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EPS 500

At the University of Illinois we are told that we are amongst the best in Illinois and the country. Our web page boasts the commitment to diversity and ensures that U of I Urbana-Champaign is the right place for you to be. I stare at these documents and feel a heart numbing coldness yet indescribable heat from the rage and pain that is engulfed within me. I was lied to. I look at the picture of the smiling face just as Black, if not darker, than mine. His eyes are illuminated with the glare from the camera. His blue shirt looks oddly out of place-as does he-amongst the four other people on the cover of the pamphlet. As I look at the other people around him, three Whites and one Asian woman, I wonder where did this Black man come from. Does he really like it here? Then, just as I am about continue on to the next page I spot it: one solitary bead of sweat on his forehead. I glance the other faces-they all look cool in what is supposed to be natural sunlight but this gentleman is hot-or nervous. Pushed into the picture in an attempt to portray equality yet that bead of sweat-almost unseen-confirms what I already knew. He does not belong there, that is not *his* crowd.

It is images like these, visible almost everywhere on campus that led me to question whether or not UIUC had achieved its mission of diversity. With services such as the Office of Minority Student Affairs and cultural houses on campus, the UIUC self appoints itself as a blazing star, leading the way for multiculturalism in academia. Yet the administration believes that it is doing a fine job of recruiting minorities into the university, I was interested to see how these minorities faired. Everyday on campus, in the classroom, and within the residence halls I see the exact opposite of what the university is promoting in its brochures. While the university

has a measurable population of Blacks, Asians, and Latinos represented (not proportionate to the Chicago-land population where the majority of it students come from but the purpose of this exposition is not to argue percentages.) but they are very seldom interacting. White students sit on the Quad under a tree and nap, Blacks students are gathered in one corner of our student union in an area that is less that _ of the whole patio, whilst the Asian students making their way silently through the crowds of people, presumably on their way to class or the library. Amongst the population on this sunny and fair fall day of about 150 students present on the quad and several discernable groups of people mingling, I can point out only one group- meaning a collective of people connected by a shared characteristic or culture with any sort of variation in complexion of the occupants. Three white women and one Asian are laughing as they discuss their plans for an evening of drinking.

It was observation along with thousands of others accumulated over five semesters and two summer terms in Champaign-Urbana that initially sparked the query that is addressed by this paper; Is there an invisible boundary between the races here at UIUC? Time and time again I see it. In fact I see it so often I barely even notice it anymore. In my mind I label them- The Black group, the Asians (also know as the engineers), the occasional Indian student (who can sometimes be put into the all encompassing Asian group) and everybody else. My experience with race and social space has taught me that *everyone else* is White. There are so many that I cease to even notice them on occasions like this; I immediately look for a place where I belong, looking for the darker group in the room. Usually, I end up sitting alone; too afraid of being associated with Blacks who are behaving "stereotypically" but not embarrassed or assimilated enough to associate with the Whites who are currently discussing the latest episode of real world versus road rules.

This is my reality as a Black woman at the University of Illinois. The purpose of this exposition is to explore and compare experiences of race in the college environment. Using ethnographic methods such as observation, interviews, and group participation, as well as drawing on several academic sources discussing cultural identity and social location, I started this project to see if others had similar sentiments as mine. By searching for common themes regarding feeling of belonging to a cultural or ethnic group, ways that the participants themselves identify social groups, as well as the ability to discern the groups that they do not belong in. Additional themes that arose were a subjective sense of community and perceived differences of that community that prevented subjects from joining particular groups. As the semester unfolded I developed three subsidiary questions to help me review and analyze the information acquired from interviewing. Those questions are as follows:

1-What role does the perception of race play in creating social space?

2-What interactions between the groups are taking place?

3-Can these interactions or lack thereof be the due to subjective sense of community and the ideas that students of different ethnicities have about interracial relations?

