

Causes for Persisting Discrimination on the U of I campus

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EVOKE

About the Ethnographer

“About the Ethnographer” seems to me a vague title. I could provide some basic statistics: 1) I am 21 years old; 2) I am a male; 3) I am heterosexual; 4) I am a senior, double-majoring in Anthropology and Spanish; 5) I have lived in Newman Hall, a dorm run by the (Catholic) Newman Foundation, for all four years of my college studies, but I am neither Catholic nor religious. . . . The list could go on forever, and still I could never convey more than just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Instead, I will rename this section; instead of “About the Ethnographer,” I am now calling it “The Ethnographer’s Motivations.” What was it that caused me to spend a semester researching conceptualizations of and responses to discrimination and hate on campus? What was it that influenced me to choose that topic and not gaming or improv comedy or cafeteria food like some of my fellow students have?

Not ignoring the multi-dimensional nature of everyone’s personal identities, I attribute my interest in this subject to my “race”/ethnicity. For me, ethnicity has always been something difficult for me to grasp, to come to terms with, for, as long as I can remember, I have battled with it. I fit into no one category – I am multi-ethnic Latino. To break that down, my father is Puerto Rican, and my mother is (as I jokingly put it) everything else, a “European mut.” I am second generation Puerto Rican; English is my native tongue; I only became truly proficient in Spanish after studying abroad in Ecuador for six months during the Winter and Spring months of 2006. Yet, my family name is “Hernann.” Not much of a Latino name (or so it seems). In fact, the most frequent “What are you” question I have encountered has always been, “Hernann, huh? Are you German?” Apparently, a double “n” at the end of one’s last name is a very “German” trait. “No, no,” I tell the curious questioner, “It’s a variant of ‘Hernandez,’” not wishing to divulge anything more about how my mother and father decided when I was just six months old that I would have more opportunities in life if my last name were not obviously Latino.

It took me years to come to terms with my last name and the decisions my parents made 21 years ago. Truthfully, it was not until just a couple months ago that I really comprehended what the name change actually meant. For many years, I do not know, maybe until I was in middle school, I was angry at my father for changing our family name. I considered him a coward and ashamed of his ancestry; I thought him a fraud, a phony. Later, through high school and part of college, my interpretations changed a little. Instead, my father became the hero (though, honestly, I still felt pretty bitter and resentful); he became the proud Latino who sacrificed his own last name for the betterment of his son. Oh, how I romanticized his actions! Only two months ago did I finally, finally understand the reality of what occurred those many years ago, when my parents testified in court to amend our identities while the judge bounced me on his lap (as the story has been told to me).

It hit me like a truck! I remember, I was standing around in my room, pacing a little. Something was not right; something was not meshing, and I could tell that I was close, close to realizing or discovering something, even though I was unsure of what that something was. I had been contemplating my own identity significantly more as a “side effect” of the initial research I had conducted for this project. And then I understood. Finally. Dead in the center of my room I stood – shaking, hyperventilating. Tears welled in my eyes. I felt dirty and completely, utterly worthless. All along I had considered the name change to be a choice, but that night I realized the truth. Sure, it was a “choice,” but it was not really a “choice” per se. For me to have a better life, my father was forced to abandon his identity, everything embodied in his last name. He had no option – society told him, obligated him to alter his family name. Racism, white privilege at its finest. It was not sacrifice; it was not cowardice; it was defeat, a lack of any other recourse. My family lacks a name because racism deemed it so! I felt insignificant, powerless, beaten, that regardless of my efforts, something invisible in my genes would somehow dictate that I am inferior to my white counterpart.

Dirty. Betrayed. Alone. I did not belong anywhere. I felt an imposter, the trounced Latino with the last name of his oppressors, yet equally unwelcome by his Latino brethren to whom he was not sufficiently Latin, for he lacked the “pure bloodedness,” the natal Spanish fluency. Deserted, not fully White enough to allow myself completely into that world, yet not fully Latino enough to be accepted into that one either.

I called my father. I told him everything, how I had been so angry at him, so bitter; how I attempted to idealize his “choice,” how I experienced my “epiphany.” I told him of the man at the Writers Workshop who, after me telling him that my name was Puerto Rican, not German, and that my major was Spanish, responded, “Oh, taking the easy major out, aren’t ya?” I told him of the time of answering a friend’s inquiry as to why I call myself “multi-ethnic Latino” and not “multi-ethnic white.” It was an interesting question, and the only reason I could think of was that since the first standardized test I ever took in elementary school, my teachers had told me to fill in the “Hispanic” bubble. A nearby listener retorted, “Lucky for you,” referring to affirmative action, completely undermining my self-worth. I told him of when I was telling a friend about Puerto Rican culture, about salsa dancing, about rice and beans, about fried plantains, about my “jibaro” uncles and my “gangsta” cousins. She responded, “Andrew, you’re the whitest Puerto Rican I know.” But I also told him of every time I felt deficiently Latino, not Latino enough. I told him of every strange glance I received at La Casa Cultural Latina, of every time I was introduced as “Andrew, the white Puerto Rican,” of every patronizing scoff I encountered when I spoke my formal, school-learned Spanish instead of a more informal dialect. All of this I told my father and more.

Silence on the other line. A deep, troubled sigh. “I’m sorry,” he eventually responded. “Everything I tried to protect you from happened after all.” The academic in me thought immediately of Oedipus. We talked for a while, telling each other childhood and not-so-childhood stories of prejudice and reverse discrimination, rejected by many, condemned to exist in the void between two cultures, our personal Atlantic Ocean. Misery loves company.

So, “The Ethnographer’s Motivations”? I could say something about the greater good, that everyone should be accepted (not just tolerated) for who they are, that ignorance must be eradicated. I could say something about the untapped potential in all individuals to create a utopian society. And, yes, all of that would be true. But what were the ethnographer’s INITIAL motivations? I want to live free of personal struggle. I want a space. I want to be multi-ethnic and have that be ok. I want to be me.

EXPLORE

Question

What questions is your inquiry contingent upon?

The following are the fundamental questions upon which I base much of my investigation:

- Why does discrimination continue at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)?
- What actions do the University and the student body take in response to acts of intolerance?
- How effective are such responses?

The following are the secondary questions upon which I base much of my investigation:

- How do people at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) campus conceptualize hate, hate crime, discrimination, acts of intolerance, and white privilege?
- How do they talk about it?
- Who do the victims tell about their encounters with acts of intolerance?
- Who do the victims purposely NOT tell about their encounters with acts of intolerance?
- With what frequency do the victims tell University employees (administration, faculty, etc.) about their encounters with acts of intolerance?
- Which criteria tend to correlate with formal, legal action against a perpetrator of hate, and which criteria tend to correlate with more informal action or even inaction?
- What are the solutions to continued prejudice, especially in light of augmented education and awareness?

Through the interview I conducted and the forum I attended, I have the following hypotheses:

- The victims of hate crime and prejudice are not inactive as many might believe; however, often, their action is hidden from a more public sphere. Frequently, their action takes the form of verbal complaining, of “venting” or “bitching,” many times within a group of individuals who share the victim’s ethnicity or identity marker that stimulates such discrimination. Yet, that group complaining is commonly where action concludes. We must remember, though, that such isolated action is not counter-productive; it is just not as productive as it might be.
- An individual seeks formal, legal action more frequently in response to a blatant, obvious (oftentimes physical) hate crime, than when the crime is more subtle. Further, it seems that the more hate crime/discrimination one has experienced and the more formal action one has taken in the past, the more likely that individual is to take action (again).
- More formal action is taken when a group or individual offends an entire group/community, not just one individual. The higher the quantity of people involved, the higher the probability that formal action will be pursued.

How do individuals of the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) conceptualize hate, hate crime, and discrimination? How do they talk about hate, and what solutions do they offer?

What is "Latina/o"? What does the mission statement of La Casa Cultural Latina tell us (or not tell us) about who is welcome?

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Plan

How will you go about answering your inquiry?

I plan to conduct multiple interviews of people of numerous ethnicities, genders, etc., of numerous “identity markers,” as I have begun to call them, that might stimulate another person to act in a discriminatory manner. Ideally, I want to obtain a general picture/idea of victims of hate, not focusing on any particular group or category of person. Thus, I want to speak with people with visible physical disabilities, Latinas/os, African-Americans, women, homosexuals, Native Americans, Muslims, etc. However, to what extent I will be able to talk with “representatives” of all of those “groups,” has yet to be seen. Further, I do not want to make the error of categorizing/compartimentalizing a person’s identity into a single “box” – identity is complex, dynamic, internalized, and externalized. It might also be interesting to interview someone who has never encountered hate before, who has never been prejudiced against, to see his/her perspective concerning discrimination and how s/he might go about solving the problem.

In addition to speaking with those who have suffered from acts of hate, I also plan to speak with other “resources,” people such as police officers who may have interacted with victims (or perpetrators) of hate crime, with the director of one of the culture houses, with someone from the Office of Minority Student Affairs, and/or someone from the

counseling center, all of whom would have different perspectives, insights, and experiences relating to how hate crime is conceptualized and actualized on campus and how the university reacts to occurrences of hate on campus.

Finally, I hope to hold a forum to discuss various ideas for solutions. It will be difficult to coordinate, but it might be interesting to have the forum consist of (at least partially) those individuals who I would have interviewed beforehand.

And in the meantime, I want to complete individual research of secondary sources focusing on initiatives against hate and discrimination (those successful and not) on other campuses. Further, I would like to research texts whose focus is talking about hate, more in depth analyses of the language of hate from both the victims' as well as the perpetrators' points of view.

To begin to appreciate how discrimination is understood on campus, I interviewed a fellow student and friend of mine who I knew from previous conversations had suffered from hate crime and discrimination. (For the purposes of this project and to protect her identity, we will refer to her with the pseudonym Mitali.) I contacted her, giving her only a general sense of the topics we would discuss in the interview, but no more information than would be necessary. The plan was to ask some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How do you self-identify?
- 2) Do you feel there is a discrepancy between how you identify yourself and how others see you? Explain.
- 3) What is your definition of "hate crime"?
- 4) Have you suffered hate crime and discrimination in the past? Explain.
- 5) Who/What "type" of person perpetrated such hate and discrimination?
- 6) What were your immediate reactions?
- 7) What were your immediate actions?
- 8) What were your long-term actions?
- 9) Who do you tell about these occurrences? Why?
- 10) Who do you NOT tell about these occurrences? Why?
- 11) Why do you feel this hate and discrimination continues?
- 12) What solutions do you propose?

OBSERVE

What observations, or findings are you encountering in your research?

The following is an analysis of the information acquired through a questionnaire I distributed on the days of Wednesday, November 29 and Thursday, November 30 concerning individuals' responses to experiences of discrimination, primarily focusing upon who they informed (and from whom they withheld such information). I was particularly interested in whether or not an individual told somebody from the university about any experiences with campus prejudice they may have had. The questionnaire opened with a definition of discrimination in attempt to ensure that all of the recipients were utilizing the same meaning when considering their own experiences as well as to inform them as to what discrimination is in the case that they were previously unaware. At the top of the first page, the survey wrote, "Discrimination: Negative treatment or consideration against a person based on the group, class, or category to which that person is perceived to belong to (such as race, color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation) rather than on individual merit." Then, the following questions were asked:

- 1) Have you experienced/been the victim of discrimination at the UIUC campus?
- 2) If yes, how was it manifested? (Verbally? Physically? Both? Other?)
- 3) Who did you tell about the experience? Would you qualify them as having a similar or different identity to that of your own? (Similar identity as your own? Different identity? Both? More of one than the other?)
- 4) Who did you NOT tell? Would you qualify them as having a similar or different identity to that of your own? (Similar identity as your own? Different identity? Both? More of one than the other?)
- 5) Did you tell anyone from the university?

After completing the previous inquiries, on the final page the participants provided their demographic information, writing their 1) Year in school, 2) Gender, 3) Race/Ethnicity, 4) Sexual Orientation, 5) Religion, 6) If they have a visible, physical disability, and 7) If they are an international student. Yet, such information to me was only secondary in nature compared to the questions on the first page. What mainly concerns me (for the purposes of this questionnaire at least) is what a person does in the face of discrimination, any discrimination, regardless of whether it is racism, sexism, etc. Also, I footnoted on the first page of the questionnaire as well as vocally telling the participants that the "survey [was] anonymous and voluntary in nature [and that they were] free to fill in as much or as little as [they] want[ed]."

