of White males, Latinos, Asian American males, African American women, and Latinas agreed that law school faculty respect female students on campus. By comparison, 67 percent of White females agreed that law faculty respected female student opinions. However, half the Asian American female students disagreed, believing that male law faculty did not in fact respect the attitudes and beliefs of female law students.

In regard to academic ability, 68 percent of the entire sample agreed that male students respect female students' ability (Table 107) and 81 percent agreed that male faculty respect their academic capabilities as well (Table 108). In particular, all White, Latino and Asian American males agreed females' academic ability was validated compared to 75 percent of African American men who disagreed. Further, 75 percent of African American males and all White, Asian American and Latino male students believed that faculty respected the ability of their gender counterparts. The majority of women, 68 percent of African American women as well as 100 percent of Whites and Latinas, believed that male students respected their academic ability. By contrast, a majority of Asian American female students disagreed (68 percent). Majorities of African American females (67 percent), White women (100 percent) and Latinas (100 percent) also agreed that faculty respected their academic ability. Again, Asian American female students disagreed: half felt that female student academic ability was respected by law school faculty, and half did not.

Although there were expressions of respect for women at the law school, nearly all the respondents (97 percent) agreed that there were too few female faculty at the University of Michigan Law School (Table 109). For all the positive attitudes expressed toward women's

opinions and academic ability, women continue to be woefully underrepresented on the University of Michigan Law School faculty. While women faculty are present in numbers, exceeding the near invisible status of faculty of color, they are essentially a token presence.

In further examining relations between males and females, 61 percent of respondents agreed that in general men respect women on campus (Table 110). However, a sizeable number of students (39 percent) felt that general respect was lacking for women in the law school. Again, male students split on a point related to assessing gender climate: 75 percent of African American males and 100 percent of Asian American males believed men did not grant women general respect. By comparison, 75 percent of White males and 67 percent of Latinos felt differently, responding that men in law school generally respected women. A split also characterized female responses: 83 percent of African American women and 100 percent of Latinas agreed that men on campus generally respected women. A majority of White female law students (68 percent) and half the Asian females (50 percent) disagreed.

Apparently, progress is being made in the effort to control the sexual harassment of women. Over half of the entire sample (61 percent) disagreed that male students were sexually inappropriate with female students (Table 111). An even larger number (84 percent) disagreed that male faculty ever engaged in sexually inappropriate behavior toward law school female students (Table 112).

Another series of questions asked respondents to describe their relations at the university with various racial, ethnic and gender groups. An overwhelming majority (90 percent) reported satisfactory relations with White students; 10 percent reported excellent associations with White students in law school (Table 113). In specific terms, all African American males, White males, Asian American males, Latinas and Asian American females claimed to maintain generally satisfactory relationships with White students in law school. Although few student race/gender

groups reported excellent associations, one-third of Latinos, 17 percent of Black women and one-third of White women indicated that their relationships with White students were excellent. Of the entire sample, over half (68 percent) reported satisfactory relationships with Latina/o students; 68 percent also had satisfactory relationships with Asian American students (Tables 114 and 115). Similarly, the majority of respondents (68 percent) reported satisfactory relationships with African American students; 26 percent indicated that they had excellent associations with students in this racial group (Table 116). Consistent with the emerging pattern, the majority of students (74 percent) also reported satisfactory relationships with Native American students and with Arab American students (61 percent) (Tables 117 and 118). The overwhelming majority of respondents reported satisfactory or excellent relationships with male (Table 119) and female students (Table 120).

Students were then asked to evaluate the ways in which their ideas about race and gender have changed since entering law school at the University of Michigan. Well over half the sample (68 percent) indicated that their feelings about or attitudes toward other races remained the same (Table 121). Nineteen percent of the students said their feelings had become more positive, while 13 percent said their attitudes toward other races had changed more negatively.