Amongst those interviewed were five women, two men. Two of the seven were instructors; one taught U.S. history before 1877, which is a topic, which both directly and indirectly applies to this inquiry because the content of the course material directly deals with race by discussing slavery, colonialism, and interaction between native people and conquering Europeans. The other taught leadership studies that directly corresponds with the development a community on campus and within the Residence Halls. Students who take this class have a tendency to become RAs and hold positions within the university system that impact social interactions. Of the 5 undergraduate students that participated, one was a Resident Advisor, one

was a Multicultural Advocate the year before, one was an office assistant, and one was a desk clerk, and one was just a student, no participation in RSOs were listed. The racial composition consisted of three Blacks, one Latina who identifies as Puerto Rican and Cuban mixed, one Latino that identifies as Irish and Mexican mixed, one White and one Asian. The interview questions varied depending on whom I was speaking to. For students who did not have a leadership role within the department of Housing or Residential Life, I asked them questions like: what race or ethnicity do you identify with? If several I asked them to please identify. Who do other people think you are? Where do you belong in the cafeteria, who do you usually sit with? Describe that group? How often do you interact with those outside of your group? Why or Why not? If it was a student leader i.e. the RA or Ma, I asked them: How do you define community? What community do you belong to? These participants were also asked to answer the same questions as above. The instructors were asked questions regarding their race and social groups when outside the classroom as well as the racial interaction, depth, and dynamic within the classroom when discussing course material as well as outside of the classroom when forming study groups etc. These questions allowed me to establish a working foundation upon which to build my research.

I decided to use the Residence Halls as well as interview several people who work within the halls as sources for several reasons. Reflecting on my development as an incoming freshman I realize that interactions that occurred within the residence Halls had a greater impact on who I chose to associate myself with. Roommates, neighbors, floor mates, as well as building services workers were the first people that I was exposed to. Using this train of thought helped me to hypothesize that interactions within a Residence Hall is an excellent way to gauge the perception and creation of social space, specifically in regards to race. Also, by observing, participating,

and interviewing Resident Advisors, I was able to better understand the role that they place in shaping social space via inclusion by programming events and attempting to create a small community for freshmen.

Five of the seven people whom I interviewed were people I had a relationship or a degree of familiarity with. I believe that having a previous relationship with these people allowed me obtain a deeper, more intimate response to the questions regarding race and social space. At the commencement of this research, when I attempted to speak with people that I did not know, I was often turned down the interview. I believe that on the UIUC campus the discussion of race, while not a taboo topic, when mentioned primes the person to take a stance. I have observed that White students, even RAs who were required to spend a semester confronting issues of race and social justice in a class, are reluctant to participate in a discussion. There is an underlying and sometimes even overt hesitation when one mentions race, even if not mentioned in a tone that indicates conflict, or accusatory language. This hesitation will be explored later in this exposition.

The final item that I would like to address in regards to methodology is my effect as an African American woman on the spaces around me. While conducting my research, I brought to the table my own experiences of race and social space. I have attempted however to remain neutral and conduct my research in a manner that is descriptive of ethnography-a combination of group participation with self-reflexivity and observations to supplement interviews.

Identity and group affiliation

People usually stress the importance of coming to college to get a degree and make money. It is not until you get here that you realize that the university experience is something more than late nights studying and running to class. It is during this transitional period between

the completion of high school and the completion of college that many people, including myself, begin to form and solidify traits and characteristics that will eventually become our personality. Social psychologists describe a concept called social comparison, which is the process of comparing ourselves to others in order to judge the self (Breckler, Olson, and Wiggins, 2006). This concept is very useful in helping understand why people choose the social groups that they want to belong to. In order to gain and accurate assessment of themselves people generally tend to migrate towards other perceived to be like them or conversely, to people whom they want to become.

The creation or affiliation with a group of people is a natural psychological occurrence. It can be inferred from this concept that when people group themselves socially based on shared physical characteristics such as race, or culturally similarities such as language or religion, are also natural, but only to an extent. During my interviews I asked participants to define for themselves what their identities were. I strongly encouraged them to list several if possible and a common theme that arose was the identification of a race or ethnicity first. Regardless of the race of the participant, the very first thing to emerge was cultural or racial identification.