By in large, the participants were strangers to me, individuals whom I had never met until I approached them on the basement, ground, or second floor of the Union (where the majority of the surveys were completed) or on the ground floor of the Foreign Language

Building or Davenport. However, some of my friends and acquaintances (and even my brother and his girlfriend) also contributed. With those who I knew (as well as a few who I did not) I was invited to sit with them as they filled out the questionnaire. But my initial attempt was to keep my distance, to be near enough to answer any questions, but far enough away to allow for the highest possible confidence of confidentiality of the participant. Still, some invited me to remain near, while others conversed with me while filling out the survey, and two preferred me to ask them the questions aloud. In every situation, I did what I felt would create the most comfortable atmosphere for the contributor. In every situation, it attempted to remain as unbiased/non-influential as possible, responding to most questions with a "There is no right answer." When asked to clarify something, I would do so as effectively as I could, but also vaguely, again, to prevent as much personal influence as possible.

I distributed thirty questionnaires to as diverse a population as possible. Though, I admit that it was not a completely "random" sample in the typical sense of the term. They were not allocated blindly – I approached individuals and asked them for "just a few minutes of their time." Knowing that I only had time for thirty surveys to be filled, I tended to approach people who I deemed had a higher probability of being a victim of discrimination (otherwise the entire purpose behind the survey, of determining the responses of those who have had such experiences, would have been for not). Thus, the sample of participants became primarily students of color. I confess that this is not the ideal manner in which to select contributors, especially because there are multiple hidden markers for which a person could be discriminated upon, factors such as sexual orientation, religion, a last name commonly attributed to a particular ethnic group, etc. Yet, at the same time, while not perfect, I do not deem my methodology invalid. As it is, only sixteen of the thirty distributed questionnaires were returned with a "yes" for having faced discrimination on campus. And had I allocated the surveys in a more "blind" manner (yet still confining myself to only thirty of them), the "yes" return could/would have been considerably less.

Yet, even those sixteen "positive" returns (I put "positive" between quotations because while the surveys were given back to me with a "yes" designation, I do not find it "positive" – as in "good" – that anyone has ever suffered discrimination) have much to tell. Of those sixteen, fourteen individuals replied that the discrimination they experienced had been verbal, two that it had been physical, and two that it had been indirect/intangible, the "mannerisms of some people," as one participant wrote.

So, who did these sixteen individuals tell of their encounters with discrimination? Eleven informed friends, boy/girlfriends, and/or family members. "I usually tell people I feel comfortable with," stated one contributor. Further, the surveys indicate that frequently the people informed have similar identities to those of the victims; however that does not occur with extreme regularity. It seems that both "insiders" as well as "outsiders" are almost equally told of the victims' experiences, with "insiders" being updated only slightly more often than non-. This tendency may go back to telling those who one feels comfortable with, regardless of shared (or not shared) identity; though, some individuals did explicitly state that they inform members of equal schema "because they might have

the same situation,” as one participant put it. Only four individuals spoke with somebody from the university about their incidents, and three did not tell anybody. The reasons for remaining silent could be many and complex. It could be that they felt embarrassed about the situation; it could be that they were unaware that they had encountered discrimination when the incident occurred; it could be that they felt that informing somebody would just be for not, that nothing would come of it; or, it could be desensitization. As one individual wrote, “[The experience] wasn’t that serious. I am used to little stuff that people do to discriminate.”

The next question, then, is who did these sixteen individuals not tell? In response to that query, five people wrote that the only informed friends and family, but they did not explicitly, purposely not tell someone else. “There is no reason to tell everyone about it,” one person asserted. Two people said that they deliberately not tell their friends or family, acting contrary to the aforementioned tendency. One individual expanded: “I didn’t tell my parents because I knew that they would have been incredibly upset and would have taken it further than I would have.” Next, three participants wrote that they did not inform faculty or the Board of Trustees. And finally, two contributors said that they consciously did not tell either the perpetrator(s) or those individuals with similar identities to those of the perpetrator(s). The explanation for that could be complex. Possibly the victims felt that informing those people like the perpetrators was a “lost cause” and would result in nothing; maybe some avoided telling them out of fear or embarrassment; and perhaps some did not want to hurt the feelings of a friend who may have unknowingly committed a prejudiced act. One person mentioned, “I didn’t want [those who were discriminating against me] to know that I had been affected by what they said even if it was a joke.”

Thus, just one question, the most significant question to me, remains: How many people informed the university about the discrimination they encountered, and who in the university did they tell? Of these sixteen individuals who have faced on-campus discrimination, only four told anybody from the university. Three of them informed at least one of their professors, only one of whom is described as having an identity similar to that of the victim. Also, these three individuals had suffered from verbal, not physical, discrimination. The fourth person (who experienced both verbal and physical) told not a professor but the Dean of Registered Student Organizations. Now, I do not know if it was the physical component of the discrimination this fourth participant faced that caused a difference between informing a professor versus informing a dean, but nonetheless, the correlation is there (whether valid or not).

So, what conclusions might be drawn from this information? Well, first I identified a tentative correlation that I would like to pursue further with additional interviews. The numbers are not such that I could make any definite claim, though I find it intriguing that in both cases of mentioned physical discrimination, the acts were against Muslim Arab students, one male, one female. There were other, similar participants, though, who indicated that they had not suffered physical discrimination or any discrimination at all. But, I wonder if such a finding might signify that the university is particularly hostile towards Muslim Arab students? A second claim I feel fairly comfortable making is that it appears that, when faced with discrimination, the majority of such students would inform

just friends and family and nobody else. It is not that those individuals would deliberately not tell others, but the information of the experience could very well remain within a group of friends and family members with whom the victim feels comfortable. I would not call such behavior as counterproductive in any way, for in not internalizing the experience, the victim is coping (and even those who do choose to internalize their encounter(s) could be coping as well). But what I will say is that the actions are not as productive as they could be.

The administrator who I interviewed in October supposes that the incidents of discrimination and acts of intolerance are underreported, a supposition that this questionnaire supports. The survey tells me that if an individual at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) encounters discrimination, s/he probably will not inform the university, and if s/he chooses to tell a university employee, that employee will more than likely be a professor, not a non-faculty administrator. Nobody mentioned speaking with/informing the administrator who works directly with victims and perpetrators of acts of intolerance. Also, nobody mentioned using the university's "Stop Hate" website to report any incidents of discrimination (though, because I did not overtly ask if the participants utilized that website, I cannot make any claims one way or the other on whether the students employ it or not). I have multiple hypotheses concerning one's motivations for not informing anybody from the university about their encounters which I would like to pursue in further interviews. Perhaps the individual did not know of the "Stop Hate" website or of which person to inform; maybe the individual did not interpret the university as a useful/helpful means to reconcile or prevent additional incidents; possibly the individual feared being targeted for reporting an act (by either the university or by other perpetrators); or perhaps it is a combination of all those theories (or maybe none of those propositions are valid at all).

This survey did provide me substantial information in a relatively short period of time. However, arguably the most revealing component was the exchanges that occurred with the participants. Like I mentioned earlier, some would invite me to sit with them while they took the survey; some talked to me while completing it; others conversed with me afterwards; and for the rest, I engaged in discrete participant observation while they considered their responses. The following are other noteworthy findings I obtained while conducting the questionnaire, but not from the questionnaire itself:

Many contributors had considerable difficulty determining whether or not they had actually been discriminated upon. Many would stare at the first page for minutes without filling out anything, while others, after a few moments of contemplation, would turn to the final page and answer the survey starting at the back and working towards the beginning. Part of this could have been the individual's uncertainty as to if their experience actually was discrimination, even though I did place a definition of "discrimination" at the top of the first page. (In retrospect, though, I should have highlighted the definition to directly bring it to the participants' attention. Some did not see it until I told them that it was there.) But, even with the provided definition, I believe that some still could have been unsure, having experiences similar to that of one contributor who told me that he did not even know that what he encountered was

discrimination until a friend of his told him so. Another reason for some people's difficulty (which actually could account for some of the "no" experiences with discrimination) answering the question could be the indirect discrimination that some people cited. Some told me that they thought they had been discriminated against, but upon being asked about it, they began to doubt themselves, for it was very discreet. I noticed that it was hard to record indirect discrimination.

Another finding was extremely interesting, and to tell the truth, I remain unsure as to its implications. The question that gave the most participants considerable difficulty was not even the "survey" itself, but the demographic information component at the end. I never would have guessed that the "Race/Ethnicity" inquiry would have been such a tough question to answer. Part of the issue was semantics. One individual told me that he was, "Indian, not Native American, but Indian." But the largest obstacle that had to be managed was the issue of self-identity versus imposed identity. I learned that many people have the same problems that I do when asked to categorize themselves. Like me, many had to resolve the differences between the way they conceptualize themselves and the way others "see" them. Many participants just outright asked me what I wanted them to write. One individual who had trouble told me, "There's no one Indian," and remained uncertain as to how to answer that particular demographic. To "help," I reminded him that the questionnaire was about discrimination. Noticing that he had experienced prejudice, I asked him how he felt the perpetrators may have answered the question if they were to do it for him. He immediately, and with significant ease, responded, "Oh, well then I'm Indian." Yet another person just overtly asked me, "You want me to put 'White,' right?"

The final non-written "finding" was not really a finding at all, but a reminder. I felt that it could not have been more "appropriate" that while I was distributing and "proctoring" a questionnaire concerning responses to discrimination that I encounter a group of students engaging in "mock Spanish." I heard grossly exaggerated American accents uttering phrases like "Necesito usar el baño" and "¿Dónde está la biblioteca?" in addition to created, Americanized, "Spanish" words such as "dog-o" or "hat-o," etc. The person with whom I was conversing after completing the survey saw my not-so-well-hidden bothered reaction to the mockery of my family's language, and I was reminded that this campus is indeed a white space (interesting, considering that the perpetrators all appeared to be of east Asian descent as well as members of the Asian American Association, for it was in that office, with door wide open, that this incident took place - it seems these Asian Americans have picked up the message that such a discourse is acceptable).

Like I said, I feel I gleaned significant information from conducting the survey, yet the fact is there is only so much data one can obtain through such a methodology. It provided some new information and confirmed some hypotheses, but more than anything, it functioned as a stepping stone, inspiring new questions for me to ask in subsequent interviews. Such questions include (but are not limited to), 1) Are you aware of the Stop Hate website through which one can report acts of intolerance and hate crime? 2) Did you tell anybody from the university about your experiences? Who? Why? What happened next? How effective was the process? 3) Why did you just tell your friends and family?

The following is a transcription on what I consider to be the most noteworthy elements of an interview I conducted on 10/26/06 with a university administrator who deals closely with acts of intolerance on campus, investigating the incidents, working with student activist groups, etc.:

Me: So on a, how am I going to word this? Um, you described intolerance and hate crime. Um, do you have a personal definition of that that might differ from a legal definition? And if you don't, I mean, I don't want to put words in your mouth.

Administrator: Um, um, how will I answer this? [Laughs.] I think that acts of intolerance can be construed very broadly. Um, so while a perpetrator may not think that this is, that there was definite bias in committing this act, certainly the outcome of it could have, very well could have been precipitated by, um, biased sentiments towards a particular group. And so, um, when I talk to students about reporting and identifying acts of intolerance, um, I acknowledge that sometimes it is because of ignorance. You know, I mentioned that at the first forum [Me: Yeah.] Um, not always, I mean, certainly there is, um, issues of racism, um, that come into play, but, you know, we're on a campus of 40,000 people with so many, um, uh, so many different students, faculty, staff coming from so many different places, you know, having not interacted significantly with particular populations. Um, you know, I could probably give you just some specific examples, and, and students oftentimes, they're well, you know, "That's not an excuse." But it is.

You have to kind of take people from where they are. Um, and if they've never, um, if they've never interacted with, say, Chinese, um, international students, probably will have, may have, some preconceived notions, uh, based on stereotypes, based on what they see in the media, um, based on their own limited understanding of Chinese culture. Um, the same thing with students with disabilities. Um, I think that there's a tendency to, um, think of students who are, say for instance, wheelchair bound not being able to do everything that a non-wheelchair bound person is able to do. Um, but in fact if you really interact with someone significantly who's in a wheelchair, you will realize that, um, while there may be some limitations, just, just as intelligent. [Me: Mhmm.] You know, there's just as, it doesn't inhibit their ability to do much of anything. I mean, it's just, I don't know how to. You know, it's just that. It's a disability, and take it for what it is. [Me: Ok.]

Me: Yeah, just that lack of exposure [Administrator: Right.], that was a really hard pill to swallow.

