

“Tacos and Tequila” and Racial Insensitivity in the Greek System

Carole Heisel

EXPLORE

Question

What questions is your inquiry contingent upon?

Possible change to my project (as written in an e-mail to Professor Moodie)

Professor Moodie,

After trying to get some sources for my project and realizing how few there are and unfortunately that they are very busy, I have decided to rethink it and wanted to run some things by you first. I think I would like to expand my project to be more focused on Stereotypes on the U of I campus and perhaps within the Greek System. This, of course, was sparked by the recent issue concerning the "Tacos and Tequilla" themed Greek event. I am a member of the Greek system and have actually found myself very disgusted with some of the themes (namely "CEOs and Coporate Hoes" and "Golf Pros and Tennis Hoes"...can you believe that!). Of course, those have more to do with gender than race, but we've also had "Cowboys and Indians" themed events. I feel this opens up more sources and possibilities for me, but I want to know what you think about this as a topic. Is it too typical of a topic? Do you think if I do this project I will be representing Greeks as absolutely terrible, because that is not my goal? I know it is kind of late in the game to be changing my topic, but I don't know if I could do a sufficient job focusing solely on the AIS program and culture surrounding it (especially since the feedback I have already received from it is focused on the Chief and I do not want to deal with that). I would really appreciate any questions, comments, and concerns you may have. In the meantime, I am going to post this exact e-mail onto my ILabs. Thanks.

Carole Heisel

Inquiry #1

<http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/programs/AmericanIndianStudiesConsortium/archive/PressRelease/aispressrelease.pdf#search=%22american%20indians%22>

On our campus there is continuous focus on American Indians because of the Chief issue. There is truly an American Indian presence at the University of Illinois. Unfortunately, however, I believe that the role of American Indians on campus is oversimplified and predetermined by the Chief issue. This idea caused me to wonder what the roles of American Indians on this campus are BEYOND the Chief issue.

During the Fall 2005 semester, I took an American Indian Studies course. I didn't realize it at the time, but the American Indian Studies program at the University of Illinois is relatively new. While browsing through some documents on The University of Illinois's website regarding American Indians, I came across a news release from October 3, 2001. The headline of the document is, "PARTNERS COLLABORATE TO CREATE AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES CONSORTIUM." By joining with the Newberry Library, the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), made up of all Big Ten schools and the University of Chicago, began to make American Indian Studies a part of education at these universities. It is very interesting that the Newberry Library helped to initiate the new program. There is some explanation of this in the document. "James Grossman, Vice President for Research and Education at the Newberry, emphasized the Library's mission to promote the use of its collections. 'This collaboration draws on and expands the Newberry's role as a meeting ground for a diverse community of researchers

in Indian history,' said Grossman." However, by making itself a "ground for diverse community," does the Newberry Library also sets itself up as a ground for political discussion in regards to American Indians? Will the CIC also be initiating political discussion through their involvement in this program? This would seem a natural effect from a program that tackles such a historically political issue as American Indians.

One of the most interesting elements of this document is the identification of the people sought out to train for the development of this program. The document states that "the new CIC American Indian Studies Consortium will facilitate the development and training of graduate students in anthropology, history, literature, education and other fields whose academic research focuses on the cultures and experiences of American Indians." Of course, it is right that people with an interest in the field should be the ones to pioneer the new program, but what is the impact of having these people be graduate students? Is this fact simply because there are not established professors with the knowledge of American Indians? Another interesting fact is the great field diversity that is being brought into this program. These humanitarian fields cover a wide variety of subjects, which brings to mind another question. What exactly are the plans and goals for this program? In other words, what exactly does the American Indian Studies program intend on teaching and why?

