

Is the race and ethnic division of students at the University of Illinois' Illini Union, specifically African Americans, a form of self segregation or apart of an unspoken tradition?

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EXPLORE

About the ethnographer

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Illinois in the department of Educational Policy Studies, my concentration is the sociology of race and ethnicity in higher education.

Unit Keywords

race, ethnicity, black, african, african-american, african american, education, segregation, ethnography, eps

Partner Projects

Ethnography of the University

INQUIRE

Rationale of the Unit

The rationale of the project deals with multiple microcosm issues that fall under the umbrella of race and ethnic relations at the University of Illinois. Specifically, the project will examine a space at the university that divides the students by race and ethnicity-the South Patio of the Illini Union. The goal is to determine the historical and social aspects of the self division, and decipher whether the division hurts race relations on campus in a broader respect; and whether the division is self supported or imposed upon that particular group by the UI culture.

Project diary

Assumption I-from the preliminary work I have conducted for the project, I believe many of the human subjects interviewed will have an opinion of why they segregate themselves from other races at the Union, and some of them may not see it as segregation at all. I also believe that most of the younger students will not have a clue of the historical context of my theory of what lead to the current state of events.

Assumption II-in regards to how the interview questions will be answered. I believe many of the students will have a broad/superficial understanding of the topic, but very few will have specific details. I also believe that the space that is being mapped will automatic evoke feelings either positive or negative of the participant.

Assumption III-from the questions being asked in the interview, I believe many students answers will correspond to whether they are and underclassmen or upperclassmen. The experiences of the underclassmen will be limited due to their brief time on the campus; and the freshmen would not have had the oppurtunity to experience the project 500 commemorative programming that took place in 2003.

Assumption IV-the interview questions from the Group II and III categories will have somewhat of a different perspective regarding the origins of the space and why it was being utilized.

INVESTIGATE

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Research Plan

BACKGROUND

Historical data will be gathered using the University of Illinois archives, coupled with personal accounts from alumni of the the university. A brief history of the space that will be mapped will also be examined, to determine the relevance of that specific space. Archival history will serve as the bulk of resources for background information.

ACTIVITY 1

Observing and mapping the space prior to mapping the space with interviews of current students. The goal is to examine the construct of the space and see if there are different variables that would assist in my understanding of the

ACTIVITY 2

Interviewing past and present students, faculty and staff about their opinions on segregation on campus; and specifically their version of history on the Illini Union South Patio

Activity 3

Archival research focused toward understanding Black student life on campus from the 1950's to present and how that would support or negate the arguments being made by the interviewees from Group I. The research would also provide a historical roadmap to outline the progression of student life with relevance to the space being mapped in the project (South Patio-Illini Union).

Activity 4

Reading articles and books and articles that focus on self segregation, the University of Illinois and the sociology of African Americans. The goal is to understand what aspects create the situation being examined.

Project diary

Interviews Fresh/Soph- the interviews with freshmen and sophomore students have lived up to the expectations of ambiguity and unfamiliar subject topic. Although the students interviewed all can identify the space and the assumptions, none of them provided a concise reason for the utilization of that space. Most of the information that they reported came from word-of-mouth from older students who may have mentioned it in passing. As far as self segregation, all of the participants agreed that it was an issue that was developed when they first arrived on campus, and the students who did not follow the homogenous pact usually came from school classified as diverse and suburban. The interesting thing about that was the city schools that were diverse still had homogenous group activities.

Interviews Junior/Sen. - The interviews with the juniors and seniors were more interesting due to the different ideologies and assumptions made by them. Almost all of the interviewees had a reason for their utilization of that space, and they all had a historical contribution they added to the conversation, some being heinous according to my perceptions. The overall comparison of the two different class levels did not prove more informative than the other, but a trend was developed that would have the younger students falling into the same mindset as the older students. One of the interesting facts was the younger students had an array of reasons for utilizing the space, with the older students citing social activity as their prime reason.

Readings, Keywords, and Constructs

READINGS

Joy Williamson, Black Power on Campus-University of Illinois 1965-1975

Beverly Daniel Tatum, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria

Joy Williamson, Black Power on Campus-University of Illinois 1965-1975

Beverly Daniel Tatum, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria

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Project diary

The more I research the project, the more complex the different themes become. More and more sub-questions and topics are arising as I do research and talk to students. There is also a lack of research done in the field and their needs to be more scholarly work around the topic of self segregation.

CREATE

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Field Notes

Interview Groups
Group I Current Students

The first set of conducted interviews focused around current African-American students at UI with which questions are geared toward their perception of historical, social and traditional comments on the different disciplines being explored. From the first round of interviews, the diverse and insightful responses to interviews questions were examined. The initial questions were not as productive, but did help foster alot of conversation from the interviewee about the topic broadly. As a result switched the order of the questions around to be more accomadating. With the revised questions, the second round of interviews went smoother than the first.