Administrator: Mhmm. And oftentimes it is, you know, because I, especially for students of color, and then sometimes the faculty of color, um, it's just so hard to believe that

because, as a person of color, I have to know how to navigate this society. I've had to have interacted with, with Whites. I've had to have interacted with Christians. I've had to have, because that's the dominant, um, population in this society. Um, but it doesn't go the other way around. Um, Whites don't have to interact and don't have to understand African-American culture, Latino culture, um, Asian-American culture, Native American culture. Um, or even, able-bodied people don't have to understand what it means to be, to have some sort of physical or mental disability. Or, physical disability, and mentally healthy, if you will, people don't, don't know what it means to have a mental health issue. [Me: Mhmm.] Um, and you don't have to. I mean, you're not put in a position, um, as an able-bodied person to understand what it means to have to be in a wheelchair or have to use some sort of assistive devices. . . . You know, when you're talking about dynamics between racial and ethnic groups, that's something that White people generally, that's something that we call White privilege. [Me: Mhmm.] You don't have to think about, um, what it means to be African-American, you know, in this society, or what it means to be Asian-American. And, certain, um, phenotypical, um, characteristics that identify you as such. [Me: Mhmm.] You know, and, um, I could tell you that I'm not African-American, but, you know, I think that your first, if you had to describe me, the first thing that you would probably say is, "She's an African-American." [Me: Mhmm.] Um, so it's, you know, it's automatic.

Me: Ok. Um, so, so we've identified, um, kind of a lack of exposure and ignorance as a cause. [Administrator: Sure.] Are there others?

Administrator: Why certainly I think that there is racism. Um, take for instance this, this issue that's been recently in the news and a buzz among many students, you know, on campus, the issue of the exchange that occurred between the Tri-Deltas and Zeta Beta Tau fraternity. Um, I have to question when the theme is "Mexican Fiesta," "Tacos and Tequila," whatever it, it was, set out to be, why interpret that theme in a derogatory manner, in a stereotypical, negatively stereotypical manner? Why not celebrate, you know, Mexican culture? If that's the theme, why not focus on all of the positive aspects? There are positive and negative in every cultural culture. So, why automatically gravitate towards those that are less desirable, those aspects or those characteristics of a community that are less desirable? And, I mean, certainly I think that there are some, some underlying racist ideologies that, that would make somebody do that. . . .

Me: Um. Then, how does the, from a more university perspective, how does the university process and handle, um, acts of intolerance?

Administrator: Well, we've created just, kind of a, again just because this has been just recently revived, I guess I should've said at the beginning that this was, this office was decided to become the acts of intolerance investigative office when the attacks occurred in 1999. [Me: Oh, ok.] And then, so received some funding from, some government

funding, some private funding. Not quite sure, that funding initially died. Um, and so the initial efforts of this office died as well. So, so I started here in December as Emergency Dean and started investigating acts of intolerance in the Spring, so Spring 2006. Um, so at that time, since then, I've been trying to create a process that I think makes sense. So, the process is such that when I receive information about an act of intolerance occurring, I investigate obviously the victim, um, if the victim wants to come forward; if there are perpetrators known, I investigate the perpetrators. And then I try and determine what's in the best interest of the victim first and foremost, um, uh, the best educational interest of the perpetrator. Um, so whether it's mediation, um, um, having some type of dialogue, um, talking to both parties separately, getting some sort of understanding, or any number, any number of things.

Um, but because up to this point most of the incidents that I've investigated have been, the perpetrator has, has not been identified. It's usually I'm just interviewing the victim, and I'm trying to figure out how do you want to move forward. Because sometime people say, well, "I just want to leave this one alone. I don't want to take this any further. I just wanted to report this for reporting purposes." Um, and then other times, we'll try and, um, implement, uh, measures that will redress, the, the victim. Um, um, you know, feelings of offense or hurt [Me: Mhmm.], um, threat, or you know, whatever. [Me: Yeah. Ok. Um] So right now it's a very general process, if you will. I'm hoping to, actually in the next, before the end of this semester establish bias response teams. And so, when an incident occurs, if it's, um, sexual orientation motivated, to have a group of people who are versed in issues, um, pertaining to gay, lesbian, um, transgender students to have that team convened to figure out what is the best approach [Me: Ok.] so to develop a multiple perspective, um, approach to dealing with the situation. Um, and the same thing with, you know, if it's a religious-based incident, if it's racial- or ethnic-based incidents to convene those different teams. [Me: Ok.] . . .

Me: Then, are there, are there any, like, records or histories of offensive that have been committed? [Administrator: that have occurred prior to my?] Yeah.

Administrator: Not that I am aware of. I have not gotten any. [Me: Wow.] I mean, there are some anecdotal verbal accounts, um, like the attack on [Me: Mhmm.] the Asian woman in 1999, but there, there's nothing. There's really no institutional memory of that, that I'm aware of, I have not been given that kind of information. I mean, and I have, yeah, I would say no. . . .

Me: How effective do you see student activism as being, particularly here on campus, but more in general too?

Administrator: I'd like to see more. Um, I'd like, I think as a society we're very reactive, so we wait, you know, when something happens, happens and then, you know, there are

meetings; there are forums; there are protests; there are, um, there are activities that stem from that event occurring. Um, how do I say this? My, my perception is that, um, it seems to me that people have really become desensitized to acts of intolerance occurring, except when it occurs on a grand scale like this, this most recent incident. But, there were several, several incidents that occurred in the residents halls, primarily FAR, and they were just kind of, you know, noted, wiped up, and moved on. Um, and it, I was, I found it surprising that, um, the residents of that particular hall or the staff members, and, um, staff members, you know, may have held meetings or forums to address it or whatever, um, but not always well attended. Um, not always, um, well received, you know, by the students. So, I, I, always find it surprising that there is not more [Me: Mhmm.], you know, um. People are not more upset, you know, when “nigger” is written across the wall, or “Go back to your country” is written in the elevator or the bathroom. Um, and it’s, it’s almost like, well, you know, “What’s the point?”

But, I always tell students that if you don’t address it when it’s on this level, it, it could potentially escalate to a much greater level, like what [Me: Right.] we’re dealing with right now. Um, and so you’re basically saying to, to the person, uh, committing the act of intolerance that, “That’s fine.” You know, [Me: Mhmm.] I mean if it’s not, if you will, if you don’t make a huge stink about it, um, you know, you’re just, you’re just saying that that’s ok. Um, so I really wish that, and I think that, um, if, if students were more, more vocal about it and realized, um, the power that they have to change how the university operates, um, um, how their peers interact, um, with them, how professors interact with them, I think that we would see a different community.

Um, I don’t think that, this is just speculation, but I, I don’t think that you would see as many acts of intolerance occurring. If people were called out on it every time it occurred, and, um, you know, people were really vocal about it, I think, just my guess is that people would think twice about writing racial offensive remarks or sexually explicit, um, drawings, you know, [Me: Mhmm.] on a wall. Um, I don’t know. [Me: Ok.] And I think that, that there really needs to be pressure put on the powers that be to really create an educational environment that fosters, um, understanding and appreciation of everyone here, all cultures, and it needs to be, it needs to be a structured, I mean, obviously, just by being here and interacting with, you know, Latinos and, um, gays and African-Americans and women and men and, so, obviously you have that informal, um, structure, but I, I think it needs to be a formal structured kind of program or, um, measure that needs [Me: Ok.] to be put into place that really encourages that. . . .

Me: Um, so, some of the stuff that’s been said in these forums [Administrator: Mhmm.], there’s been a lot of talk about a “cover up.” [Administrator: Mhmm.] Um, and it doesn’t seem like that’s the case, um. [Administrator: Well, I think it’s, oh, I’m sorry, go ahead.] No, no, actually I don’t, just what do you think of, what, what is your response to that perception?

Administrator: I think that it’s easy for students to say on that end that the university is

trying to cover this up, the university does not want bad publicity. Um, and not really understanding the channels, or, um, the, um, the channels that we need to go through in order to effect change, or, um, the processes before something happens. Just, just like the legal system, you know, you can't just, um, sentence someone immediately, you know, to prison or give them the death penalty immediately, there's a process for it. [Me: Mhmm.] In conducting research, you don't just come out with your conclusion without, you know, [Me: Mhmm.] um, looking at the literature that's already out there, without interviewing [Me: Mhmm.], and, establishing your methodology, and, um, conducting your research without coming to that conclusion, and that's the same, the same thing.

Um, there are certain steps that have to, certain investigative steps that have to occur before implementation can happen. And, two, um, understanding that the university can't just sanction people without some kind of basis, um, can't just say, "You can't do this," because that's infringing on First Amendment rights, that's infringing on Right to Assemble, you know [Me: Oh yeah.], so, so taking those, those factors into consideration. Um, and from my perspective, from the short tenure that I've had here, my sense is that, um, the university is not, you know, personally, and I think that I have the support of, of the Dean of Students, um, as long as it's reasonable, as long as it's, it makes sense, let's move forward with, with trying to effect, whatever, [Me: Mhmm.] you know, trying to put into action whatever proposal the students have.

And, so I think it's easy because things are not immediate, things don't happen immediately, um, and because sometimes the outcomes are not what students expect them to be, that it's easy to say, well, "The University is just trying to cover this up." But, from this, this side of the table, [Me: Mhmm.] um, I, I don't think that's such the case. [Me: Ok.] I think this is a very, um, student centered, um, office that being the Office of the Dean of Students, obviously, falling under the Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs, and our primary focus is that of students, but we have to balance the interest of all students, um, not just the most vocal students. . . .

Me: Then, um, let's move on to solutions, [Administrator: Ok.] which is, really, that's, I mean, that's the purpose behind my thesis anyway [Administrator: Ok. Right.], like, let's get, let's get all this information and see, ok, what do we do with it then? [Administrator: Mhmm. Mhmm.] Um, so especially, just, exposure seems to be a big, a big issue, but I remember, um, I can't remember exactly who said it, the first forum, he said when it comes to, especially when it comes to racial, different racial and ethnic organizations, people only see us when we're giving out free food or when we're dancing, [Administrator: Right, right.] which, I mean, that's not complete exposure. [Administrator: Right, absolutely.] Um, so how can we expose, um, the students, the, the whole student body [Administrator: Mhmm.] in a more effective way? [Administrator: Mhmm.]

Administrator: Um, that's really a challenge because, of course there's exposure on an everyday basis. I mean, you, you have classes with, um, women; you have classes with

students, students who are disabled; you have classes with, whether you know it or not, um, men and women who identify as gay or lesbian. Um, so there's already that exposure, if you will. And I don't know, I, I think that students do a ton of programming, um, so I don't know if additional programming is, is the solution. Generally programs, the audience that attends, um, these programs are people who know about that culture anyway, or people who at least have an interest in learning about a particular culture. And those are not the people that you need to reach. Um, so I don't know.

I think at an education, at an institution of, of higher learning, and like I've mentioned at these forums, and like I've said, you know, to my colleagues, um, I think that there has to be a class, a class that, that really, um, uh, delves into, um, the history of, of particular cultures, um, that, the contributions of particular cultures, the struggles of particular cultures, the privileges of particular cultures have. Um, but I think that really addressing it from an educational standpoint is, is really what needs to happen. Um, and that's, that's really difficult because if you manage to mandate, you know, obviously for someone to take a class, I don't know how effective that is. [Me: Mhmm.] You know, I mean, this is, ok, "This just a class, just another class that I need to take," um, I mean, students already don't, you know, some students already don't attend classes because [Me: Right], um. So I don't know. I don't know.

Um, I think that there are just by virtue of the way the university is set up, random roommates, um, classes that are not single-sex classes, or single-race classes. Um, but just, but really encouraging students to go outside of their comfort zone. So even if you're not African-American, take an Afro class, take an Afro studies class. Um, even if you're not Jewish, take a class on Judaism. Um, you know, even if you've never interacted with a Korean student, or a Korean person, you know, go to a Korean event and, and really try and get something out of it. So I don't know if there's anything, you know, that the university can do to really encourage that exposure because you're going to continue to have the people attending who want to attend. [Me: Mhmm.] You know, and those who need to attend, not attending. And, establishing mandatory workshops or mandatory classes doesn't get to the root of the issue. Um, so it really needs to start way before people get here. [Me: Mhmm.] I mean, it really needs to be developed very early on.

Me: Do you have any other solutions in mind, um [Administrator: For exposure or for?] Just, just in general. [Administrator: Well.] with exposure if you, also, if you want.

Administrator: Sure. Well I think, I think one of the, what I see as one of the main issues is that these are such sensitive issues, especially when it comes to, to race. Um, people are just not comfortable talking about issues of race, more so disability, more so religion. Um, but I think, um, just having and, and this is one thing that I'm proposing, is, is to have campus-wide dialogues, um, about different issues, whether it's, "Is race still important?" You know, um, um, issues that are really divisive, very controversial, um, but through dialogue will allow for us to progress as a society. Um, and so I think that

until you're ready to have those hard conversations, then, and confront people's biases and, uh, stereotypes, stereotypes of, of the people that, you're just putting a bandaid on the solution. [Me: Alright.] I think we have to be free to just, to talk about these issues. And then of course, some smaller collaborations, you know, between some unlikely groups I think is always beneficial. Um, yeah, so. . . .