Another very important thing to note is that this document is from 2001, which means this program has been in the process of development for at least five years. Therefore, the American Indian Studies program should be established by now. However, another document, the University of Illinois's Fall 2006 Course Catalog (<http://courses.uiuc.edu/cis/catalog/urbana/2006/Fall/AIS/index.html>), lists only eleven courses as part of the American Indian Studies program. There are three 100 level courses, four 200 level courses, no 300 level courses, three 400 level courses, and one 500 level courses. Is this even a complete program that undergraduate students could choose to major in? Is this a complete program for graduate students? If so, who majors in American Indian Studies and why did they choose this field? What are their goals as American Studies majors? If not, when will it be complete? Will it be complete ever? When will the program be expanded to offer more classes that possibly may interest a greater number of students, even as general education requirements? How were the few classes that are offered developed? How were the topics for these classes chosen? Who takes these courses? Why do they take these courses?

Obviously, there are very many questions that can be asked about the American Indian Studies program at the University of Illinois. These questions are important to ask as part of the EOTU because, while they may not be large in actual population number on campus, their culture is clearly a part of our campus, whether desired or not. The new American Indian Studies program at the University of Illinois can offer insight into another aspect of culture that is not situated around a political issue.

Plan

How will you go about answering your inquiry?

11/5

I am in the process of organizing a focus group, one of the fieldwork techniques we discussed last week in class. I am planning on gathering a group of sorority girls and discussing the "Tacos and Tequila" party as well as other insensitivity issues that came up in my interview with R. I am also curious to see what other opinions and questions they can raise about insensitivity in the Greek system. At this point, I am unsure if it will be with girls from the same sorority or if I can get girls from multiple sororities to be represented. Mostly, this is a scheduling issue. Ideally, I would have a more

representative sample. Likewise, I would like to meet with fraternity members, but, as a woman, I am unsure if I would be able to conduct a telling focus group made up of all males on issues that may include gender insensitivity. Therefore, I would like to do a focus group containing member of both sororities and fraternities. In addition to the focus groups, I am planning on conducting more one on one interviews, attending any events regarding the insensitivities displayed in the Greek systems that I am able to, and collecting as much “literature” on the issues as I can.

10/23

I recently changed the topic of my project to be “Insensitivity in the Greek System.” This topic is an expansion of my search of American Indian Culture because, in e-mail correspondence with a professor in the AIS program, the topic of the “Tacos and Tequila” controversy was brought up. Like the Hispanics on campus, the American Indian culture also feels they are stereotyped and improperly used by whites on campus. Being a member of a sorority myself, I feel that this is an important issue to research not only because recognition of this insensitivity needs to occur and changes need to be made, but also to help bring to light harmful stereotypes of sororities that are just a wrong as those placed against those of varying cultures and genders.

In order to begin my research, I informally spoke with several girls in sororities and did a formal interview. I have been collecting articles from the Daily Illini and am going to try to contact and interview people who are mentioned in the DI. Also, I want to contact regular Greeks, Greek leadership at the chapter and campus levels, and University Greek representatives. I am also considering contacting students and University personel who are not associated with the Greek System.

Who I Might Talk To

I am compiling a list of names that may be useful in exploring the American Indian role on campus. As of now, those that I have gathered consist mainly of professors in the American Indian Studies program. There are eight faculty members in the AIS program. I have already contacted one about being a source for my project and after I meet with her (pending her agreement to be a source) I will decide exactly whom else I should contact. I am also planning on looking through Registered Student Organizations to see if there are any that relate to my topic. Hopefully, I will be able to contact the officers of such organizations.

What Information I Might Gather

Am I actually very unsure about the direction this project is going to go. I know that I do not want my topic of the role of American Indians on campus to center around the Chief debate. I feel this topic is a bit over done, however I am a little concerned about how much of a role American Indians have on campus outside of this debate. Essentially, that is what I am trying to figure out. Perhaps the question should be, what is the role of American Indians on campus outside of the Chief debate? I am planning on gathering information about the numbers of natives on campus, what activities and clubs exist in relation to them, what is the Native House, what courses are offered in the AIS program, and what are the goals of each organization related to American Indians.