These are the questions from the interviews, the responses and a formatted list are attached.

Mapping Spaces Interview Questions – Final Project

The project questions are broken down into three different sections; historical, social and Traditional. The purpose of the sections is to grasp different aspects of the same subject in reference to the spaces being mapped. The questions are reflective of the goal to analyze patterns of the different participants in reference to the project. The questions are open-ended questions to not sway the participant to the types of answers sought by the interviewee.

Background Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your major?
3. Where are you from?
4. What year are you in school?

Historical Information

1. Do you know if there are any historical ties to the space you are in now?
2. What reasons would you give for Black students sitting at this spot on the quad?
3. How did it come about, your sitting in on the quad?
4. What name do you use to describe this place (if you are meeting a friend, they would meet you...)?
5. What is your main objective when you come and sit on the quad?
6. Have you ever observed other groups on the quad? Is there a pattern with certain racial groups sitting in certain places? If so, can you identify the racial group with the space?

Social Information

1. How do you feel about race relations on campus?
2. What are some new issues that need to be addressed concerning race and the UI campus?
3. What are some of the old issues that still need to be addressed concerning race and the UI campus?
4. Would you describe Illinois as diverse?
5. To what extent do you believe race has played in your experience on the UI

campus?

6. If you could change one issue on campus associated with race, what would you change?

7. Would you consider this section of the quad to be segregated? If so why do you believe it is?

8. Do you believe self-segregation is a problem on the UI campus?

Traditional Questions

1. Do you believe Black students sitting on the quad is a tradition? If so, how long would you estimate that tradition has been going on?

2. Have you ever heard of any reasons for Blacks to specifically sit at this spot on the quad?

3. Have you ever heard of Project 500? If so, can you briefly explain its relevance to Blacks on the UI campus?

4. What other spaces on campus do Blacks hang out at like they do at the Union? Do you believe there is any significance to those spaces?

5. What are some other traditions for Blacks on the UI campus? Please be specific with relevance to students?

6. Can you name a basic UI tradition that all races participate in?

Group II Former Students

Group III Faculty and Staff

DISCUSS

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Findings

Introduction

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a complex society created through diversity in every aspect considered. The one hundred and thirty-seven year old institution has climbed the academic ladder from being an agricultural based institution, which most of the time were, to one of the most technologically advanced institutions in the world. The students of the school come as close as the Urbana-Champaign community, to as far as Australia and other international locations. The diversity of the students is apparent every time you stroll along the campuses main quad.

The diversity of the students according to race is a complicated one. The presence of international students and local students who do not fit the stereotypes many people have cultivated into their definitions of race, making it difficult to box individuals in broad categories, or neat little racial boxes. Due to the diverse atmosphere there are many lessons to be learned and issues to be solved.

One of the issues associated with race and the university is the apparent self

segregation of the minority students. In this case the minority students are African American Latino/a and Native American students. Many people in these groups seem to confine themselves to their group or intermingle amongst the three, although the Native American population is the smallest overall. These groups seem complacent with their group arrangements and some do not realize they have limited themselves to their specific group.

The cause of this segregation could come from many places; some people believe the minority orientation that encouraged students of the three aforementioned groups to stay a day longer to help students with the transition from racially homogenous neighborhoods and high schools, to the diversity of the University of Illinois' campus. Other students feel that the housing arrangement supported the construction of these groups. The overwhelming majority saw the lack of students represented in those groups at the institution as a pathway to racial division.

To fully understand what self segregation is and how it relates to this institution, I will narrow my foci to one place on campus, the university's main quad. To further narrow the research, I will specifically look at the Illini Union using a mapping of spaces approach. The paper will initiate with the mapping of a specific space and then there will be a self reflection of what the space means to me. A theory about how the space became racially segregated will be examined and interviews will be analyzed to understand the meaning of that specific space to an array of different people. The goal is to gain some understanding of how the space became racially segregated and what the significance of that space represents. One of the other initiatives in the paper will be to understand if the campus culture of the university encourages the segregation, or is it self imposed by the people that participate in it.

The architecture/scenery

The center point of an area is usually the starting point. This theory is true in many models outside of mathematics, and it is even true at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The center of this college campus is unarguably the quad that houses most of the educational classes within the college of liberal arts. The pathways to buildings that separate walkways from the large grassy area are positioned in diagonal cross points that outline every possible route from one building to the other. The buildings making up the quad tell the story of the university from its initial inception as an industrial institution, apparent by the buildings donning engraved titles like Agriculture. At the south end of the quad is the Foellinger Auditorium, the beaux arts classical style building, is loosely modeled after the Thomas Jefferson's Rotunda at the University of Virginia. Foellinger has a strong presence because of its copper domed top and concrete columns.