Me: So then, um, there was a lot of talk, especially I felt, during the first forum [Administrator: Mhmm.] a week or two ago [Administrator: Mhmm.] about the chief, [Administrator: Mhmm.] and, and just a lot of just using the chief as, you know, [Administrator: Parallel.] right. Do you ever feel almost compromised having the chief still here, or, you know, or, or just what is that relation? How do you accommodate for that?

Administrator: I don't. I stay out of that discussion.

Analysis:

One of the primary foci of the interview was to determine what this particular administrator viewed as some of the causes of the acts of intolerance and hate crime on campus. She explained that perhaps the chief root of such behavior/action is ignorance (echoing the sentiments of the majority of my other interviewees). After seeing my look of skepticism and hearing me refer to such a notion as a "hard pill to swallow," she continued. The almost automatic characterization of other people into categories (such as race, ethnicity, religion, etc.) is a result of White privilege – the White community is not "required" to self-reflect and constantly re-examine their self-identity to "survive" or navigate in today's society. Members of the dominant category do not have to understand or even truly interact with members of any of the non-dominant categories. For example, a Latino in American society is forced to understand his self-identity in relation to that of his White male counterpart's. However, that same counterpart is NOT obligated to evaluate his self-identity in relation to that of the Latino individual's.

But, ignorance is not the only cause of this destructive behavior. Racism, too, produces hate and acts of intolerance. The administrator believes that it was a combination of ignorance and racism that allowed for the organization of and taking part in the "Tacos and Tequila" exchange. In coordinating a Mexican-themed party, the participants were not obligated to represent the Mexican community in a negative light; they could have chosen to embody everything positive about the culture. However, many individuals chose to grossly misrepresent the Mexican population, utilizing and perpetuating the community's most negative stereotypes. In opting to realize the exchange in such a damaging way, those individuals demonstrated both their underlying ignorance and racism towards the Mexican community.

Thus, in the answering of a question, more questions come to mind. The administrator explained the sources of ignorance, claiming misrepresentation by the media and overall lack of exposure to other cultures as a primary cause. But, what is the cause of racism? Is racism just an extreme realization of ignorance, or is there something more, an added emotional/psychological/value component? Could it be said that ignorance primarily causes acts of intolerance, whereas racism causes hate crime?

After discussing the root of White privilege and so forth, the administrator told me about the way in which the university “handles,” “deals with,” “takes care of” acts of intolerance and hate crime. (I put the previous words in quotations because I cannot think of a word that describes the action of “dealing with” these actions without also carrying a negative connotation; I cannot think of a neutral, non-loaded word; perhaps “resolve?”) What I found most telling about the university was that there is no institutional memory of acts of intolerance and hate crime, nothing more than “anecdotal verbal accounts.” Further, prior to the administrator’s arrival (only a couple semesters ago), there was no institutional system/process which guided how to “deal with” these occurrences. Actually, there still is no institutional process; everything is handled on a case by case basis according to the method the administrator has created for herself. Under such a system, it is difficult to determine patterns of discrimination, a problem the administrator currently faces; thus it is tough to create a plan of action in curbing the issue of continued ignorance and racism, sexism, etc. Without first ascertaining the tendencies, it is challenging to find solutions.

To continue with the topic of the university, I questioned the administrator about a common student belief about the actions of the institution as it responds to acts of intolerance and hate crime, the continued declarations of a university-wide/administrational “cover-up.” In reply to the query, the administrator recounted how it is easy to say that the university “covers-up” any realizations of prejudice on campus, or any negative publicity in general. That is not reality, however, according to the administrator. The fact of the matter is that in order to obtain not only a university acknowledgment, but also an institutional response (including punishment and further preventative measures), one must go through the proper university channels. Such a process does not happen overnight; however, students tend to become frustrated, angry, and impatient with the university when a quick institutional reaction does not occur. I wonder, though, for whom is such a process constructed, for whose benefit/aid? Who created the current system, and for what purpose? The process takes time, sometimes as much as multiple years in fact, making it difficult for resolutions to pass when student leaders graduate while university administrators remain.

Then, after discussing the university directly, the administrator gave me her experience-based opinion concerning student activism and why it has a tendency to be ineffective. According to her, student activism is too reactive. An event occurs which spurs immediate action, but then the momentum dies before positive change can be enacted. Instead, she recommends that student action be more continuous, more organized, more thought-out. Further, the administrator believes that there is insufficient student activism, partially due to the students not realizing the power they possess, but also (and perhaps

more importantly) that the students have become desensitized to acts of intolerance. She is continuously surprised that there is not a more dramatic response when racist and offensive graffiti is written on library or elevator walls, or when an act of prejudice occurs within the dorms.

Now, while the administrator's description concerning student activism seemed logical and insightful, she said two things that intrigued me even more than the "realities" of such action. The first was her use of the term "wiped up" when referencing her offices responses to acts of intolerance. Perhaps she, like I, had difficulty coming up with a neutral, non-loaded word to describe the university's reactions, but it could mean something entirely different. "Wiped up" could imply something to the effect of "making like new" or "cleaning up" or, if I may dare say, "to make as though it never happened." Such a lexical item is interesting to me considering her complete denial of any institutional cover up not ten minutes beforehand during the interview. Now, I am not suggesting that there exists some sort of university sanctioned, under-the-table conspiracy to hide acts of intolerance. But, what I am suggesting is that the way in which the university "wipes up" occurrences of discrimination might actually do more harm than good, failing to prevent such actions from happening again, or even encouraging their repetition in not doing more to punish or at the very least bring to greater attention the acts of intolerance that take place on this campus. Their actions in part could be creating the desensitizing described above.

The second of the administrator's statements that intrigued me was her saying the following sentence within the same context of the "wiped up" phrase previously analyzed: "But, there were . . . several incidents [of intolerance] that occurred in the residents halls, primarily FAR." It is the "FAR" that interests me because a fairly common accusation amongst students is that the university frequently racially profiles incoming freshmen when determining their housing arrangements. Students charge that the Florida Avenue Residence Halls (FAR) houses significantly more students of color than does the 6-Pack. I have done no research on this particular topic, and I cannot say with any certainty whether or not the allegations are true. However, I find it interesting and far from coincidental that those same dormitories which are reputed to have the most people of color are also the place where the highest cases of acts of intolerance occur.

Then the interview moved to a discussion about solutions, about how to make this a hate free, prejudice free campus. The administrator states "that there really needs to be pressure put on the powers that be to really create an educational environment that fosters . . . understanding and appreciation of everyone here, all cultures, and it needs to be . . . structured." So, how is such an environment created? Well, increased student programming is not seen as the answer, especially because there already is so much programming and these problems still exist. The solution could be the creation of a class required of all incoming freshmen that discusses topics such as racism, sexism, White privilege, self-identity, etc. However, the administrator has some reservations, for, especially in making it required, it could become "just another class," and the students might not take it extremely seriously. An additional solution might be the commencing of a campus-wide dialogue concerning the same topics that the hypothetical class would

address. The benefits of such a dialogue include that it would be less expensive/work intensive and that it would be optional, meaning that it would be more meaningful to the participants. But, the very benefit of making such a dialogue optional is also its drawback, for the people who really need to be reached, as is the case with current university and student programming, would not be. A final solution is the creation of issue-specific response teams that would receive training in a particular topic (such as race, religion, or sexuality). These teams would be “deployed” in response to acts of intolerance and would more effectively be able to resolve the problem. However, the objective of the teams seems more about resolution and less about prevention.

What I find noteworthy about the discussion regarding supposed solutions is how the administrator almost “writes off” acts of intolerance as the “nature of the beast.” She says that the university creates an environment for the realization of these occurrences through having integrated dorms and classrooms, for example, “throwing” students of multiple backgrounds who had previously never been in contact with each other into an obligatory mix of dorm- and classroom-life. She states that one must begin that contact and mutual understanding significantly earlier in life to be effective. I, on the other hand, while I understand the point the administrator attempts to make, do not agree with her. Yes, integration might cause conflict, especially at the start. However, I refuse to believe that segregation is a preferred or even valid solution. I understand that the administrator is not condoning all-White or all-Black classes; but, blaming the problem on integration seems to me to be a “cop out.” Further, just because an individual did not receive the exposure s/he needed to non-dominant populations does not mean that they are a lost cause. Instead, we just need to find new, better, and more creative solutions.

The administrator claims that programming is not the answer, and a class might not be either. But both programming and an obligatory class have benefits she failed to mention. Perhaps student programming has failed because of the manner in which it has been traditionally approached and continues to be approached to this day. The majority of student-run cultural programs focus upon the sensual, the corporeal, in many cases sexualizing whatever group is being represented, even reinforcing negative stereotypes on occasion. I know this can be common amongst the Latina/o groups on campus, for example (I speak through personal experience), for the most common programs seem to be dance exhibitions (usually salsa) of some kind and/or a “Taste” of a specific country in which the “typical” food is given to the attendees free of charge. Maybe instead of discounting student programming altogether, they should just change their methods and objectives. Instead of sexualizing themselves, why not educate? Student organizations could start a campus-wide dialogue similar to the one suggested by the administrator. If these organizations were to take it upon themselves to provide an accurate, more well-rounded perspective of whatever represented culture, maybe the students who participate in their programs would not leave with negatively reaffirmed notions concerning members of that particular culture.

Also, regarding the idea of a required class, that some individuals may consider it “just another class,” without absorbing the content it would provide, does not mean the idea should be abandoned. Having a class that the entire freshmen class must complete does

more than just educate the students who attend its lectures and discussions; it also creates the environment the administrator talked discussed, an environment in which the students become immediately aware that the university stands for acceptance of diversity and will not tolerate a racist/sexist/etc. mentality.

Finally, the administrator says a great deal in her refusal to discuss the issue of the Chief. She opts to “stay out of the discussion” concerning a very heated issue/debate on campus. Many victims of acts of intolerance compare what happened to them to the Chief. For example, in the many forums I attended concerning the aforementioned “Tacos and Tequila” exchange, multiple individuals compared the racist misrepresentation of the Mexican community to the Chief, and many believe that it is because of the Chief’s continued presence on this campus that people think that a racist ideology is acceptable. Many believe that the Chief sets precedence and is a very clear statement on behalf of the university that the mitigation of acts of intolerance is not its priority. This sentiment leads to a sense of hypocrisy, and compromises the university’s genuineness and effectiveness when it states that it will not tolerate offensive parties, for example, and chastises the participants, while continuing to commit acts of intolerance in misrepresenting the Native American community and not retiring the Chief. Silence says a lot, and contrary to what the administrator may feel, in not talking about the Chief, she is making a non-neutral statement. Much is said when the university administrator who most closely works with acts of intolerance feels as though she cannot comment upon the issue of the Chief. Are these her personal sentiments, or are her superiors demanding that she not discuss the Chief, I wonder?

The following is a transcription on what I consider to be the most noteworthy elements of an interview I conducted with a friend of mine, Mark (a pseudonym). Mark self-identifies as White, middle-class, gay male:

Me: Um. What is your, um, definition of hate crime?

Mark: I, I, I thought about that a little bit before when you asked me. I was like, “Oh, I never really thought of that.” And I guess my, um, my initial reaction to that has always been, a physical, almost that you get, almost that you have to touch to make it a hate crime. But that was my initial, like, thought of it. I’m like, “Oh, why does it always have to be violence or a physical beating or a, any sort of attack?” But it can be much more, um, I mean, there are vocals. The vocal hate crimes are what, I’ve only had like two really big ones, but those are the ones I had. And they’re not physical though, so I don’t that’s, physicality can do it right away, but vocals can do so much more. I mean growing up, the things that have affected me the most have been the name-calling, which is so stupid [Me: Mhmm], but I’d rather have that than a punch in the face or something by anyone. [Me: For] For anything. [Me: Mhmm] For anything. For being smaller than the bully or something, sexually or not. . . .

Me: Um. Then in both of these cases [of discrimination you have experienced], um, and maybe when you hear of these things too, what are your immediate reactions to it?