What Texts Might Help

The most obvious text that will help right now is the AIS website (<http://www.nah.uiuc.edu/#>). As I talk to more people about the subject, I will inquire about helpful texts.

What Contexts Are Relevant

Since the focus of this study stems from the AIS program itself, I would like to observe the actual programs role from within an AIS classroom setting. What are the classes about? What are the classes teaching? Who are the classes teaching? The ultimate goal of these questions is to answer, what is the impact of the classes? Also, I would like to observe within the Native House. Since this is a cultural house, I would expect to find some insight to the American Indian culture on campus.

OBSERVE

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

11/20 Inquiry #6

My questionnaire did not turn out as successful as I had hoped it would. I passes out about 20 questionnaires and only had 4 returned and they were all from my friends. I think the biggest part of this was that it was not a simple, easy survey where the answers can just be circled. However, my objective was to get people to think and those that answered my questionnaire did offer some good information. The questions were as follows:

1. As a member of a sorority, do you feel that there are racially insensitive issues in your chapter. Circle YES or NO

Explain:

ANSWERS I RECEIVED: 4 yeses, each referred to the TriDelts and the "Cowboys and Indians" theme we had

2. Have you participated in any events that can be perceived as racially insensitive? YES NO

Explain the event:

ANSWERS I RECEIVED: 2 attended the "Cowboys and Indians" exchange

3. As a member of a sorority, do you feel that there are gender insensitive issues in your chapter? YES NO

Explain:

ANSWERS I RECEIVED: 1 yes, 3 no's - "CEO's and Corporate Hoes"

4. Have you participated in any events that can be perceived as gender insensitive? YES NO

Explain:

ANSWERS I RECEIVED: "I went to the 'CEOs and Coporate Hoes' party, but I tried not to dress too slutty"

5. What actions are being taken to elliminate insensitivity in your chapter?

ANSWERS I RECEIVED: We try to think about the themes of our parties and if they're offensive, we don't put pictures from past events that were offensive online, we try to think of themes that are fun and not offensive

6. Do you feel that your actions within the chapter support or oppose insensitivity?

ANSWERS I RECEIVED: Person 1.(from the one who answered yes to the gender insensitivity) Sometimes support- even though using the word "hoes" in a theme is offensive, I still went to the exchange, but I try not to be too bad about it

Person 2. Oppose -we are trying really hard as a chapter to think about whether we're being offensive or not now

Person 3. I don't know

Person 4. Oppose: we try not to do themes like "Ghetto" anymore so we're definitely trying to not be offensive anymore

Reflection on Answers I received: I thought the last question was extremely interesting in that two people answered a question about a person role by referring to the actions of the chapter as a whole. However, because I received only 4 answers and all of them were from the same sorority chapter, I don't think this questionnaire revealed much. It could be

very useful in the future, especially if I can get more people to respond and then use it not necessarily to draw conclusions, but to base questions in a focus group off of.

11/5

Most recently my fieldwork has been centered around the collection of newspaper articles and follow ups on those. At this point, it has actually been difficult to even develop the approach of my project simply because there is so much information being thrown out there. However, this has made my project very interesting. I've been able to discuss the issue with just about anyone on campus and have found a wide variety of opinions. These opinions range from people thinking the issue is done and over with to people thinking nothing has been done about it. There are groups that have been trying to keep the issue going and in public view. Last week there was a protest that began on the quad, went to the ZBT and Tri Delt houses, and then to Swanlund Administration Building.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the protest long, but even this even sparked much debate. One of the most interesting things at the protest that cause an observer to write into the Daily Illini was a caricature with the words "Cowardly Caucasians" on it.

In addition to newspaper articles, I have been collecting e-mails about the issue. This is a more limited means of research for me because, while I have received many e-mails regarding the "Tacos and Tequila" issue, I cannot begin to assume that I have received them all. Due to my position in the University's community, I am not on many e-mailing lists that would allow me to receive e-mails from all aspects of the situation. However, I received some from friends that have forwarded them to me, e-mails from groups such as UGASA (some of which were forwards from other organizations I am not a part of), and the official University e-mails about the issue.