The significance of racial background in the formation of identity is startling but not unusual. The aspect of race is irreversibly connected to identity within the U.S. due to a past history of discrimination and intolerance. The separatist attitudes created by the exploitation of Blacks, Latinos and almost every other colored ethnic minority has left a lasting effect on the development of identity within these cultures. When entering the university, students of color struggle with notions of identity in ways that both mirrors and differs from their White counterparts. While the majority of students grapple with issues over sexuality, academic ability, and the prospect of extracurricular activities, minority students experience all of these things in

addition to struggling with a potentially hostile campus, being racially profiled by local law enforcement authorities, and the perception often expressed both verbally and nonverbally that they do not belong. Even when considering a place to relax and go to a nightclub, Blacks on the UIUC campus are constantly reminded of their race. Research done by Tiara Fields on the presence of police at campus bars in the Champaign-Urbana community, locations where Black and Latinos students usually attend are often surrounded by police. Police claim that their presence is necessary to prevent fights and conflicts although it was proven that most confrontations occur at bars where more White students are likely to be present (Fields, 2006). Constant negative reactions from Whites had and continue to have a detrimental effect on the formation of identity on miniority students.

As explained earlier, that traits developed during this phase can become a part of a person's adult personality. Discriminatory behavior has a negative impact on the identity development of both the target of such actions as well as the actor himself. "Identity formation is the result of a complex interplay among a range of factors: individual decisions and choices, particular life events, community recognition and expectations, societal categorizations, classification and socialization (Kirk, & Rey, 2004)."   Personal identity development is not immune from the effects of stigmatization or stereotyping. Societal categorizations generally effect minorities in a way portrays them as the enemy, unwanted; an outcast in American society. It is primarily because of these reasons, expressed both in my interviews and personal experiences that push minorities to certain group affiliation. "It is at the meso level-at school, in the work place, or on the street-that people most frequently ask, "who are you" in an attempt to categorize us and determine their relationship to us. Moreover, it is here that people experience the complexities, conflicts, and contradictions of multiple identities" (Kirk, & Rey, 2004). While

this is a generalization based on a small sample size, I would still suggest that many minorities of Black, Asian, and Latino backgrounds align themselves with others who have been pushed out and rejected from everyday society. These members tend to be usually of the same racial and ethnic background because the experiences of discrimination are shared amongst the group. The constant bombardment of being forced to define yourself based on labels that have been systematically established to point out that you are different and usually inferior is detrimental to identity formation. This label of race often restricts, in addition to socioeconomic status, what social groups are available to join. Many times, the only groups remaining are those that are cultural; consisting of shared components such as religion, tradition and more importantly-race. Without this common bond of rejection and exploitation from the majority, it would be harder to predict reasons why many minorities form enclaves, often accused of being based solely on race, form and persist throughout minority communities.

The impact of race and the formation of identity is not unique to the minority experience. White students are also affected by this system of labeling and group rejection, it is just commonly called discrimination. White students experience race differently. The dominant culture is considered the norm and when a person is a member of that culture, they are unable to see the privilege and power that they inherit. White people, especially students struggling to formulate their identity, usually are unable to recognize this inheritance. "Race is never an issue for most White students coming into the campus community because they have little to no background with other minorities. Because of this background, many Whites do not understand the role that their racial identity imposes on themselves and on others" (Files, 2006). The concept of social comparison plays an unusual and dire role in this exchange of racial group affiliation because the comparison by a white person between themselves and a member of a

minority group will foster the idea of supremacy due to the way that U.S. society is structured.

Equally, the comparison of a member of a minority group to those of the White, dominant culture may foster feelings of inferiority. If you couple this method of social comparison with overt and subliminal socialization that reinforces that Whites are better and the results are disheartening. A white participant revealed to me the sentiment that Whites are taught to believe that America is based on meritocracy and that racial divisions are caused by minorities separating themselves or not wanting to belong. "I was taught that everybody was on equal ground after the Civil Rights Movement." Kirk and Rey states, "This assumed equivalence ignores the very big differences between an individualists symbolic identity and a socially enforced and imposed racial identity" (Kirk and Rey, 2004). The illusion of racial equality held by many Whites on the UIUC campus is strongly present. It is most visible when discussions arise regarding affirmative action and the perceived discrimination that occurs when minorities are admitted into college based on race. White students who hold this view however believe that they are being discriminated against and often refer to the process as reverse racism.