Mark: Right now, more shock than anything because I personally feel that I've come a long way between coming out and being comfortable with where I am. I feel like society is there, like I've caught up to society, [Me: Mhmm] finally, in a way, because I've spent so many years either repressing it or just, like, keeping it to myself. Now that I'm out and happy [laughs] and happy with where I am, I feel like, "Yeah, I've finally caught up, and society and I are running at the same, running at the same pace." And it's not at all. Like, I feel, like, now I hear these stupid, just things that I say that are broad about certain groups, but when I hear them about a group I'm in, which aren't many, because I'm a White, middle-class, working male. It's like, "Bad for me. How many bad things can you say about, besides we suck?" [Me: (laughs)] Um, "You suck." [Me: (laughs)]

But, I mean being gay, that's a group that I hold strongly to [Me: Mhmm], and I feel like I'm pushing forward, and other, I think the gay society is moving forward. And, and society itself, and the acceptance is lacking behind a little bit. And it's, like, one of those sad realizations that come out whenever, there's, there's some harassment at work or harassment on a bus, when you hear somebody just say some thing to you and not even mean it. Or, like the word "retarded." So many levels, but when you mean it, it's, it's a totally different level to it. [Me: Oh yeah. Yeah.] So, so it's just like, "What? What?" Um. Like the feminist movement. You think all is well, and then you get some jackass making some comments or something. And you're like, "What? Are we really? I thought this was 2006." I thought we were moving ahead as much as possible, and you get bumped back every once in a while.

Me: [writing] Sorry. [writing] So those were your immediate reactions. What are your immediate actions?

Mark: [laughs] I cry. I cried the both times. I didn't say that earlier. I acted just so strange, and I got just so; my body reacted as if I did something wrong, I remember. I got red-faced, and, like, the shakes. It was a weird, I mean, I knew I didn't do anything wrong, but that's like the same reaction. Like a super guilty feeling, reaction, but not like, "Oh, I feel so guilty for, for being who I am." But it was just that reaction. It was so strange. That, I guess, it was more of a scared. You think everything's ok with where you are, with where you come. And then the next thing you know you get knocked down a peg, a peg, and get reminded that there are people out there who just don't know. And, it's not like they're necessarily blind to it or just, um, I think they're uninformed for the most part. [Me: Mhmm] It's just, like, don't go saying the word "fag" everywhere, especially in a mall in front of retail workers. [Me: (laughs)] As right as she thought she was I think all of the guys at the counter were [gay], and I had one buddy, he was like, "I would've screamed at her if I was him." [Me: Mhmm.] And he would have. He was

sassy, but [chuckles] It's just like, "Ah, God." [Me: Yeah.] So yeah. Um, my body can't handle it. I shut down. [Me: I can understand that.] Yeah.

Me: Um, so then, who do you, um, who do you tell [Mark: Who did I tell?] when things like this happen?

Mark: Well, the initial problems with those first two was I couldn't, I don't have any way to tell my parents. I just came out to them in July, this past July. [Me: Oh wow.] Yeah. I had been out to my friends for four years and officially to my parents only since this last July. So, so during the two instances at the work stations, um, I only had the friends, so like random friends I could tell, or, or even if I did. I would, like, diary about it, but it was no big deal. But I, it was this weird place where I couldn't tell my parents how upset someone made their son based around something that they didn't know about and now ultimately don't like. So, it's very strange. [Me: (laughs)] So, I do go to my roommates, if for, like, the blunt answer, my roommates, um, depending on where I was living at the time. Um, my brother every once in a while, but not too much. He's a year younger than me. [Me: Ok. Did he know about? Did you come out to him before your parents?] Yeah, definitely. [Me: Ok.] Yeah, it was about, it was the same year I came out. So, three and a half years ago [Me: Ok.] for him.

Me: Um, your friends, are they, how do you identify them? Are they all straight [Mark: Um.], all [Mark: Um. The initial friends?] Yeah, yeah. The initial friends, or the friends you would talk to when stuff like this happens.

Mark: Oh. Mostly straight because I feel like I can get a angry, too angry of a reaction if I told, well, not if I told, but I do tell gay friends every once in a while, but I get the reactions like I got at work. That, "I would have screamed at that woman" and all that. [Me: Oh, ok.] But, you know, it's like I need to tell people who aren't in the same boat as me and try and get a, get a reason why she went in to this, even if it's my straight roommate who's a female. Well, I'm like, this is what happened. And she can go either way. Like, she can be angry, but it's from a different standpoint; it's from a tolerant standpoint, excuse me, an acceptance standpoint, not a "I'm a gay, female rights issues standpoint." [Me: Mhmm.] I said "tolerance," that made me angry. I'm, I'm shocked I said it. [Me: No, no, no.] . . .

Me: How rooted in the past, in history, so to speak, do you think maybe discrimination as a whole, and then specifically that towards issues is?

Mark: I mean, ever, ever since there was one, I'm not a very religious person, but ever since there was one man and one woman, there's been discrimination against any sort of

opposite, any sort of opposing, either what you are or what you think to be right or wrong. I mean, it just grew from there in a way. Um, as far as, uh, GLBT, I mean, it's been around forever. I mean, really I like to think it has. I mean, you know, like, there's no way that, "Oh, the first gay was born in the 1300's." It's like, no, I feel, I personally feel like it's been those, there's been someone like that ever since. I'm sure it was dealt with differently. I mean, typically you find it as well, too. It's been around. [Me: Mhmm.] Yeah. [laughs]

Me: So, the kicker. [Mark: Uh oh.] How do we fix it? [Mark: How do we fix it?] What are the solutions. [Mark: When you read that through, you were like, "This is the 'big deal' question," I'm like, "Oh, God."] No. No, no, no. It's the "big deal" question for me, it doesn't have to be the "big deal" question for you.

Mark: But, no, but it is. It should be the big question for anyone who is a good human being [laughs] because a lot of people don't think of that question. Um. I mean, it's as hippy as, like, remedial as, just like, just weird, just like, accept, like, who cares? I mean in a way, it goes back to, like, that, weird, it goes back to that, like, being happy with what you have and then being angry with what you don't have. It's like, why, why, why do the discriminating when you're perfectly fine living how you're living? What does that, what will that gain for you, whether you're a rich White family, or a poor Black family, and they happen to both be homophobic in some sort of way? But it's like, "Why can't you be happy with who and what you are and have?" Don't really know if that's a solution, but, um. I'm getting all hippy. I really am. [Me: No.] I mean, I understand what happened in the sixties. We are beginning to understand that sort of movement. I'm just, like, "Why? And can't you just, not love, but can't you just?" I don't know. Like, worry about yourself, in a way. Worry that you're not raising your kids right, not even discriminating, are they eating enough? Worry about the core, and then you can worry about everything else that's out there.

Me: Do you think that "worry about yourself" is connected to discrimination? [Mark: I mean. I mean, yeah.] Does, I mean. A lot of people see this "other," this "other," as a threat. [Mark: Yeah] You know what I'm saying? [Mark: Yeah. Ooh.]

Mark: Yes. I mean. And worrying, I guess, I mean, that phrase "worrying about yourself" can lead back to a very closed off person or society if, I mean, if, almost communistic, worrying about yourself as a community. And, you are, seem to be forgetting about everything else that's out there, and that could lead to another, more problems of, "Oh they're not like us. We've been worrying about ourselves so much." So, I try to stay away from worrying about everyone [Me: (laughs)], not worrying about everyone, but realize that there is more out there [Me: Mhmm.] than you. [Me: Mhmm.] Capital "You." Or "Y," but "You." [Me: Ok.] But yeah, good catch on your behalf.

Me: So, so how do we get that, so how do we get it so everyone has that “who cares” attitude? I’m going to push you, sorry.

Mark: No. It’s, it’s, it’s interesting. The joke, the first thing I could think of is, more cartoons, was the first thing I could think of. But no, it’s strange that it is weird that, in a weird way that’s no kind of true. In a more sick way, um, TV has helped, I think. Um. We are seeing more gays and lesbians on TV. And, that’s a very nice thing. And, some portrayals fall into the stereotypes, you know, and then you get into stereotypes, and that’s, ugh. Um. But, the exposure’s there more. [Me: Mhmm.] And everyone watches TV. I mean, I know that’s a generalization as well, but everyone watches TV; everyone reads the newspaper, even if they pick up a headline. You pick up the headline last week, oh, “New Jersey Allows Gay Marriages.” And you think you know something about the gay community, and maybe you do. You know, it’s nice that that’s out there. [Me: Mhmm.] And, getting to the masses, unfortunately, it’s not through theater anymore. It’s not through even necessarily music anymore. It’s though, uh, your free little box in your TV, or in your living room and your kitchen and your bedroom [Me: Yeah.] that you have access to all the time. And, um, even the news, even the news sheds interesting lights on, um, rights issues, both pro and con. [Me: Mhmm.] I mean, they show the crime stories that things go wrong. I think it’s more of a responsibility up to them now to let us know, not let us know, but show ways that other people can be doing more positive work as well. [Me: Mhmm.] Not just give up the Debbie Downer moments.

I will divide the analysis of the transcription into six parts, some of which display trends I have begun to identify through conducting multiple interviews, and others just unique points that Mark brought up and I would like to decompose further:

Firstly, according to Otterbein College, “hate crime” is defined as a “crime of aggravated assault, arson, burglary, criminal homicide, motor vehicle theft, robbery, sex offenses, and/or crime involving bodily injury in which the victim was intentionally selected because of the victims' actual or perceived race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability.” What is interesting is that this is not the definition that is regurgitated to me when I ask my interviewees for their “personal definitions” of hate crime. Mark’s initial reaction/response to the question (like the other individuals I have interviewed) included some idea of physicality, that a hate crime is almost always associated with some kind of physical act, physical assault against a person due to the perpetrator’s own biases/prejudices, that the reason behind the crime was some kind of “marker” the victim manifested. However, an equally similar response was to question that initial reaction. Mark, like some of my other interviewees, quickly re-examined his personal definition of hate crime, citing psychological harm as equally damaging, or even more damaging than physical abuse.

These tendencies lead me to question the meanings of their responses. Are my interviewees suggesting that the current definition of “hate crime” is limiting or short-sighted in its failure to incorporate a psychological component in focusing on the physical? Is it that they are partially uninformed, ignorant of the legal definition of “hate crime”? Such responses make me wonder who authored the hate crime legislation: victims of hate crime? Non-victims? I would be interested in knowing the ramifications of retaining a definition of “hate crime” as it currently stands versus including more of a psychological element. Is it even possible (or constitutionally legal)?

A second element that I found particularly fascinating was Mark’s description of being “ahead” or “behind” society, mainly because I had never considered such a viewpoint before. But, once Mark articulated it, I found that such a perspective is quite common amongst individuals/groups that tend to be victimized, such individuals that have to cope with prejudice and discrimination on a daily basis, constantly reexamining their own self-identity. For such people, a sense of acceptance of other “minority” groups can (but not always) seem without question. True, racism can breed racism, and oftentimes it does, but there is at least an underlying assumption that minorities will watch out for other minorities and will come together for “the greater good.” Frequently, due to such a mindset, these individuals seem to conceptualize their place as being somehow “ahead” of greater society, of being slightly more enlightened persons. This tendency is reinforced through the interviewees’ conceptualizations of prejudice as being out of date, comparing discrimination realized on campus to high school or to the past. Mark says, “I thought this was 2006,” implying, like others, the idea that negative stereotypes were supposed to have ended by now.

Thirdly, Mark displays yet another commonality found in all of the interviews conducted thus far: the idea that a primary root/cause of discrimination (ultimately/potentially escalating into hate crime) is a lack of exposure/a lack of information about the minority groups. Mark, like some of the others, does not say that the perpetrators are ignorant, implying that “ignorant” has a negative connotation. Making reference to various levels of words’ meanings, Mark suggests that when a person uses a word without thinking about all of its possible definitions or interpretations, one can offend another individual inadvertently.

The fourth component of the interview was a unique one, or at least, an unexpected one. When asked about who Mark tells of his encounters with discrimination, I expected him to say his other gay friends. Recounting such experiences with other/similar victims seems/seemed to be a common trend amongst suffers of prejudice, for frequently they all can relate to the situation, empathizing with the victim. Mark, however, does not share this losoe generality. Instead, he told me that he often aims to tell non-gay friends about times when he is discriminated against. Other gay individuals, he says, react very angrily with very little constructive discussion taking place. If he talks with straight friends, though, he is able to understand their viewpoint (to a certain degree); he tries to recognize why he is victimized. Mark says that, yes, his straight friends become angry, but it is a different manifestation of anger than his gay friends’. I cannot guess as to what such behavior might indicate. On the one hand, I am tempted to suppose that it represents a

more activist individual, one who wants to find the cause of the problem in order to seek solutions. However, on the other hand, in not informing other members of a “like” group, in this case the gay community, Mark might not be all that activist, for he is not unifying anyone behind a cause or situation. Or, he might just yearn to individually rationalize the prejudice he faces, with no desire to be truly active. I cannot say.