I have conducted interviews with a few more people. One of the most interesting comments came from a sorority's Campus Coordinating Director who stated her belief that the University deals with problems within the Greek system in an intelligent as well as responsible manner by allowing the sorority of fraternity in question to deal with their problems on their own. She feels that this allows the students to benefit more from the situation because, by establishing and enforcing their own punishment, the sorority and fraternity in question has to do more introspective thinking about their issue instead of just being told they did something wrong and told what their punishment is. Instead of becoming resentful of the University's punishment, there is opportunity for learning from the situation.

10/23

Inquiry #4

R is a junior and a member of the Delta Zeta sorority. I chose R not only because she is involved in the Greek system, but also because she is half Jewish, a culture that is continually stereotyped.

Me: How did you find out about the "Tequila and Tacos" issue?

R: My roommate asked me if I heard about it and I told him I didn't. Apparently he got an e-mail about it with an official statement from the chancellor. I read about the Tri Delts that got in trouble and how their social calendar was taken away by their nationals. Do you want me to tell you what I think about the Tri Delts, though?

Me: You can tell me anything you want?

R: (laughs) No, I won't. I just know that they got in a lot of trouble and I think it's a good thing. I didn't ready anything about ZBT getting in trouble though. I wonder if it's different for the sororities and the fraternities. I know ZBT was involved but I don't know if they got in trouble.

Me: What did you think about what happened?

R: I thought it was really bad, but I've had problems with exchanges for a while. There are the problems with girls having to dress a certain way and wear as little clothes as possible. I mean, even when we get e0mails about the exchanges we're told to look hot. We're told to do things and dress a certain way so the frats like us. Exchanges are supposed to be fun, but things get carried away. I know I sometimes get sucked into it too even though I know I should be more aware of it, but I hope I'm not as bad. But there is a lot of skin at our exchanges with short skirts, tight shirts with stomachs showing, and a lot of cleavage.

One time in class I was talking to a member of the house who was on Panhel exec and knew a lot of people in other frats and sororities. We were talking about the exchange from the night before that she didn't get to go to. She asked me how it went, and I told her it was a lot of fun, but there weren't a lot of guys there and they didn't really get into the theme, which was "Anything but Clothes." She asked if there were a lot of girls there and said that was a good thing because they have their pick of girls and can go home with a girl they like so we can have more exchanges with them in the future. J's a really nice girl, but I couldn't believe she said that!

It's really bad that this is what is expected from exchanges, but it's just something that happens because it's what we're supposed to do. I don't think this is just a problem at exchanges though. Last night there was a philanthropy event called, "Sig Eps Present" where girls were supposed to find a creative way to show off their letter. Instead, the girls dressed up slutty, walked down the runway, and struck a sexy pose. Basically, the guys just judged them based on what they looked like. There was a girl who was wearing basically nothing and a cardboard box with her letters written on it and a cowboy.

Me: What did your girl wear?

R: She was actually one of the tamest of them all, but she had on a DZ shirt with really short shorts and she held up a turtle. She was really cute. All the girls were and you could tell that the houses picked a really cute girl to represent them because that's what they want the frats to think of the house. The Theta girl was wearing a toga, heels, and had leaves around her. There was one girl from Phi Mu who was just wearing a dress and she looked out of place because she wasn't dressed slutty.

Me: What other parts were there to the competition?

R: There was a talent section. Our girls did some tumbling and dancing stuff. Most of the houses did dances, but the Phi Mu girl played classical piano and the AOPis girls were singing and snapping their fingers. They were good but they looked out of place and looked like dorks, but there really isn't any other option. You either do something sexy or you look like the dorks.