Although student attitudes or feelings about people of different races apparently changed little since entering law school, students reported dramatic changes in their valuing of cultural diversity. Of the entire sample surveyed, 24 students (77 percent) felt more positive toward arguments supporting the need for cultural diversity (Table 122). By the same token, a majority of respondents (61 percent) indicated that their feelings toward women's rights were more positive since attending law school (Table 123). Concerning attitudes toward the status of women in society, 55 percent of the group felt that their attitudes had not changed since attending law school (Table 124). One-quarter of the students said they had developed more

negative ideas concerning gender issues since attending the University of Michigan Law School. It is powerfully significant that all the African American, Latino and Asian American males who responded said that they were more positive about their feelings concerning the status of women. However, White males were split on this point, with 50 percent indicating that they had developed more negative feelings and the other half saying their feelings had not changed. Moreover, the majority of African American females (67 percent) and Asian American females (83 percent) had developed more positive feelings about the status of women since attending the University of Michigan Law School. Half of the Latinas and two-thirds of White women did not change their views about women in society since attending law school.

The final section of the survey, “Student Attitudes and Opinions,” asked respondents general questions concerning personal views on racial and gender issues in our society. The majority of students (48 percent) reported growing up in neighborhoods that were mostly White (Table 125). The next largest group of students (32 percent) grew up in neighborhoods with mostly people of color. Statistically speaking, half the African American males and two-thirds of African American females resided in areas that were mostly composed of people of color. By contrast, two-thirds of White females were from neighborhoods that they characterized as mostly White. In this sample of University of Michigan Law School students, three-quarters of Latinas, all Asian American males, and 83 percent of Asian American females were raised in predominantly White neighborhoods. Half the White males responding and one-third of Latinos said they were from neighborhoods that were half White and half people of color. But only 20 percent of the sample grew up in such racially balanced neighborhoods. In regard to racial representation in high schools attended, just under two-thirds reported attending a high school that was mostly White (Table 126). One-quarter of these University of Michigan law students attended racially balanced high schools; 10 percent attended high schools with mostly people of

color. Specifically, three-quarters of African American males, 83 percent of African American females, two-thirds of Latinos, half the Latinas, two-thirds of Asian women, and all of the Asian males attended high schools with a majority White enrollment. Only 50 percent of White males attended high schools that were racially balanced, half White and half people of color.

As for the racial composition of undergraduate institutions, the majority of students surveyed (55 percent) attended institutions that were mostly White, followed by 26 percent that enrolled mostly people of color (Table 127). Specifically, half of African American males, White males, and African American females attended White majority colleges. Two-thirds of Latinos and White females also attended predominantly White undergraduate institutions. For Latinas, half attended colleges that were racially balanced, and the other half attended institutions that mostly enrolled people of color. Lastly, all the Asian males and 83 percent of the Asian females attended predominantly White universities.

We went on to ask respondents about the racial context of friendships generally and in law school in particular. Thirty-nine percent indicated that their friends on campus were half White and half people of color, closely followed by 36 percent who had friendships with mostly people of color (Table 128). Overall, close to half these law students (45 percent) reported that they associated mostly with people of color. Thirty-six percent said their friendships in general were racially balanced (Table 129).

The next set of items in the questionnaire asked students to elaborate further on their racial beliefs and attitudes. A sizeable majority (84 percent) believed that interracial dating and marriage were equally acceptable as dating and marrying a person within one's own race (Table 130). African American respondents voiced the only disagreement with this premise; half of the African American males and half the African American females disagreed.

Interestingly, two-thirds of the respondents agreed that Whites were trying to keep non-Whites down (Table 131). Along the same lines, the overwhelming majority of these law students rejected the premise that in our society, a person's racial and gender identity does not interfere with opportunities and achievement (Tables 132 and 133).

The majority of respondents (68 percent) stated a preference for studying with students of diverse racial backgrounds when preparing for examinations (Table 134). The preference for racially diverse study groups was stated by half the African American males and females. By comparison, all the Asian males and White females expressed preferences for racially diverse study groups. Similarly, two-thirds of White males and Latinos, three-quarters of Latinas and 83 percent of Asian females also preferred the option of a diverse study group when preparing for examinations.