Fifthly, Mark illustrates an additional common thread of all of the interviewees, that discrimination is the result of just being different. Mark says, “[E]ver since there was one man and one woman, there’s been discrimination against any sort of opposite, any sort of opposing, either [for] what you are or [for] what you think to be right or wrong.” An almost universal trend amongst my subjects is that they believe in almost an inherent ethnocentrism that many people seem to maintain. Difference causes discrimination – that is what many of the interviewees feel – especially when individuals interpret “other” cultures/behaviors as a threat. The question, then, is why do people view minority cultures as a threat to mainstream society? Is it insecurity? Is it fear? Are the minority cultures actually, aggressively, actively threatening the mainstream?

The sixth and final noteworthy element of the interview with Mark was his proposed solutions. He suggested both a vague and a more concrete resolution. The first he describes as being a very “hippy” notion, that society just needs to adopt a “who cares” sort of attitude, suggesting that we just drop the whole idea of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, etc., categorizing people as just that, people, and nothing more. To do this, Mark proposes that we focus on what we have as individuals, being happy with what we have instead of being angry with what we lack. In response to just how to effect such a change, he recommended heightened exposure to, in this case, the LGBT community, through cartoons, for example. TV is the medium, he says, through which people can perfect society’s imperfections in informing “the masses” to the invalidity of retaining prejudiced ideals.

The following is a transcription on what I consider to be the most interesting elements of an interview I conducted with an acquaintance of mine, Peter (a pseudonym). Peter self-identifies as very religious, White, middle-class male from a small, homogenously White town in central Illinois:

Me: So, you kind of talked about geographic differences, um, of discrimination, and just kind of the way it’s displayed today. How do you think this relates to hate and discrimination in the past?

Peter: . . . When you’re only exposed to people of your, that you know, look like you and act like you and stuff, then when you see someone who comes in, like I guess it’s sort of a challenge to what you’re used to, and there’s some desire to say I’m right and the way you do things is wrong. You know, there’s just some human element to when people look differently, then they, you know, I mean in high school, well not high school, but in high

school yeah, but in school, you know, someone wears glasses and most people don't wear glasses, you make fun of them. You know someone with different color skin that most people don't, then you're going to make fun of them. There's just something about that. And that doesn't make it right, but, um, so I think that has to do with the geography and that, when you're used to seeing people with certain skin color or act a certain way, then there's just something about that that causes tension.

Me: What do you think makes, just, just that they're different?

Peter: Yeah. I just, uh, just that they're different. Um, maybe if, it's insecurity, people think that, well, if they're doing it differently then maybe I should be doing it differently, and I don't think I should be doing it differently, and they're somehow challenging me. That might be part of it, I don't really know. . . .

Me: What do you feel is the cause or the root of the discrimination and hate either on campus or great, greater, just in general I guess?

Peter: Um, well even after, you know, 200 or so odd years, you know, Black people are still, I think, not all of them, but some of them, are still mad about, uh, you know, being a slave, which they have every right to be. But, you know, myself and I think some other people, are mad at, well, maybe not mad, but whatever; but, people don't like to be accused of something that their ancestors did 200 years ago 'cause you know, it's not their fault. And you could argue that, um, you know, White people are benefiting from, um, something that Blacks, you know, since Blacks had been enslaved and had no money for such a long time, the Whites were ahead in terms that they had the money and the backgrounds and the things so they, there's this inequality, um, as a result of slavery even though it was so long ago, and, so even if you didn't, and by you, I mean by a White person didn't own any slaves, and they're still benefiting from that system.

Um, and as for myself, I get angry because what am I supposed to do about it? Um, you know, as long as I, you know, treat everyone, you know, the same in terms of, regardless of what they look like or what they believe, you know, I think that's all I can really be expected to do. Um, and let's see, I'm sorry, I'm getting away from the question. As far as the root, um, yeah, people owned slaves in the past, and they're still angry about that, and, um, that gets passed on from generation to generation. Um, and I think just people being different, there's something about people looking different or acting differently that people feel insecure about or feel challenged by. Um, and I think you can see this in everyday life.

If someone, you know, I don't know, um, I can't think of a really good example, but just, like, if someone ties their shoe this way, and they see someone tying their shoe a different way, there's sort of this, like, you know, not always, sometimes people are open minded,

and they're like, "Hey, maybe that's a better way of tying a shoe." And, that's kind of a simplistic answer, but, um, I'm sure it could apply it to all kinds of things, but when you see someone doing something differently, there's this tendency to say, well for one, there's pride where someone might be like, "Well, I'm doing this better than you." And then, the other person will be like, "No you're not." And then there's this, I guess that could relate to how someone looks or how they act, you know, to the culture, and the, um, how some, you know, how what regions and how they look, those are tied together.

So, um, and people have pride with how they do things; that creates conflict, I think. And, um, if people aren't, you know, open and saying just because they do it this way doesn't mean I can't do it this way, and, you know, maybe I can learn something from them, maybe they can learn something from me. So unless you have that openness, then that kind of sparks conflict, I think. Um, so I guess that's just a theory, but it makes sense to me.

Me: Um, so lastly, what do you think are, uh, solutions?

Peter: It's hard to say because for I while I was just kind of like, "Why does it matter? Let's just forget about it. You know, you're stupid if you discriminate against someone just because of how they look." It should be based on, you know, they're human beings, and they have the same integrity and worth as anyone else. Um, but there's the problem, you know, well some people want restitutions, and then I mean, I guess, um, like Indians, American Indians, like they pretty much got completely screwed over. So how do we deal with that? How do we, you know, do we give them all their land back? Does that mean everyone else would have to move out? Um, so I'd kind of like to just think, you know, we can just kind of put the past behind us, but that doesn't seem to happen.

Um, I don't like how emphasis on culture can be divisive. Um, I think that if you're going to have, you know, your Black, your African-American club or your, I don't know, some German-American club, or whatever club. You know, that's great, because we can learn from these cultures, you know, regardless of what culture you come from, but if it starts to be exclusive at all, like, you know, if I start some, like if I had some German-American homecoming, and I only let White people go, or German people go like that, people would flip out. So if you try and do the same thing, for, like, you know, Blacks or Koreans or Japanese or whatever, like that doesn't seem right. So if you're going to have, I don't think there's anything wrong with having any specific events, but it should be open to everyone. And hopefully, and, and I would hope these people would advertise them as being open to everyone, and I think they are, but, um, some situations where that doesn't seem to come across. Um, so I think if people learn more about each other's culture and had sort of an appreciation for it and, um, try not to feel threatened by it, um, it'd go a long way.

In conducting the interview, Peter informed me that he does not recall ever witnessing or experiencing hate or discrimination during his lifetime, and that is why I feel that his insights and views are particularly significant and the reason I wanted to interview him in the first place. Oftentimes, it appears that the discourse surrounding prejudice revolves around the victims of such injustice (I admit, this is very much an assumption on my part), failing to take into account the opinions of those who are seemingly unaffected. If we are ever to find solutions, though, one should consider as many perspectives as possible.

In a forum I attended, we were informed that frequently, victims and members of ethnic groups that are often targeted almost continuously self-evaluate, self-reflect upon their own identities in order to “survive” in today’s society. However, that same person also told us that generally, the “average” White individual can “survive” without such self-examination, thus they do not engage in it as often as non-White individuals. I wanted to interview a person for whom discrimination was not regularly on his mind; I wanted to see how his conceptualization of hate, his personal definition of hate crime, varied compared to other victims with whom I have conversed. (I do want to mention, however, that everybody’s circumstances are unique; that one person’s experience with prejudice is not ever going to be identical to that of someone else’s. Everybody’s perspectives are distinctive.) Now then, that being said, let us turn to an analysis of the transcription:

The first component of the interview that I found especially intriguing was Peter’s discussion about an almost inherent, personal degree of ethnocentrism within every individual. He describes a certain “human element,” that almost causes, or at least explains, the superiority that a person might feel in the face of a different culture. He then illustrates discrimination as the effect of one culture “challenging” another, that people feel insecure when multiple cultures are present, that simply the co-existence of another ethnicity might somehow imply that one must concede dominance.

A second interesting aspect was Peter’s response to the question concerning the source of today’s discrimination. First, he suggests that history plays a role, that many African-American individuals harbor anger about their ancestors being enslaved. Immediately after that discussion, though, Peter becomes defensive, saying, “[W]hat am I supposed to do about it?” He articulates that he never personally owned any slaves, that he did not do anything wrong, but that he is under attack for the possibility that his ancestors were slave owners. He attributes continued prejudice and discrimination to historical anger that is passed from “generation to generation,” implying that the African-American community is at least partially responsible for today’s level of social/racial/ethnic prejudices. Peter proposes, then, that pride in how people do things creates conflict, that unless “they” are clear in articulating their own lack of a desire to impose their culture upon another, tension could arise. This is interesting because it hints that it is the “minority” culture’s responsibility to prevent conflict in verbalizing that they do not yearn to challenge the majority.

A final noteworthy element was Peter's suggested solutions to alleviate prejudice and hate. He says, "I'd kind of like to just think, you know, we can just kind of put the past behind us, but that doesn't seem to happen." This seems to be a sort of "blame the victim" mentality; he again insinuates that it is the responsibility of the historically oppressed to end discrimination, that if they could forget specifically slavery, for example, today's woes would disappear. Also, Peter neither likes nor agrees with the divisiveness of culture, specifically commenting upon cultural organizations and events on campus. He makes note of a double standard, stating that African-American homecoming is permitted while in the face of a German-American homecoming, people would "flip out." Making events ethnically/racially exclusive, he says, does not seem right and could even lead to "reverse discrimination" if White people were not permitted entry. Peter states that African-American homecoming, for example, does not specifically/technically affirm that non-African-Americans cannot attend; however it is common knowledge that only African-Americans should be present.

The interview lasted almost an hour and for the purposes of this particular inquiry, I will first contextualize Mitali's identity and then highlight some of the aspects that I found most interesting and most eye-opening:

Mitali did note a discrepancy between how she identifies herself and how she feels others tend to "view" her. She distinguishes three key individual identity markers: 1) being visibly physically handicap, using a wheelchair; 2) being of Indian descent; and 3) being a woman. These three markers she feels contribute to the hate crimes she has experienced in the past and continues to experience today. However, while she identifies more as a woman with a physical disability, Mitali feels that her "Indianness" is the "straw that broke the camel's back," so to speak; it is her "Indian features" that she believes augments the discrimination she suffers compared to White women with visible physical disabilities.

At any rate, something I found particularly interesting was Mitali's response to the question concerning who she felt was at fault, the category of person who tends to commit hate crime. The simple answer is that there appears to be no category of person who tends to commit hate crime. One might be tempted to blame the stereotypically "conservative, White male" for such atrocities; however Mitali indicated that only once in all of her experiences was the perpetrator's identity ever that clear-cut. Those who engage in hate crime do not seem to be "specific," but instead are of "multi-walks of life." Mitali sees this as significantly complicating the issue, for one cannot target any particular gender, "race," ethnicity, etc. in order to combat continued discrimination. Realizing the complexity of the perpetrators' identities (as well as the victims') could be the first step in reducing hate crime.

An additional element of the interview I found especially intriguing was the way in which Mitali conceptualized and talked about hate crime. Firstly, upon reflecting upon the most recent case of hate she encountered, she said she felt as though she were "back in high school." Many people, it seems, are all too comfortable assuming that discrimination was the bane of decades past, but that it no longer happens, that hate crime occurring now, in

the year 2006, is inconceivable. I believe that Mitali's reference supports this idea, saying that prejudice's day was in the past. Further, she seemed to illuminate what she considers to be the immaturity of hate, not condoning its presence in lower education, but acknowledging it nonetheless. That hate crimes continue to occur outside of high school, outside the realm of adolescence, seems wholly unacceptable to her. Discrimination, it appears, equates to youthful immaturity and naiveté, whereas lack of discrimination equates to maturity and experience. Secondly, I found Mitali's use of the word "can't" to have a double meaning I had not previously considered. After asking her why she felt that hate crime continues, she said that she feels there exists an underlying social prejudice/mentality in which some people believe that certain individuals just cannot do or partake in certain activities. Upon asking her what she meant by "can't," Mitali told me that the word has two elements, the physical and the social. When she was younger, Mitali felt that the prejudice (especially that which targeted her physical disability) referred to her physical ability to do something or not. However, as Mitali aged and considered discrimination targeted at the non-physically disabled, she told me that she began to conceptualize "can't" from a more social perspective. "Can't" does not refer to physical inabilities, she said, but to one's social inaccessibility, that one is not socially "allowed" to do something. And it is that social component that is most difficult to manage – physical inabilities a person can overcome, but social inaccessibility is drastically more difficult, and many people quit or do not "bother" trying.