I know this really doesn't have to do with the "Tacos and Tequila" party though. I don't really think that it's just the sororities that do racist things though. It's a problem with the

campus as a whole. Actually, I kind of have a problem with Unofficial too when they say, "Drink 'til you're Irish." I guess it's different because the Irish Illini support it, but one time in my sociology class freshman year we were talking about the racist undertones of it and somebody said, "What if someone said, 'Play basketball until you're black.'" There were a lot of gasps in the classroom and people couldn't believe that he said that. Even the idea of Unofficial gives people the wrong impression about the Irish. I know I participate in it too because it's just a fun day, and maybe I shouldn't, but people just don't think about the racism behind it.

Me: What do you think allows these things that can be considered racist to continue?"

R: Well, of course what happens is based on stereotypes and I don't think there's no truth to them. Stereotypes are based on a truth that people see and then that spreads to include everyone. I guess people just don't understand the consequences of what happens when you stereotype the Irish as drinkers of Mexicans a people that get knocked up. I don't think the Tri Delts meant to be offensive though. They probably thought it was funny because of the stereotypes imbedded in their heads. It's just something that we need to learn from.

I definitely agree with Professor Moodie that my previous interview seemed like a performed interview. Ed is one of my friends and since I know most of this about him as well as some of the depth that you suggest looking into, it was difficult for my interest to be piqued to delve deeper. Also, this was not related to my topic, so there wasn't too much I was trying to get out of the interview other than why he was at the U of I. I do recognize the problems of the interview and have hopefully done better in my latest where my source spoke non-stop and I listened to the direction she went. Her interview was very informative.

Actually, my interview with R was very similar to the type that Quinn uses where it is a very one sided conversation I tried to make the few questions I asked as a way to clarify and issue or delve a little deeper into something that had been said. R did say a lot, which may be atypical, but she allowed me to gain more direction for my project. This direction came in the form of questions or even just opinions that I can use to compare and contrast to others.

Note: My interview does not relate to my topic.

Inquiry #2 "How did you get to the U of I?"

Ed is a senior in Electrical Engineering at the University of Illinois. He is Taiwanese and comes from Hudson, Ohio. The following is a short excerpt from the interview.

Me: How did you decide to go to U of I?

Ed: It's a really good engineering school and I couldn't go as far away as UC-Berkley.

Me: Did you want to go to Berkley?

Ed: A lot of my friends are from California, so I wanted to go to school with them.

Me: Did you apply to any schools in Ohio?

Ed: No, a lot of my friends from high school were going to OSU, Miami, and University of Ohio but I wanted to go somewhere different. U of I has a better engineering program too.

Me: How did you decide to be an engineer?

Ed: My dad is an electrical engineer and I just thought it would be something I liked to

do.

Me: Did your dad go to school here?

Ed: No he went to school in Taiwan and then went to grad school in Ohio.

Me: Has your family lived in Ohio ever since?

Ed: Yeah, my parents moved around cities a lot, but they never lived anywhere in the US outside of Ohio.

Me: Is it hard to be far away from home?

Ed: It's OK. I talk to my parents a lot and it's not too far of a drive if I want to go home. I have a lot of friends here and I always have things to do.

Me: So you keep yourself pretty busy then?

Ed: Yeah, I have a lot of school work to do and I get to plan social things for ECE people to do, like the barcrawl. It's a lot of fun!

Me: Do you go on barcrawls a lot?

Ed: We have one in the fall and one in the spring for all ECE majors. Next semester I get to plan two though, because there is a senior ECE barcrawl.

Me: Do you only go on ECE barcrawls?

Ed: Mostly. Sometime I'll go on another one if my friends are going, but I really like it when I get to plan them.

Me: What do you do to plan them?

Ed: I decide where we go at what times, order t-shirts and collect money for the t-shirts, send out e-mails and try to get a lot of people to go...stuff like that.