Having experienced the racial climate of the UIUC campus, I have observed a wide social disconnect between minority cultures and the dominant culture. When issues of identity arise, there are usually several groups that form. Those based on race, those based on ethnicity, those based on sexuality, those based on religion, and those based on class. It would be foolish to make to mistake of not recognizing the several overlapping groups that people can belong to based on the multidimensionality of identity. Often, there is an overlap between race and class, ethnicity and religion, and sexuality and race. "At the community level, individual identities and needs meet group standards, expectations, obligations, responsibilities, and demands. You compare yourself with others and are subtly compared…these experiences may both affirm our

identities and create or highlight inconsistencies…in who we believe we are, how we are viewed by others, our role and status in the community, and our sense of belonging" (Kirk and Rey, 2004). The sense of belonging and the creation of social networks to foster that sense are necessary for positive emotional and cognitive development. College campuses are places where identities are formed and questioned. Due to the unavoidable abundance of social interactions, we have a perfect lens to view how these identities are confirmed, rejected, and experienced.

Social Space and relative location of groups

Just as there is a range of different identities that come into play on an individual and group affiliation, there are just as wide a range of social spaces that these groups can create and occupy. The creation of social space is essential to the functionality of a group and while thus far I have implied that groups create social space, I would like to introduce the possibility that a social space can lead to the formation of a group. The distinction that I observed while conducting this project was how minorities compared to the proportion of free space available usually occupy a small amount of it. Trends such as five people occupying one double dorm room over a free floor lounge, a corner-not to be mistaken with the association of gang location-on the quad instead of a congregating on the lawn, or a small corner in less than _ of the total patio space available at the student union. While I will not discount the possibility of personal preference in regards to spatial location, I find it odd that minorities, usually Blacks, are reluctant to occupy a larger amount of space when there is available. Unnerved by this trend, I approached a group of students who occupied this corner of the patio and asked them why they did not prefer one of the tables or move to one the many lounges inside. I got puzzled looks at first, as if members had never even considered this before. Then one woman spoke up, "Cause

this is our spot. This is where we like to kick it". When I inquired further and told them that I was doing research about race and public space the members seemed more at ease. Based on our impromptu conversation, I gathered that this location was where the students felt more comfortable. The patio of the union is usually a high traffic area; people go in and out getting coffee, studying for class, or grabbing five minutes between classes to check email. These students meet here while in transit between classes to talk and catch up on weekend plans because they live in different locations on campus. I asked them if they would try to sit in one of the lounges or one of the tables one day and they all answered no. "They think we are too loud and I don't want anybody in my face complaining" was one response. "I don't study in there, I study in my room; I need to be where I am comfortable." I inquired further, why are you uncomfortable studying there, "Because he replied, I just know I don't belong there…I belong out here because I'm hot-meaning cool or popular", he tried to end with a joke. This interaction with my peers supported the idea that minorities, like anyone else, occupy space where they are comfortable. The fact of the matter is however, that on this campus they are comfortable in very few places.

I went back to my room and reflected on the experience. I thought about a friend of mine who won't ride her bike at night past certain frat houses, "Do I look like I'm trying to be raped and lynched?" she always says with a smile and a guttural laugh. I noticed as I conducted my interviews, after exposing information that relates to segregation or the inability to occupy a certain space because of the race of the participant, that a smile or a laugh is released to attempt to lighten the mood. I am also guilty of this reaction when discussing hurtful or painful experiences but not wanting to expose to the other that I am indeed hurt. This encounter on the patio of the student union was repeated again when I approached groups of color. I got a very

similar response when approaching a group of Latinos hanging out at La Casa, the Latino cultural center. I asked them why they don't study at the union or hang out in the courtyard café. Three of the seven students said they stopped by there for coffee but very seldom stayed very long. Others stated that they would just rather "be here" meaning the cultural center. They expressed the same sentiments about just being "uncomfortable" in the union. One even told a story on how he was lying on one of the couches studying for midterms. A group of White men were passing him and commented on how he was pretending to read. They laughed at the notion and mentioned something inaudible about affirmative action. "I guess they thought I fell asleep with the book on my face. I didn't say anything. I just waited until they passed by, got my stuff and left. I don't study there no more".