Finally, after asking her about potential solutions, I was surprised at the answer I received. I asked Mitali about how she might solve the problem and she gave a quick laugh and said "I honestly don't know." She had a "textbook answer," including more and better education (especially in the younger grades), increased awareness, and higher standards of sensitivity training. But, then she almost defeatedly repeated her "I don't know," asking me to tell her the answer when I find out. I sensed an element of hopelessness in her answer, that regardless of our efforts thus far, hate crime still occurs, and that she, herself, is tired of fighting.

DISCUSS

Discuss your inquiry, taking care to separate speculation from fact or data

"You think all is well, and then you get some jackass making some comments or something. And you're like, 'What? Are we really? I thought this was 2006,'" says Mark, a gay student. Such statements were repeated again and again upon interviewing individuals about their experiences with hate and discrimination. It is almost the year 2007. How long has it been since the abolition of slavery? Since suffrage? Since the Civil Rights Movement? Since the Feminist Movement? Since the LGBT Movement? Years. Decades. Yet, people are continually angered and surprised when something as outlandishly "outdated" as racial, sexual, gendered, religious, etc. prejudice persists, again realizing itself in new (and not-so-new) ways. In such an era of modernity in which "progress" is the ultimate goal, why does this continue, particularly at a large, public university like the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)? The answer to many (especially upon first hearing it) is disappointing and seemingly simplistic; however, in actuality, it is much more complex and profound. What, then, is this outwardly one-dimensional cause? Ignorance. Lack of accurate exposure.

This general, university-wide ignorance has many layers, one of which is white privilege. It is true that the University of Illinois is a very diverse campus; however, much like during the era of *Brown v. Board of Education*, “desegregation” is not equivalent to “integration.” “Diversity” has become a misleading term, utilized by administrators to boast their particular institution; but a diverse student body does not imply that those same individuals interact in any real way outside of a classroom environment. That is where white privilege comes into play: according to a university administrator who works with acts of intolerance, anyone who is not a white male must constantly evaluate his/her relation/interaction by the standards given by white men in order to navigate today’s society. That personal evaluation, though, is not “required” of the white male. This is not to say that white men do not interact with those unlike themselves, but they are not obligated to understand their position in relation to anyone else’s. That manifestation of white privilege occurs here on campus; the white students are not compelled to more than superficially interact with those non-white, non-Christian, non-heterosexual, non-physically able-bodied persons. The result is continued ignorance in the face of significant diversity.

A second layer of a broad university ignorance and lack of accurate exposure is that there exists an atmosphere of condoned, institutionalized racist misrepresentation, namely, the administration’s continued support of the use of Chief Illiniwek as the university’s mascot. To many students of color and victims of acts of intolerance, the Chief is a commonly utilized archetype. “It’s just like the Chief,” was a frequent complaint heard at the forums which met to respond to the racist “Tacos and Tequila” exchange that occurred this October. The university has created an atmosphere in which the students, whether consciously or not, comprehend and internalize the institutional backing of blatantly racist distortion, especially in its unrelenting dismissal of the Native American’s pleas to retire the Chief as the school’s mascot. Furthermore, in the face of student perpetrators of acts of intolerance, a reprimand by the university seems hypocritical. The very institution that condones sustained use of Chief Illiniwek condemns the members of the Delta Delta Delta sorority and the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity for depicting the Mexican community in a racist fashion.

A third layer of perpetuated campus ignorance is the inaccurate exposure an individual receives in terms of cultural programming. At this university, there exist numerous cultural and ethnic organizations, many of which hold events for the general public. However, the vast majority of these events, sometimes the only exposure an outsider might have to that other culture, revolve around the sensual, around eating and dancing. Many of the minority peoples on campus sensualize their own ethnicities through continually holding such events, without diversifying their programming. Thus, in attempting to expose the unexposed to their unique cultures, these organizations risk the possibility (or dare I say probability?) of actually reinforcing inaccurate and offensive notions and prejudices.

Unfortunately, ignorance is not the sole cause of chronic acts of intolerance. Another main basis is that student and university responses to such acts of intolerance actually

allow for their persistence. Firstly, there exists a “clean up” or “deal with” mentality by the university administration. Many incidents are just “noted, wiped up, and moved on.” The administrator who made the previous claim attributes continued acts of intolerance to be the fault of desensitization of the student body, and while that may be partially true/valid, I fail to understand how just “wiping up” or making like new (instead of bringing to direct attention) a racist act in any way proactively prevents these acts’ reoccurrence.

Also, many perpetrators of such acts are not held wholly responsible for their actions; in fact, oftentimes, the victims are blamed. Peter, a white student from rural Illinois, almost holds a “blame the victim” mentality, claiming that there is nothing that he can do to improve the status of today’s discrimination and hate, that it is the responsibility of the victims of such sentiment. Acts of intolerance on campus are not seen for what they truly are; alternatively, instead of chastising the perpetrators of such actions, the victims are often told to “loosen up” to not take a “joke” so seriously, etc. Those who take offense to such acts are often labeled with the dreaded “PC” or “Politically Correct,” a term that has so been skewed from its original intent that once tagged as such, the victim has little recourse to enact positive change.

An additional example of perpetrators not being held responsible is the letter that the university’s chancellor, Richard Herman, mass e-mailed “in response to” (I put the previous phrase in quotation marks because it could be argued that the e-mail was actually in response to the protest against the exchange that occurred some three weeks after the initial incident; the e-mail was sent the same day as the rally) the “Tacos and Tequila” exchange. The e-mail’s supposed intentions were to affirm that such acts of intolerance would not be tolerated, yet simultaneously, Chancellor Herman almost excuses the racist behavior (though he never actually calls the event racist). He does so in calling the actions “juvenile” and concluding the letter stating that “young people are always works in progress.” The Chancellor’s response (or lack thereof) only paves the way for continued acts of intolerance in skirting around the issue in not calling the exchange racist, in almost pardoning those individuals’ actions. His “response” only tells others that further acts of intolerance will also be absolved.

A final way in which (in this case student) responses actually perpetuate ignorance repeats my previous discussion about the sensualization of ethnicity. There is little student programming that is open to all students that portrays a minority culture in a non-sexual, non-sensual way. This is not to say that there do not exist political, social, religious, etc. cultural organizations; but frequently the attendees are members of like schema, not outsiders. In speaking of events in which the objective is to expose members of non-like groups to a particular culture, the emphasis is on food and dance, on exoticizing one’s ethnicity, in making a minority culture “hip” and “cool” and “safe.” If that remains the only manner in which the students proactively attempt to expose outside/other individuals to that culture, the ignorant will remain misinformed.

These tendencies/claims I have (tentatively) identified, yet I remain hesitant to offer any concrete arguments. Thus far, I have completed four one-on-one interviews, one with a

graduate student who self-identifies as a wheelchair-bound female of Indian descent; one with an undergraduate who self-identifies as a middle-class, white male from rural Illinois; one with an undergraduate who self-identifies as a middle-class, white, gay male; and one with a university administrator who works with acts of intolerance. Also, I have attended three forums (two at La Casa Cultural Latina and one at the African American Cultural Center) in response to the “Tacos and Tequila” exchange. However, that is not enough.

Additionally, I plan to distribute a questionnaire and mapping survey. I hope to better understand individual student responses when faced with acts of intolerance, discrimination, and hate crime; I want to glean on a larger scale the actions/behavior of the victims of such acts, such as who they do or do not tell about such occurrences, where they tend to localize themselves, etc. I have some hypotheses concerning student responses and how they are related to the continuation of acts of intolerance, but before I develop a thesis or make any solid claims, I would like to determine whether my inclinations have merit. Furthermore, I plan to conduct a forum, this time focusing on solutions. I wish to meet together with undergraduates, graduate students, and administrators (especially those involved in campus housing) to garner radical, untraditional, untried solutions to the problem of lack campus acceptance. Finally, I need to perform further research of secondary sources, of articles and other texts. I must better understand the concepts of racism, white privilege, hate crime, etc. before making any further claims. Also, I plan to investigate the untraditional methods employed by other universities to determine if similar solutions could be implemented at the University of Illinois.

I gleaned quite a bit of information from just that one interview (though, because it was in fact just one interview, I have to be careful to avoid making any hasty generalizations). However, regardless of the fact that the interview was informative, I personally felt extremely uncomfortable and unnatural. I was so incredibly worried about leading my subject and somehow having her infer “what I wanted to hear” from my actions. On the one hand I wanted to make the interview more like a conversation, but on the other hand I did not want anything I said or any gesture or expression I made to influence/“taint” the interview, so I limited my contributions extensively. This was very difficult for me to do because I normally partake substantially in discussions and am quite animated both facially and with my gestures. Further, Mitali is a friend of mine; she knows my communicative characteristics, so in my attempting to not influence her by limiting my contribution to the conversation, I potentially could have influenced her in a different way; she might not have behaved “naturally” if I were not behaving naturally myself. How does one navigate such a dilemma? How does one naturally contribute to an interview without leading the subject?

Further, I also feel uncomfortable analyzing the interview afterwards, determining “results,” conceptualizing, in a sense, my subject’s own conceptualizations. It worries me to write what another person supposedly felt or thought or believed. For this very assignment, for example, I have to speak for Mitali, but the last thing I want to do is “put words in her mouth” or misrepresent her in any way.

REFLECT

Link

Connect with other resources and materials.

See "Works Cited" of the Research Proposal posted on the "Other" section.

Implications

Could your findings have broader implications beyond this inquiry?

To be honest, I find a separate "Implications" page difficult to distinguish in my topic, mainly because one of my primary topics of research is the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of the University administration in terms of responding to campus acts of intolerance. I feel that I have already commented upon some of the policy implications of my investigation, especially in the "Discussion" and "Other" sections of the inquiry page. However, here I will reiterate what I have found, tailoring particularly to its larger implications.

Firstly, there exists no "hard" policy for responding to acts of intolerance. As confirmed by the administrator I interviewed who works directly with victims and perpetrators (when known) of acts of intolerance, I learned that there is no institutional memory, no more than anecdotal accounts, of how the University "dealt with" discriminatory incidents in the past. Further, the manner in which the University responds to such acts is left up to this particular administrator. She is utilizing her own system, creating her own solutions, for there is no documentation (that either of us are aware of) that explicitly designates how the administration is to resolve a certain prejudiced occurrence. The implications of such a methodology, especially of failing to record the actions the University historically took in response to acts of intolerance, are that the current administrator has very little data concerning trends/tendencies of campus discrimination; thus, her ability to discover valid solutions is marginalized and challenged by her lack of data.

Furthermore, the current administration seems to have a "Deal With" or "Clean Up" attitude when it comes to resolving acts of intolerance. According to this same administrator, most incidents are just "noted, wiped up, and moved on," leaving any subsequent action to the student body, the residence hall where an occurrence may have taken place, etc. Additionally, the administrator notes a degree of desensitizing by the student body, that the students are becoming more and more tolerant of discriminatory acts. Yet, I cannot help but surmise if that is a consequence of such an almost "hands off" approach to responding to acts of intolerance. Perhaps such an approach actually prevents more students from even knowing that something occurred; perhaps it is not so much desensitizing as it is unawareness.

Then, to change the focus from the University administration to the Board of Trustees, the continued presence of Chief Illiniwek as the mascot holds significant implications. Whether through vocally supporting the chief or through inaction (remember, "inaction" equates not to "neutrality," but to the act of not acting; inaction implies a lot), the Board of Trustees has created an institutionalized atmosphere of racist misrepresentation. As

supported by the forums I attended concerning discrimination on campus, the chief has become the archetype that many victims utilize to embody their experiences and encounters with acts of intolerance. "It's just like the chief," many will say. The victims view the chief as a racist mascot, which leads to the ensuing interpretation of its supports as equally racist, focusing primarily upon the Board of Trustees, who has the ability to retire the chief but has yet to do so. Such racist beliefs are then further solidified when University of Illinois Trustee, Thomas Lamont, for example, suggested that a Native American student who complained about the chief's presence, "find another school because 'the University of Illinois is not for everyone'" (Farnell 2004:49).

Those two issues, the continued presence of the chief as well as the manner in which the administration responds to acts of intolerance, are the primary policy-like components of my research (which I had identified thus far) that hold the most significant implications. Both must be addressed; both must be remedied.

OTHER

A space for other notes, findings, comments, etc.