The remainder of the interview continued in much of the same manner. Ed and I discussed the things he does with his ECE classmates as well as his other friends outside of ECE. Then the conversation turned back to his friends in California and then a bit about those back in Ohio. It was very interesting the way conversation seemed to focus around friendships for Ed, despite the fact that the interview began with a question that focused on him. As far as my role as an interviewer, I feel like I may have gotten stuck on the question about being at U of I too much. I did learn a bit about Ed's family and friends, but I came back to school topics a lot. Perhaps this is not a bad thing as I learned a lot about Ed in relation to one topic.

DISCUSS

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

When I set out to research "Insensitivity in the Greek System," I intended to interview and research a wide variety of people from within the Greek System, those who feel "victimized" by the Greek System, as well as those from outside each of those communities in order to gain an analytical perspective from others. To a certain extent, I was able to obtain thoughts from all of those groups, but not through my originally intended method of interviews. Instead, the discussion was facilitated for me through a very important element of the University of Illinois; The Daily Illini.

On October 5, 2006, the Delta Delta Delta sorority and Zeta Beta Tau fraternity held a mixer party (known as an "exchange" in the Greek World) a with a "Tacos and Tequilla" theme. Twelve days later, on October 17, The Daily Illini ran the first of many articles related to the event. According to the article, some of the women and men that attended the exchange behaved and dressed in an inappropriate, racist manner. "One woman at the party made herself look pregnant" while "the men at the party wore sombreros ad ponchos and claimed to be illegal aliens or farmers" (DI 10/17)

The response to the event was overwhelming. Investigations were begun, punishments were made, and demands for more severe punishments were made. Harsh words were

spoken against the Greek community. Its members were quickly branded as white, middle-class, overprivileged, ignorant, and racist. Ironically, many members of the University community who were outraged by stereotypes placed on minorities by a few members of the Greek system, were quick to throw out their own set of stereotypes against the same group. Clearly, this is not a productive way to deal with any issues regarding insensitivities.

However, there were also many people that were able to recognize this event as something not representative of the whole Greek system, just as not all Mexicans wear sombreros and are illegal aliens. Articles were written and letters were published in The Daily Illini that deemed this one event a representation of a problem within the overall community at the University of Illinois. Other perceived racist events were pinpointed, such as the Chief debate and lack of racial diversity education. One very interesting aspect of this issue is the fact that many are quick to connect any sort of racist act on campus to the Chief issue, often as a direct result of allowing the Chief tradition to continue. This was evident in letters in The Daily Illini opinions section and at the protest held against the sorority and fraternity that held the event in which anti-Chief t-shirts could be seen throughout the crowd.

The Daily Illini carried discussions regarding the “Tacos and Tequila” party beginning October 17-November 2, culminating in an article stating that the Illinois Student Senate passed a resolution condemning racist behavior, which reviews racist events such as the exchange and helps to plan diversity education (DI 11/2). Members of the community responded positively to the resolution and, in effect, the discussion in The Daily Illini.

In addition to the discussion facilitated by The Daily Illini, e-mails also started circulating. There were many from student organizations planning protests or meetings to discuss the issue and there was a campus wide, mass e-mail from Chancellor Richard Herman as an apology and a condemnation of the “Tacos and Tequila” party. I received these e-mails through the UGASA student organization and forwarded from a friend of mine whose roommate is a member of P.A.V.E. Interestingly, I did not receive any e-mails through my sorority.

This was especially disturbing because, despite the fact that many organizations and minorities were developing protests and asking for changes, but they only invited people from within their own organizations or those that were similar to participate. It was members of the Greek system that offended the groups, but the groups missed the chance to involve the Greeks and educate them on eliminating racism on campus. Instead, protests were taken from the Quad, an appropriate place for people to be socially active, to the Delta Delta Delta and Zeta Beta Tau houses. Instead of educating, these people were attacked.

Again, despite the fact that stereotypes were being protested, stereotypes were exhibited by the protesters. First, it was done in protesting against the sorority and fraternity as a whole. Not all the members were involved in the racism, nor did all the members even attend the party. However, all were involved as their houses were surrounded by protesters. In addition to this, there was a bold and obviously racist caricature of a person with the heading “Cowardly Caucasians.” Interestingly, this caricature was not even of one of the Greeks who participated in the party, but of Caucasians as a whole. In fighting racism, racism was active. This event was one more indication of a racism problem on campus, but instead of being directed at minorities, it was directed at the majority.