During these moments of inquiry and informal conversation I noticed common language being used such as "you know, they, uncomfortable, and them". The target words were also used when speaking informally with White students. I approached a White young man at a table and asked him if I could ask him a question about cultural centers. At first he replied that he had to study-a common response that I received when attempting to get interviews from White and Asian students-and after I ensured him that it was just a short survey for a class I was in he said yes. I asked him why he was using the lounge to study and he replied it was because his room was too loud, and that his roommate had friends over. I later found out that his roommate was Black and often had friends in the room and he was just uncomfortable studying there. I asked him where he felt comfortable studying and he said the floor lounge, the student union, and the local coffee place. I asked him if he had ever tried studying in the cultural centers. I told him how they often had open space and longer tables to put his books and papers. He looked at me in silence for a moment. "I don't go there, that place is not for me. You know, he said, I really

need to study. Sorry". I thanked him and asked if he would mind being formally interviewed later when he had free time, he quickly responded no and picked up a book.   His response was one that I had received often when attempting to interview White students, especially men. "I'm studying, I'm busy, I'm just waiting for my friend and we are leaving soon. I thank them and walk away discouraged.

One factor I had not considered when beginning this project was the influence that my race would have on my ability to obtain interviews from people, especially white people. Somehow my mental exploration on the way to conduct my study, I did not take into account the effect that the color of my skin has on social space. The majority of the observations used from this project occurred within the residence halls. Because of the five semesters that I have spent within several residence halls on campus, I am well versed in the social programs held, the excitement of rush-when students pledge to join fraternities and sororities-and the late night video gaming. I chose to conduct my interviews at a residence hall that has an impressive mixture of races. Visually, you can tell that the number of Blacks, Asians and Latinos combined outnumber the total number of Whites present within the hall. Due to the multiracial environment, I thought it would be a great place to study race and social space.

I know that people are most relaxed and free during eating hours such as lunch or dinner. The dining halls around campus offer several culturally based meals that occur once a week in a certain hall. One of these dinners has the highest rate in attendance and I often choose to make observations there. There was music and loud conversations- laughter and mingling throughout the area. I often attend these dinners and at the onset of this project I noticed something. That while the mixture of races present matched that of the multiracial hall, in the area where Hip Hop music was playing, you would find very few White people eating. I moved to the adjoining

seating areas to the left of the main area and to the right of the main area. What I discovered was that the whites students sat on the right side of the main area, where you could barely hear the music and the Asian students sat on the left. The Black and Latino students all sat near the location where you could clearly hear the music. I see them singing along to the lyrics, clearly enjoying themselves while I overheard conversations to the left and right of the main hall on how 'they' were always so loud. At one of these meals, a White female even approached the DJ, who at this specialty meal was playing music in Spanish, to please turn it down. Although there were no visible boundaries set, I could visually distinguish the races at these meals. If dinner is one of the better times to converse and build community within the residence halls, what do the separation of the races at these meals tell us about the level of racial and social interaction within these halls?

Often times during the study, when sitting at a table in the dining hall I would eat lunch at various tables to see if I could become part of the discussion currently being held. Most of the time I could not and was usually ignored. It was not until I had discussed my frustrations to my friend offhandedly that my presence as a Black woman approaching a table of White or Latino or even Asians was, at the very least, unusual. In retrospect I visualized the situations and remembered the uneasy glances and tension that would fill the space if I chose to sit with a group that consisted of Whites. This tension generally occurred before I even asked my questions regarding race and at the time, I wrote off the reaction as conformation on the portion of my thesis that discusses joining a social group and how I knew nothing of their common bond. I had not however previously considered that I received these reactions because of my race. My attempts to initiate a dialogue about race and social boundaries became increasing more difficult. Not only was my task to explore the relationship between race and social space challenging, but

also the thought that I was not being reject interviews based on content of the questions but quite possibly the color of skin, added a new dimension to my ethnographic study. I felt myself becoming part of the study in a way that I had not intended; I was once again reminded that in some places I am not welcomed.