When seeking advice about their academic career, a majority of the entire sample (58 percent) did not prefer to consult with counselors or faculty members of their own race (Table 135). A sizeable 42 percent agreed with this statement, preferring to seek academic advice from members in their own racial group. Specifically, three-quarters of African American males as well as two-thirds of Asian females and Latinos preferred counselors from their own race/ethnic group. All the White and Asian males disagreed, saying they did not prefer to consult with same-race faculty or counselors. Moreover, two-thirds of African American and White females rejected a preference to consult with same-race counselors, as did three-quarters of Latinas.

To further assess the nature of racial attitudes, we asked students about preferences for own-race or interracial parties. The majority (58 percent) disagreed that they were more comfortable at same-race parties (Table 136). However, there were specific variations. For instance, three-quarters of African American males and two-thirds of African American females said they would be more comfortable at same-race parties. The rest of the sample disagreed:

three-quarters of White males and Latinas; two-thirds of Latinos, White females and Asian American women; and all the Asian males said they would be more comfortable at interracial parties.

Although there were numerous problems and tensions identified – some major in scope – three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would definitely recommend the University of Michigan to prospective students (Table 137). All the African American males, Latinos, Asian males and African American females surveyed would recommend the University to a prospective student. Moreover, three-quarters of White males and two-thirds of White and Asian females would also recommend the University of Michigan to other law students. The one departure is in the case of Latinas: 3 of 4 would not recommend attending the University of Michigan Law School to a prospective student.

Finally, we asked these students to think about the racial and gender climates at the University of Michigan School of Law over time. The majority of students (55 percent) felt that the campus racial climate had not changed very much since they enrolled (Table 138). Significantly, four times as many students felt that the racial climate at the law school had worsened over the years compared to those who thought that the racial climate had improved. Specifically, one-third of Latina/o students and over half of the Asian students felt that the campus racial climate was worse. Over 80 percent of Whites and Blacks felt that the campus racial climate was about the same as when they first enrolled. Asked to assign a letter grade to the University of Michigan Law School racial climate, a majority of students (58 percent) gave a low “B” (Table 139).

Turning our attention to the campus climate for women, the majority of students felt the campus gender climate had remained about the same (Table 140). Only one student – an Asian woman – felt that the climate for women at the University of Michigan Law School had

worsened since she enrolled. As was true with their grading of the campus racial climate, these respondents (58 percent) mostly assigned grades of low “B” in evaluating gender equality and climate at the law school (Table 141).

RACE AND GENDER CLIMATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In conjunction with our service as court experts working with the Student Intervenors in the case *Grutter v. Bollinger et al.*, we conducted a multi-method study of campus climate. While our primary focus of attention was the campus racial climate at the University of Michigan Law School, we of necessity broadened our scope to also examine campus gender climate. Previous research shows that the social adjustment and academic achievement of females and students of color are negatively affected on campuses with hostile racial and gender climates. Our data are from a racially diverse group of 36 currently enrolled University of Michigan male and female law students. These students were recruited as a purposive sample using a variety of techniques (e.g., newspaper announcements, electronic mail, and classroom solicitations). Data were collected during April 2000. A summary of key findings from this research follows.

- White privilege and entitlement are important, overarching features of the University of Michigan Law School racial climate.
- Male privilege and entitlement are important, overarching features of the University of Michigan Law School gender climate.
- Students of color experience numerous overt instances of race discrimination; however, the negative campus racial climate at the law school actually originates from more subtle, covert racial incidents.

- Students of color and their perspectives are either excluded or undervalued in classroom discourse, curriculum, pedagogy and presence.
- Students of color also experience racial incidents outside the classroom through electronic mail, in the dining hall, at social events and in the broader campus and city settings.
- The negative campus racial climate exacts psychological and behavioral tolls on students of color that interfere with their academic achievement.
- Students of color and women depend on peers like themselves for social, organizational and emotional support. Therefore, it is important for the law student to retain a “critical mass” of women and students of color.
- Academic performance in this sample of students was comparable across race, gender and ethnicity. All were performing at acceptable levels in the program.
- Whites and Asians in the sample came from mostly White, more affluent backgrounds than did Blacks and Latina/os.
- Black and Latina/o students felt more alienated and isolated from general campus life compared to Asian and White students.
- These students mostly felt that they had made the right decision in attending the University of Michigan Law School and that they would graduate with a law degree.
- These students mostly supported affirmative action in admissions and believed that the University of Michigan benefited from increased racial, ethnic and gender diversity.
- These students described the University of Michigan Law School as characterized by racial separation, racial conflict and racial misunderstanding. They mostly felt that the University had not done enough to bridge this racial divide.