On the north end of the quad a building sits that houses many offices and departments and seems to get the most attention from students; regardless of major and academic level this building seems to be the center of attention on campus, or at least the center point of the quad. The Georgian revival style building is reminiscent of a plantation house in the old South with its white windows and red brick frame. From the quad side of the building you experience

the lavish deck of the South Plaza with its spacious presence that separates the two entrances of the building from the south side of the building, named the Illini Union.

The Illini Union is the most noted building on campus, contrary to it not having any specific significance that is linear with all of its consumers. The building is not where you pay students tuition and it does not house any academic offices, but the Illini Union is very popular on my day of observation. The brick building seems to command respect as it stands perched at the end of the central point of campus. The significance of this building lies with the individual. The importance of its existence is determined by who is utilizing the space.

If you are politically active on campus, the union is where your registered student organization offices are located. If you intend to eat on the quad, the basement of the union is provides the most variety of foods under one roof on campus. If you merely need to take a quick nap on campus between classes, the many lounges with its faux-leather couches is where you will rest your head. During the major parent days on campus, many call the union their hotel as they visit the campus. Regardless of your purpose, the Illini Union has many meanings to different people. Above all, the Illini Union provides something to everyone that utilizes it.

The Observation

On a warm October Monday, I stand in the middle of the quad during the busiest time of day, lunch time. Specifically focusing on the Illini Union, I watched as students walked back and fourth scurrying between classes. Most students tend to favor the left side door than the right entrance. Preliminary research would conclude the left entrance is closest to the pertinent places for students and staff; the student organizational offices, the bank, campus store and fast food restaurants. The right side entrance only access offices in the building and the much sought after fast food restaurants. The restaurant factor may provide insight to the left doors popularity during this lunch hour.

As the people shuffle back and fourth, all seemingly in a hurry, it is unique that this building has the most students going back and fourth without one class ever taking place there, in recent history. In stature, the building is not overwhelmingly large, which would raise the question, how do so many students utilize that space and accomplish what they want? The answer is simple; upon observation the students who are utilizing the space are doing so for short periods of time, this is evident as many of the people I observed enter the building, exist within twenty minutes of their arrival. The buildings purpose, during the time of observation, seems to serve a brief purpose as the students continue to move quickly back and fourth between classes. The traffic in the Illini Union rivals that of the arch anchor at the opposite end of the quad, the 1750 seats of Foellinger Auditorium, the largest classroom on campus that houses many introductory level classes.

Due to the warm weather, many students are hanging out around the entire quad. Most students are on the grassy part of the quad throwing Frisbees or playing catch with a football, other students are tanning or simply reading a book under a tree. Some classes have relocated to grassy areas on the quad and seem to block out their busy surroundings. For the most part the quad seems to

be festive and accommodating for the interest of the students. A brief impromptu pole revealed that most students are underclassmen taking foundation courses. As the students shuffle back and fourth from building to building I refocus my attention on the Illini Union. As I move closer to the building to observe the students, there is an apparent division of students, not by class but race. Nearest to the left entrance of the building a huge group of African Americans are gathered around and passing time. Less than twenty feet away from the African American group of students sits a large group of Latina/o students as the socialize with one another. To the far right of both groups there was a congregation of the highest represented minorities on campus, Asian Americans. Understanding the division would require an understanding of race and its relevancy to the University of Illinois. The proportion of students using this space is not reflective of the campus racial breakdown, but it does reflect a different problem the campus has not successfully addressed. The students who are utilizing the space represent something larger that would become apparent with further research and my own personal experiences at the University of Illinois. To fully analyze the space and its purpose, I have to understand the structure and observe the space, to partially understand its purpose. The other forms used to understand the purpose would be to interview the students that utilize that space and gain their understanding, and test a theory to understand the space in an attempt to conclude how the space became what is being observed today.

The Student

The homogenous groups on the south plaza near the Illini Union entrances seem to enjoy the company of their peers as the groups swell and deflate as class periods change. Some students move back and fourth from group to group; mostly between the African American and Latina/o students. Most of the students seem to enjoy themselves as they banter and vagabond without accomplishing anything academically, seemingly.

The Latina/o group conversed and greeted fellow Latina/o as they passed with a kiss on the cheek and hug. Many of the students seem to be speaking Spanish or Spanish/English as they stood in smaller groups and spoke briefly as some moved toward their next class, while others sat on square concrete flower pots. The Asian American group seemed no different from the other groups, as people stopped by the core group that sat on the right side of the quad and held brief conversations in passing.