My ability as a woman of color to drastically change to social environment that I am in mirrors those stated by Brent Staples in his article titled, "Just Walk On By: A black man ponders his power to alter public space". He states, "Yet these truths [speaking about Blacks being represented as criminals] are no solace against the kind of alienation that comes along with ever being a suspect, against being set apart, a fearsome entity with whom pedestrians avoid making eye contact" (Staples 1997).

After multiple attempts of getting interviews by inserting myself at different culturally homogeneous table, I resorted to interviewing people that knew me. As an advocate of multiculturalism on campus and within the residence halls, I had built enough relationships with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. As I reflected on these backgrounds and repeated heard the same key words being used such as "you know" I realized that my race hindered me when attempting to speak with White students but helped when speaking with Blacks and Latinos. Phrases such as the inevitable 'you know' were a reference to my identity as a Black woman and my ability to understand and relate to the experiences that members of my group or other minority groups had.

Despite this bond between Latino and Black students that consented to interviews or engaged in informal discussion, I found myself unable to become part of the numerous Asian groups. I attempted to join groups that were religious in nature-I thought that being a Christian would help-or study groups and often found that once there was a clear understanding by the

group that I had intended to stay, they would within moments of that understanding leave. I cannot explain this occurrence except but to consider the model minority myth. Throughout my observations I pin point several very different types of Asian based groups. Some were mixed with other races that usually tended to be White. Other groups were broken down by ethnicity, which is very different from race. There were groups of Koreans Japanese, Chinese, and various Indian cultures that I could not discern. I was able to distinguish between these groups thanks to an interview conducted with an Asian RA. When asked to identify himself he stated his racial background was that of Pilipino. As I started to go through my interview questions he became more comfortable speaking about his race and ethnicity. He confided in me how people often perceived him to be Chinese or Japanese and never considered him a Pacific Islander. When I asked him about locations he could often be found and with whom, I got an amazing account of his ability to integrate himself into almost any group. He stated that being Asian allowed him the benefits of the model minority myth amongst whites yet sometimes led to tension between his friends that were Latino or Black. "Yes, I have experienced racism, but not as you put it, he stated, I am viewed by minorities as a problem and not usually by White students." I asked for clarification, " Black people see me and think that I am lucky because I don't have to confront the overt racism as much as they do. But I do confront it. I am conflicted because I know that I am a minority and the history of my people in this country is painted with overt discrimination too. But to another extent I am grateful that white people see me as better". He paused to assess my reaction, "Not better than Black people…but better; more tolerable." His insights and statements resonated with me immensely. I have overheard conversations where Black people make fun of Asians and mock them partially because of the ability to be seen as more intelligent, less dependent on government intervention via financial aid, and the likely hood of assimilation.

I pondered how in my observations I interchangeably place them within two groups: distinct Asian groups or White ones. My own sentiments and conflicts became apparent and so did the truth of the Asian experience for my interviewee. His ability to migrate between groups and generally be accepted was a very unique one that throughout this study I have found that other groups do not have.

Looking back on the comments made by the RA and the distinct separation of races during meals despite close proximity I began to question what role did the people within the residence halls such as RAs and MAs have in shaping social space. I also questioned what role does education play in this picture. Being on a college campus that has cultural centers and several options and opportunities to engage in dialogue about race, power, and privilege, I wondered why this dialogue is occurring on a relatively small scale or not occurring at all.