- Despite the problems, students mostly said that they would recommend attending the University of Michigan Law School to prospective students.

A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL CAMPUS CLIMATE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study involved a systematic, empirical investigation of campus climate and how it is related to the access and achievement of Black, Latino, Asian and female students at the University of Michigan Law School. The research was commissioned by the Student Intervenors in the case *Grutter vs. Bollinger et al.* Extensive prior research demonstrates conclusively that campus climate is a central determinant of college access and achievement for underrepresented students (Hurtado et al., 1999). Specifically, this research shows that the achievement levels of students of color and women are lower on campuses where the race and gender climates are more hostile. Beyond the question of research findings, common sense persuades us that students are not likely to do their best work or to maximize their potential in settings where they feel alienated, isolated, devalued and under attack – whether the setting be undergraduate college or law school.

Our research approach is broad and encompassing; therefore, we examined the campus environments encountered by women and students of color both in the University of Michigan Law School and during their undergraduate years leading up to law school. The two campus environments are organically linked in the educational process: undergraduate feeder institutions produce the field of applicants from which the University of Michigan Law School chooses its incoming class. Evidence of systematic bias against students of color and women in the undergraduate years such as to diminish significantly the students' opportunity to enter law

school due to impact on grade point average and other standard criteria should provide sufficient rationale for the continued operation of affirmative action admissions policies.

We used a multi-method research design, which collected data from focus groups, personal interviews, surveys, institutional records, newspapers, natural observations and other sources. Three general questions guided the research:

1. Is the campus climate at the University of Michigan Law School hostile towards women, Blacks, Latinos and other students of color?
2. Are the campus climates at selected undergraduate institutions from which the University of Michigan Law School routinely recruits hostile toward women, Blacks, Latinos and other students of color?
3. Do hostile campus climates have negative effects on the academic performance, goals and opportunities of women and students of color who aspire to be attorneys?

While the research questions are simple, their implications are far-reaching. If, as some would have us believe, race and gender discrimination in American educational institutions – on college and law school campuses – are relics of a distant past, then there is no longer a need for affirmative action and other programs designed to promote fairness and equal access. If, on the other hand, the academic access and achievement of women and students of color continues to be diminished by hostile campus climates then there is still a need for affirmative action policies.

We present evidence of persistent, extensive, debilitating discrimination against women and students of color in undergraduate “feeder institutions” and at the University of Michigan Law School itself. Women and students of color experience these campuses as hostile environments, places where they are either not welcome or are welcome only in clearly delimited, subordinate status. Students of color report many experiences with covert and overt racial discrimination. They confront an educational environment that associates them with a host

of negative racial stereotypes and that responds to them in terms of these negative racial views. The effects of these racially hostile campus environments, attitudes, experiences and interactions are cumulative and debilitating for Black and Latino students. Consequently, these students are not as likely to excel to the same level in terms of grades and Law School Admissions Test scores as their White and Asian peers. Nevertheless, given the opportunities to prove themselves, we see that Black and Latino students persevere and rise above the hostile campus racial climates to graduate college, enter law school, and succeed.

Some find the idea that women (and Asian) students continue to face discrimination counter-intuitive. Women are now so sizably represented in college and law school that it is easy to forget that a scant generation ago, they too were barred from full participation in institutions of higher education. Negative stereotypes about their presumed biological, intellectual and motivational limitations provided convenient cover for institutional structures that denied them equal opportunity. Our data show that even though the representation of women in college and law school has grown dramatically, many of the negative gender stereotypes and examples of sex discrimination persist. These barriers in the form of covert and overt gender discrimination combine to limit women's access and achievement as undergraduates, in law school, and ultimately in the legal profession.