In addition to the information fed to me by the media, I was able to conduct research within my own sorority through interviews with some of the members, through

statements made during meetings, and most importantly through observations. In attending exchanges and being shown photos from exchanges, I was able to identify a new type of insensitivity within the Greek system that is highly unlikely to create as much of an uproar as the “Tacos and Tequila” party. This is because the insensitivity is geared not towards a racial minority, but towards women. There have been exchanges with the themes such as “CEO’s and Corporate Hoes” and “Golf Pros and Tennis Hoes.” In these themes, there is clearly an identification as the male being a successful “CEO” or “Pro” while the women are given the role as “Hoes.”

Perhaps the reason there is no uproar regarding these exchanges is because women are given an active role in the stereotyping and objectification of their gender. There is a choice for women to participate in these events that call them “hoes” and when they do participate, they are saying that this is okay. But are they truly given the choice and are they truly okay with objectifying their gender? According to a sorority member that I interviewed, there is a recognition that dressing with a lot of cleavage and skin showing is not wanted, but it is done anyways because they men at the exchanges expect it of the women and if the woman does not dress a certain way, the men will not talk to them. Also, there is the pressure for sorority women to dress sexy in order to “make the frats like them” so that they want to have other events with that sorority in the future.

However, as a sorority member told me, it is not just sorority women that dress sexy in order to appeal to men. Women do it every day when they wear revealing clothing at the bars as well as on Halloween when the objective of most women is to wear the sexiest costume while men are simply expected to wear fun costumes.

Clearly, there are insensitivity problems within the Greek system that need to be addressed. The “Tacos and Tequila” event as well as other themed parties, such as “Cowboys and Indians” show that there are racial insensitivities that need to be eliminated, but that can only be done through education. The Illinois Student Senate resolution is one step towards this education, but the success of these programs is dependant on the unification of all groups. In addition to that, it needs to be recognized that insensitivity is not simply racial. There are many other types of insensitivities within the Greek system as well as the campus community as a whole, such gender issues. In order to be the accepting community that Chancellor Richard Herman would like the campus to be, all stereotypes need to be addressed as problematic.

OTHER

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

Paper Proposal 12/4

On October 17, the first article regarding the “Tacos and Tequila” Party appeared in the student newspaper, The Daily Illini. This event happened October 5, twelve days before the article ran, between the Delta Delta Delta sorority and Zeta Beta Tau fraternity. There, one woman made herself look pregnant and some of the men wore sombreros and ponchos and claimed to be illegal aliens or farmers. The event caused an uproar on campus and many people began to attack the Greek system, especially the involved organizations, as simply racist, but as Patty Garcia, the president of the United Greek Council, said in The Daily Illini, “People automatically think the Greeks have to deal with the problem and fix it, but it is a campus wide problem. By throwing all the responsibility on the Greeks, it’s minimizing the problem.” My project follows this case

and asks, “What is the role of the Greek system and Insensitivity on campus and how does it relate to, reflect, or even represent insensitivity on the University of Illinois campus as a whole?”

This question is especially important because the root of the insensitivities needs to be uncovered in order to find ways to alleviate racism and other insensitivities from occurring again from within a system that can have many positive qualities that are too often overshadowed by the negative stereotypes associated with the Greek systems. Also, because the Greek system is large at the University of Illinois, many students can be impacted by what occurs within it. Therefore, if insensitivities are being spread amongst the Greek system, then many people will be confronted with it. Likewise, if tolerance and diversity are being spread, the Greek system will be confronted with that. If the proper things are being spread amongst the Greek system, they have a larger chance of then being spread to the remainder of the University community.