Research Proposal:

What are the conceptualizations of and responses to campus discrimination, acts of intolerance, hate crime, and white privilege at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)? Why does such prejudice continue? And, how effective are the responses to such behavior and actions? The answers are complex and intricate; however, my aim is to articulate what many may not want to hear: the seemingly simplistic sources of campus discrimination and the ineffectiveness of both the administration and students' reactions to prejudice. My exploratory/preliminary research suggests the following hypotheses:

While at times discrimination is the result of racism/sexism/etc., perhaps a more common cause is a lifetime of ignorance and lack of accurate exposure to "other" cultures, which persists upon entering the University. Firstly, administrative responses (or lack thereof) do little to prevent continued ignorance, which in turn leads to continued acts of intolerance. For instance, there exists an institutionalized atmosphere of racist misrepresentation, namely the Board of Trustees' sustained support of Chief Illiniwek as the University's mascot. Again and again, during both the forums I attended and the interviews I conducted, I heard individuals utter, "It's just like the chief," when describing their personal experiences with discrimination on campus. The chief has become the archetype, embodying the entire experience of encountering an intolerant act in a single word. Forum attendees make clear that victims of prejudice recognize the chief as a racist symbol and the administration's support of the mascot as therefore racist as well, promoting a campus atmosphere where racist misrepresentation is excusable. The breadth of this institutionalized racism extends so profoundly that University of Illinois Trustee, Thomas Lamont, suggested that a Native American student, who complained about the chief's presence, "find another school because 'the University of Illinois is not for everyone'" (Farnell 2004:49).

Also, the administration seems to assert a “Clean Up” or “Deal With” mentality. According to a University administrator I interviewed who works directly with victims and perpetrators (when known) of acts of intolerance, many incidents are just “noted, wiped up, and moved on.” Making anything more of the occurrence is left up to the students, a particular residence hall, etc. Additionally, the perpetrators (again, when known) are not held publicly responsible for their actions. A perfect example is Chancellor Richard Herman’s letter he mass e-mailed in response to “Tacos and Tequila,” a racist exchange that occurred between a University sorority and fraternity (Pierce 2006:1). In the letter, never does he actually call the party “racist,” and he excuses the perpetrators in referencing their youthfulness, calling them “juvenile” and concluding the letter with “Young people are always works in progress” (Herman 2006).

However, the students’ actions also promote continued campus ignorance. First, although many cultural, student-run organizations put on extensive programming/events whose purpose is to expose “outsiders” to their cultures, frequently they only reinforce one’s inaccurate preconceived notions. As alluded to in multiple forums and an interview, there exists a certain sensualization/exoticizing of ethnicity: the programming often only exposes the outsider to food and dance, without providing him/her any new perspectives. Also, as supported by the questionnaire I distributed, commonly a discriminated individual will not tell anybody from the University about their experience, but confines the dialogue only to friends and family. This reduces the administration’s ability to know if an incident took place and its effectiveness to prevent its reoccurrence.

So, why is such information and its further development worth knowing? To start with, the campus is in fact quite hostile against those who do not fit the male, White, middle-class crowd. But, only the victims know just how hostile this University can be, and as a result, ignorance persists, explosively showing its ugly face during such racist events as the aforementioned “Tacos and Tequila” exchange. The University, the student body and administration alike, must understand the extent of campus discrimination. Further, and more importantly, only in discovering the true roots of the problems can the best solutions be pursued.

But, one must additionally ask another question: How will it be known that the conclusions drawn are valid? First of all, my conclusions are based upon a valid methodology, which I will explain later. Yet, what I will comment upon now is that the basis of the conclusions were independently repeated under multiple conditions and situations, frequently without answering a direct question on a given topic. Oftentimes, the subjects rearticulated what others had already mentioned just in talking freely about their experiences with prejudice on campus.

To continue, in terms of the context of this project compared to others, mine exists both in conjunction with recent/simultaneous research as well as apart. There are multiple other EOTU inquiries whose objective is to explain the “What.” Some reoccurring themes seem to be campus self-segregation and the racial categorization of residence hall placement. More specifically related projects include one which discusses the “purpose” of the chief, supporting my previous claims in stating that “team mascots are a mask for

racism” (Akintunde 2004). Yet another project espouses my statement that early, unresolved ignorance continues into adulthood, where it causes even more significant problems (Rhue 2003). Thus, while my project shares the objectives of the aforementioned projects in providing insight to the current state of the University, mine also aims to go a step further, for it is the “Why” that remains unanswered; it is the “Why” I strive to develop.

The contextualization of the project, though, should not be limited to parallel research, but should also be contextualized among events, incidents. The University of Illinois has a history (both long- and short-term) of discrimination. For example, in 1996, several males yelled ethnic slurs and insults at an Indian woman (which subsequently lead to the founding of TEAM, a student-run University organization) (TEAM 2006). Years later, in the Spring of 2006, a sorority and fraternity held a racist party entitled “Big-Booty Hos and Ghetto Bros,” during which the participants offensively dressed as urban, African-American “thugs” (Simmons 2006:1). Then, just a couple months ago on October 5, 2006, members of the Delta Delta Delta sorority and Zeta Beta Tau fraternity held an exchange dubbed “Tacos and Tequila,” at which individuals followed the trend of the “ghetto-themed” party in representing themselves in a manner extremely insulting to the Mexican community (Pierce 2006:1). Robert Jensen of the University of Texas explains that such “Brown-“ or “ghetto-themed” parties are not unique to this campus, though, for similar events have occurred throughout the country, at the University of Texas college of law in 2006, at the University of Chicago in 2005, at Cornell University in 2004, and Texas A & M in 2003 (Jensen 2006:1).

So, what is the payoff? Why support a project such as this? Solutions! The events just referenced are indications of a significant problem of University ignorance and prejudice, as well as signals that such issues are not disappearing on their own or through the currently utilized preventative methods. The payoff will be a better understanding of the topics in question, which will allow for the pursuit of new, untried, even radical and unconventional solutions.

That said, my methodology must be discussed, the techniques used for preliminary/exploratory research as well as my plan for subsequent investigation. As already revealed, I conducted participant observation at a number of forums concerning the “Tacos and Tequila” event and the general University climate. Emerson supports such a methodology, stating that it can “produce a more detailed, closer-to-the-moment record of . . . life” (1995:18). He continues, citing the advantage of participant observation under certain contexts, saying it is preferable to “observe and record naturally occurring talk and interaction” when attempting to comprehend one’s definition of a term (in this case, “discrimination,” “civility,” “Chief Illiniwek,” etc.), instead of asking a person directly during an interview (Emerson 1995:140).

On top of attending said forums, I also performed textual analysis, primarily of newspaper articles and letters written in response to the “Tacos and Tequila” exchange and general racistly-themed parties. In Chancellor Herman’s letter, for example, I examined what Fairclough calls “prepositional assumptions,” “assumptions about what is

or can be or will be the case,” as well as “value assumptions,” “assumptions about what is good or desirable” (2003:55). That way, I was able to understand how the Chancellor publicly categorized the exchange and what he deems important concerning the University atmosphere.

Thirdly, I “proctored” a questionnaire in order to determine some general campus trends regarding student responses to discrimination, specifically who they told (and their identity compared to that of the victim), who they did not tell (again, and their identity compared to that of the victim), and if they told anybody (faculty or staff) from the University. Such a methodology is viewed as more and more valid and applicable in the field of anthropology, especially because people actually spend “a lot of time answering questions” and answer “with great deliberation” (Bernard 1995:241-242).

Finally, the bulk of my exploratory research comprised of conducting one on one interviews. I attempted to combine two theories/philosophies concerning my interviewing approach (the approach I chose depended on the question I wanted answered). On the one hand, I followed Weiss’ recommendations: I asked direct questions, expecting a direct, specific answer with as much detail as I could unearth (1994:83-115). But, on the other hand, I also adhered to Anderson’s opinions: I solicited more general questions, allowing the subject to talk freely and say what s/he wanted to say, listening while attending more to the narrator than my own agenda (1991:12). In merging the two attitudes, I felt I was able to understand how a person’s beliefs may or may not have corresponded with their behavior, as well as better comprehend some of the general campus tendencies concerning discrimination.

The individuals with whom I spoke are all quite different in terms of their backgrounds. They include a wheel-chair bound female of Indian descent; a White, middle-class male from rural Illinois; a White, middle-class, gay male; as well as a University administrator who works directly with the victims and perpetrators (when known) of acts of intolerance. A focus that was particularly revealing was listening to the recorded interviews while considering “like-schemas,” utilizing Strauss’ “keyword analysis” to understand how one’s discourse with me altered due to their own cultural assumptions (2005:205). Further, one might question my ability to describe these individuals’ experiences, for they all have encountered very unique and different experiences than I. However, as Twine states, there is no factual evidence to suggest that a person of one schema cannot accurately describe the experience of a person of an “outside” or different schema (2000:9). Thus, the diverse nature of my subject pool alone does not affect the overall validity of my project.

My proposed methodology for future research, then, is not unlike my preliminary investigations. First and foremost, I plan to conduct more interviews (utilizing similar approaches), expanding the diversity of my subjects even further. In doing so, I hope to ascertain the most valid, general tendencies/commonalities concerning a victim’s experience with discrimination on this campus. Based upon the results of the questionnaire, I deem it appropriate and necessary to interview a member from the Native American community, the Muslim-Arab community, and the African-American

community, on top of conversing with a White individual with none of these “markers.” Also, additional textual analysis of newspaper articles (specifically from the University’s newspaper, the Daily Illini,) would compliment the interviews in that it would provide further examples of prejudice at the University.

Secondly, I will carry out a focus group. This is a valid and tried methodology, for it produces “data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. . . . [Furthermore], in multimethod uses, focus groups typically add to the data that are gathered through other qualitative methods” (Morgan 1988:2-3). The purpose behind the focus group would be to determine solutions. It is my experience that within the context of an interview, the subject often has difficulty producing any solutions at all – they commonly feel “on the spot” – yet the interaction a focus group would bring might allow for the increased sharing and decomposing of ideas.

Lastly, used in conjunction with interviews, I will complete an extended micromapping survey to determine where certain individuals and groups habitually reside (Mehl 2002:17). I will provide the participant a map of campus and ask him/her to identify five “significant” locales (where “significant” refers either to places the individual regularly frequents and/or considers important). I hypothesize is that the University of Illinois is desegregated (“diverse”) but not integrated. But, a common assumption/question is: How could the answer/cause of campus discrimination be ignorance when the student body seems so diverse? Well, it is my conjecture, like that of multiple other EOTU inquiries, that the student body segregates itself. A mapping survey might help to verify (or disprove) such a statement.

Yet, particularly due to the nature of the questions my project esteems to answer and the methodology I utilize to yield conclusions, one must not forget that such a project involves human subjects research. A human subject is defined as “a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or obtains individually identifiable, private information” (Human Subjects 2006). And, throughout the exploratory investigation and during the entirety of subsequent research, I will remain sensitive to the needs and feelings of my subjects, always emphasizing the voluntary quality of the study, as well as his/her confidentiality. Given the sensitive nature of the investigation, I will be particularly diligent to guarantee that the research does not “harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people with whom [I] work, conduct research, or perform other professional activities” (AAA 2006). Lastly, an IRB form will always be completed prior to commencing any interactional research.

To conclude, what are my project’s objectives, and what is at stake? As mentioned throughout the proposal, I ultimately aim to discover valid, real, workable solutions to better the University of Illinois’ atmosphere, one’s acceptance, treatment, and encounters with discrimination. Yes, the bulk of the research is to determine the “Why,” to understand how the administration and student body’s responses to acts of intolerance are ineffective in its prevention. But, why stop there? Why research a topic without utilizing the information gathered to improve the situation? Those investigations, those solutions, I

plan to convert into an honors senior thesis, to really expand the project into something of greater significance and worth, something that one day I might be able to publish. But, the thesis will not end there. Frequently, an individual feels as though conducting research and writing a report is actually being proactive in solving problems. Yet, a thesis is just a packet of papers with a bunch of words on it until somebody actively articulates, verbalizes that “bunch of words.” I plan to make noise, to vocalize my results to all who will listen: the Student Senate, the same administrator who I interviewed, the cultural houses, the Chancellor, the Board of Trustees. I should not be the only one privy to the conclusions of the project.

In the Spring semester of 2006, the University’s President, Joseph B. White, issued the “Strategic Plan for the Urbana-Champaign Campus,” which outlines the groundwork of the development of the University through 2011; some of the plan’s objectives include “building relationships with overseas institutions . . . and enhancing the diversity of the student body by making the University more accessible to foreign students” (Roberts 2006:1). Such a proposal would certainly increase what is already a diverse campus. However, if the current trend of ignorance continues, that added diversity could potentially considerably increase campus incidents of intolerance. What is at stake is the college experience of thousands of minority and international students today, tomorrow, and in years to come.

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