The American Dream lies at the very heart of the American cultural ethos. At the center of the American Dream is the emphatic conviction that, in this society, education opens the door to success. The belief that even the poorest American can achieve greatness with talent and hard work is one of our society's most cherished cultural ideals (Hochschild, 1995). In most instances, talent is equated with educational attainment. In particular, the Holy Grail of Higher Education has embodied the hopes and frustrations of a people seeking America's promise of equal opportunity. Education has long been seen as an essential foundation of democracy. The

extent to which individuals are afforded the opportunity to earn college and professional degrees and to enter the practice of law speaks volumes about openness and power relations within any society. For women and people of color, the centuries-old struggle for access and success in higher education and the professions has been emblematic of a larger fight for personhood and full citizenship in America. In this struggle, progress has come in fits and starts, interspersed with rollbacks and lost ground.

If our goals in higher education, especially law school, include promoting equality and fairness and increasing the numbers of underrepresented groups in the legal profession, then we must commit ourselves to breaking down barriers, abolishing policies of exclusion, and building on students' strengths so that we can reach these goals. This generation of women law students and law students of color is one of the first to have the opportunity to train for the practice of law, but not the first to have the ability. Previous generations were denied the access and opportunity to practice law simply on the basis of race and gender discrimination.

One measure of institutional success is the creation and maintenance of policies, opportunities, processes, and support systems that assure the presence of successive generations of talented and committed students of color at the University of Michigan Law School. Our findings show that affirmative action in admissions is an indispensable part of such efforts.

It is our hope that the findings and material in this report will prove valuable to the Court's deliberations in this momentous case.

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FIGURE 1
An Educational Process Model

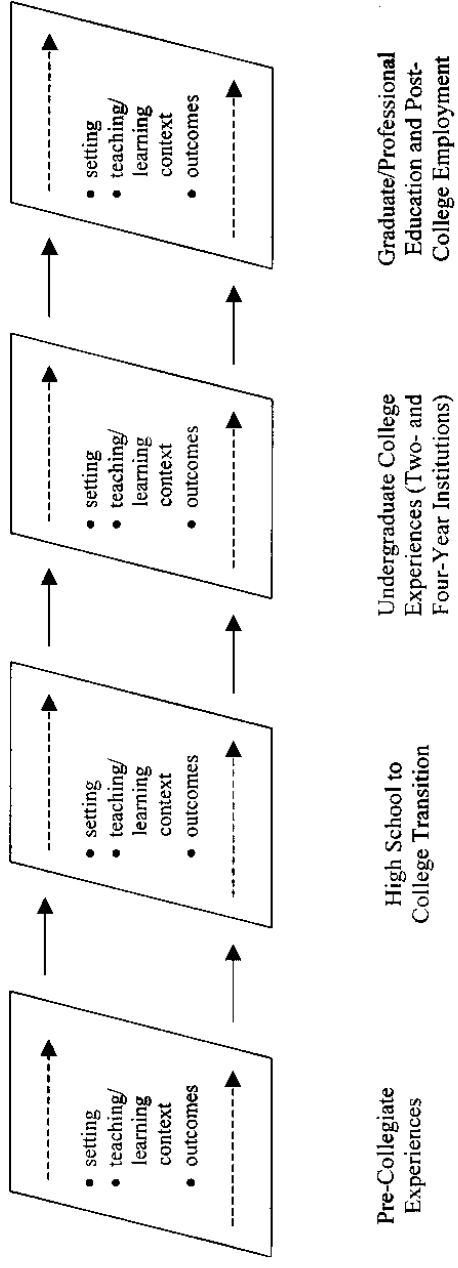


Figure 2

Focus Group Participants

<i>Focus Group</i>	<i>Ethnic/Racial Group</i>	<i>Gender Breakdown</i>
1	African American	4 Women, 2 Men
2	African American	3 Women, 2 Men
3	African American	4 Women, 2 Men
4	African American	3 Women, 2 Men
5	Latina/o	2 Women, 5 Men
6	Latina/o	5 Women, 2 Men
7	Latina/o	3 Women, 2 Men
8	Asian American	5 Women, 3 Men
9	Women of Color	2 Women (1 Chicana, 1 African American)
10	Mixed	4 Women, 2 Men (1 Pilipino, 1 Asian, 1 Mexican, 1 Black, 2 Biracials – Black/White; Asian/White)
11	White	3 Women, 3 Men
12	Mixed	1 Woman, 1 Man (Chicana; White male)