The main research method for my project will be through participant observation. I am especially suited for this means of research because, not only am I a part of the University community as a whole, but I am also a member of the Greek system. This gives me insight to many of the terms, policies, and events that occur within the Greek system that are either unknown or not fully understood by “outsiders.” Also, this allows me to identify people of importance or knowledge that I can work with as sources.

Within the Greek system, I have interviewed members of sororities that are not in any leadership roles. One of my main sources, R, has been very useful in providing insight on why a sorority chapter may have insensitivities, why the women partake in them, how and if they challenge them, and how members respond to the leadership that spreads these insensitivities. From the three interviews I conducted with R, I was able to learn about a person’s reasoning for partaking in insensitivities, her thoughts about them, as well as uncover other insensitivities that are not about race, but gender. More interviews with standard members of sororities, as well as fraternities need to be conducted to get a broader idea of these questions. Also, leadership within the Greek system needs to be interviewed to find out why exactly insensitivities are tolerated and even supported. Is the leadership aware of their part in the spread of insensitivities? Also, if there is an awareness of insensitivities on the part of standard Greek members and those in leadership positions, what is being done on each level to alleviate those problems?

As a member of the University community, I have access to a large number of primary sources, specifically the student newspaper and e-mails. The collection of these sources have aided me immensely in my study. Articles on the “Tacos and Tequila” event appeared in papers October 17-November 11. This was nearly 3 weeks of discussion facilitated by The Daily Illini. The newspaper allowed me to hear opinions of people I may have never had the opportunity to encounter, including University employees, undergraduate students, graduate students, editorial cartoonists, editorial writers, members from the Greek organizations involved in the incident, and members of the Latino community. Also, discussion was facilitated through e-mails sent out through various organizations and people. In fact, the e-mails were sent out people on a personal level all the way up to the leadership of Chancellor Richard Herman.

However, my participant observation is limited for various reasons. As a Caucasian, middle-class, woman on campus, I am prohibited from having true insight to particular groups that are vital to this project. Primarily, I am not a member of the racial groups that may find themselves victimized by the Greek system. Also, I am a part of the Greek system, but only as a member of a sorority. Therefore, I lack the perspective of fraternities. For this reason, it is very important for me to find sources that do have access

to these groups.

These people can be found through contact with the Registered Student Organizations that are geared towards these people as well as random people that can be found throughout campus. Interviews of people that were quoted in Daily Illini would be insightful, since these people already have a clear position on the insensitivity found on campus and amongst the Greek system. One effective method to determine what types of insensitivities are found within the Greek system and how people think these insensitivities related to the Greek system and the University community as a whole would be through focus groups. This would allow many people to give opinions about the subject in an atmosphere where they are encouraged to think about insensitivity issues within the Greek system and University community.

However, this can be problematic in that the people involved may feel pressured to think a certain way or to refrain from voicing a controversial opinion. This was evident in a forum I attended that involved members from both minority and majority groups. Very few members of the majority spoke at an open microphone and many member of the minority spoke. The reason for this is an enormous question in itself, but it was clear that mixing these groups did not result in representative discussions. Therefore, it would be useful to have focus groups with the majority and minorities (racial and gender) separated and also together to see the different outcomes in the discussions.

In order to determine the questions for the focus groups, I would like to develop a survey or questionnaire. This will be helpful because I have many assumptions about my project, specifically in that I believe many people to have opinions about the Greek system and their relationship to insensitivities. I can ask these questions on the surveys or questionnaires and, depending on the results and amount of feedback for each question, I will delve deeper into it with the focus group.

Insensitivity is a true problem on this campus and therefore is a valid topic to research. The “Tacos and Tequila” event caused a lot of scrutiny to be placed on the Greek system. While the purpose of this study is not to prove that there is a problem in the Greek system and the Greek system only, it is important to realize that the Greek system is involved in insensitivity. Therefore, this project seeks to discover those perceived insensitivities bringing them to the attention of leaders within the Greek system so that changes can be made to make the Greek system and University community a more welcoming place for all.