Two interviews addressed this issue. One was with a Young Black female TA who teaches history before 1877 to a class of about 25 students. She briefly described her three class sections a majority White and a variation in class standing. She has one class that is 98% freshmen, one that is mostly juniors and seniors and one that is very well mixed between the two. She noted that there is very little interaction outside of class between the races but quickly stated that could be due to the small numbers of minority students within these sections overall. She also said that she makes sure, when group projects occur that she picks the groups and makes sure to include ethnic and racial minorities within each group, "Because of the nature of the class-it directly addresses slavery, colonist, and the detrimental interaction between Native Americans and Europeans-the minority view is necessary to help students gain insight." I asked her whether or not students were engaged in the material through discussion and she replied that engagement varied. Within her class of freshmen, the most discussion about race and

socioeconomic status occurs while in her junior and senior class, she has a hard time getting them to engage the material. "They are set into campus culture by now, there is nothing I can do." I asked her to elaborate. "Well, they have joined their fraternities and sororities by now, they have learned to be pro chief and quite frankly believe that the material is faulty. They think that now, since equality has been achieved that the past racism and discrimination does not matter anymore".

Several of her ideas interested me. She indicated that campus culture, once one has become assimilated to it, teaches students particularly White ones what they should believe. This can be better explained by social psychologist call deindividuation which is a psychological state in which people lost their sense of personal identity and feel immersed in a group (Breckler, Olson, and Wiggins, 2006). This process suggests that "large groups and the anonymity that they provide serve to increase people's adherence to emerging norms in that group which is sometimes aggressive or self-serving" (Breckler, Olson, and Wiggins, pg.401) This concept is often grouped to group polarization which refers to the tendency for group discussion to adopt whatever position is initially held by the majority of group members will by the end of a discussion be even more widely preferred after a group discussion (Breckler, Olson, and Wiggins, pg 409). One student confided in me that he did not know he was supposed to be pro chief because he was White. "Nobody ever told me! I'm from a small town in Omaha!" By indicating that the culture of campus is learned and observing how segregated the campus tends to be socially I began to understand that some groups that the White majority participates in fosters ideas of avoidance of racial issues and this avoidance contradicts what the class material teaches.

My second interview, this time with a Young White female instructor, described a similar pattern. She noted that the most discourse occurs in her leadership class occurs when they approach text that discusses race and ethnicity. There is the most uproar, she commented with a smile, when we begin discussing White privilege. She stated that her students claim to appreciate and accept minority cultures, particularly the Black culture by listening to that music, participating in sports, and hanging out with Black people, sometimes. I mentally noted that this "appreciation" is really voyeurism, which is from the perspective of the privileged; the lives of people of color, of the poor, and of women are interesting for their entertainment value. "The privileged become voyeurs, passive onlookers who do not relate to the less powerful, but who are interested in seeing how the "different" live" (Collins, 2000). She stated that she often receives looks that scream "traitor!" from her white students and looks of hope from the minorities in the room. "When we discuss race there always seems to be a 'but…' involved," She stated in our interview. After these interviews I remembered a statement made by one of my mixed Latina participants, "You-meaning Black people-have become the trendy race!" The lack of educational interest in race relations or social inequality is prescriptive on this campus. I was not comforted either by the fact that many leaders of fraternities and sororities, student organizations, and RAs were members of her class. Students that shape the campus environment and help mold the incoming freshman refused to accept the concept of white privilege and actively and proudly participated in voyeurism. Furthermore, they refused to be educated on the subject. After gaining this insight, there is no wonder that within the residence halls on campus and even during culturally themed meals, the races are divided.

I have finally gotten an answer to the query stated in my title: Is there an invisible boundary between the races at UIUC and the answer is yes. The boundary is our past. Identity

and the inability to accept changes, constant reinforcement of the practice of out grouping, and voyeurism, and the refusal of education to change the problem places the University of Illinois in a precarious position of stagnation. I am unsure whether the proximity of the Mason-Dixon line to Champaign- Urbana affects this or the inability for the Chicago-land suburban students transcend this historical border and attitude is partially a reason for the sentiments that were expressed in interviews and observed around campus. This study has found that identity is the primary factor in the formation of groups and the decision to restrict entrance to groups. The one thing that constantly changes and can often be changed is the one thing that minorities cannot change; their identity. The color of their skin serves as their group marker and that marker intrinsically and extrinsically separates them. The sense of belonging among groups regardless of race is based on shared experiences and unfortunately skin color has a tremendous impact on the experiences that can be shared.

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