FIGURE 3: A MODEL OF UNDERGRADUATE CAMPUS RACIAL CLIMATE

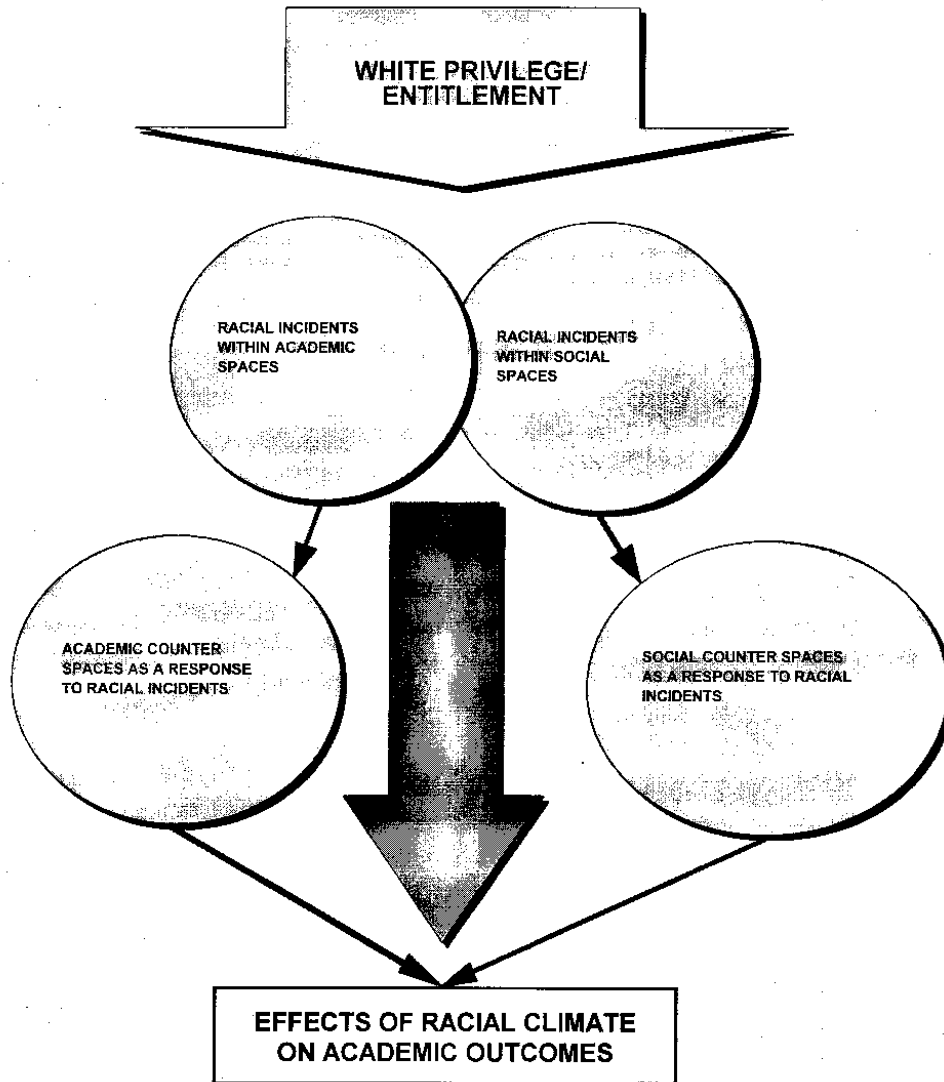


Figure 4
Focus Group Participants

<i>Focus Group</i>	<i>Ethnic/Racial Group</i>	<i>Gender</i>
1	Latina/o	3 Women, 3 Men
2	Asian American	4 Women, 1 Man
3	African American	5 Women, 3 Men
4	Asian American, Latina, African American	4 Women of Color (2 Asian American, 1 Latina, 1 African American)
5	White	4 Women, 4 Men

FIGURE 5: A MODEL OF CAMPUS RACIAL CLIMATE