The separate groups utilizing the quad space all had individual conversations, but one major similarity; they were all involved in the conversations that they carried with their specific group. If race and language were not taken into account, all three groups being observed would be doing the exact same thing. If this is the case, one wonders how race could divide groups to engage in the same display of socializing. Another observation was that there were no groups of white students engaged in the same display. White students are probably not engaged in this kind of socializing because of their large representation on campus, and small number of minorities trying to develop a sense of community. From my examination of the Illini Union, I refocused my attention to other parts of the quad to see if the homogeneity of racial groups exists within the larger

population of students on the quad. As I scanned the campus it was apparent that there were few minority students hanging around the center of the quad around the walkways and the grassy landscape between the buildings. These areas are dense with White students with a very small presence of African American or Latina/o students. These students are engaged in their form of socializing and the miniscule presence of minority students shows that the individual groups may have culturally separated to the socializing method they are comfortable with. Upon this examination the question arises, what caused the racial segregation of students? Although the question is large one that would require years of research, the smaller question focuses on the segregation of African American students from the rest of the activities taken place on the quad.

Personal Reflection

The place where African American students separate themselves on the quad is arguably known by every African American undergraduate student. Being an African American, I came to understand the South Patio of the quad at the beginning of my freshman year. In September of 2000, I barely knew where my classes were but I did learn how to get to the quad, and who socialized there. As a freshman I knew of the place but I didn't dare go there to socialize. Most of the students were upperclassmen and they all seemed to know each other. The African American students who stood around and discussed whatever the topic was that day all seemed to be so out of reach for me as a lonely freshman. As I remember it, the people were Black Greeks, athletes or members of the social elite, and none of them were freshmen. Although there were no rules or organization to how students occupied the space, the need to belong in that space made me wonder more and more about it. These students were the African American leaders on campus; their presence was intimidating to someone who barely knew his roommate. The south patio became the place I aspired to sit at one day. It may seem a little dramatic to want to sit in a certain place that was open to all, but that place became the status symbol of popularity for African American students. Everyone who participated seemed to know each other and they all got along.

The remainder of my freshman year did not lead me to utilize the space, although other freshmen did begin to use the space. On some cold days the students still gathered for brief periods of time, but would eventually move inside the union to the alcove or in the food court. As I passed by from time to time, I realized that the conversations they had were reminiscent of high school. Some of the talk was gossip about other students and some of the conversation focused on analyzing the institution and the problems that plagued the African American students; this was the kind of conversation I yearned for as I became discontent with some of the problems on campus with no outlet for my dissatisfaction. Other conversations that I passed were academic based, critiquing professors and recommending classes to students that had not taken them.

Overall the conversations were very blunt and open although the students did not all seem to know each other on a personal level. The actions of the students led me to believe the space represented something more than I had initially given it credit for, it was the place of comfort, where the students did not have to feel they

had to represent their race or be on the defensive about inappropriate comments. The realization of what the space meant to me came from an experience I had with my freshmen year roommate. My roommate came from a small town that had no racial diversity, I was literally one of the first African American people he had come in physical contact with. One day he made a blatantly racist comment that I needed to talk to somebody about, and I remember thinking the African American students on the quad would understand how I was feeling. My first experience in utilizing the space at the Illini Union came at the beginning of my sophomore year. I was walking past the union and I saw a guy from my economics class and he called me over to the space. Without noticing what had happened, I became one of the students that utilized that space. The initial excitement gave me a sense of home; this was the first time I had been around more than five African American students since the beginning of school. The space became one of the highlights of my days; I found solace in knowing that the space was there on the good and bad days, weather permitting. I was reminded of sitting on the front porch of my house with friends at home and talking for hours about world issues to absolute asinine banter. For my remaining three years as an undergraduate, I became a staple in the space that once seemed so out of reach. The nature of the conversations remained as diverse as the ones I had observed, and the feeling of belonging became more pertinent. As the years went by new students came to the space and others moved on after graduation, but the purpose of the space remained constant. Although I no longer use the space I am confident that the tradition has continued. Practically every African American student I knew either utilized the space or was very familiar of the purpose it served without any significant conversation as to why it existed.

Interviews

To grasp a different experience from the one I had on the space at the Illini Union's south patio, I talked to other students to understand what how and why they utilized that space and what it meant to them. The student's answers were as diverse as the people who described their experiences. Both upperclassmen and underclassmen had a different take on the space related questions, their similarities are pivotal to how the space became what it is today. One of the issues taken into consideration was the recent change in culture of the new African American students to campus.

Before I could attempt to understand self segregation, I would have to first understand their viewpoints on race relations and campus culture as a whole. When asked how the students feel about race relations, majority of the students felt that there was some form of problems associated with race on campus. One student cited "people act diverse and accepting in class, but there is a lot of covert racism on campus", showing that there is a long way to go before we live harmonious on the Illinois campus.

The students were also asked to identify what problems divide students on campus and many of the students cite that Chief Illiniwek and some of the historical issues are continuously separating the campus and developing a divide amongst students that is not headed toward repair.

The survey the students answered had many similarities and some differences. Of the similarities, people were able to identify the space without hesitation and pinpoint the space being analyzed. Most students felt that the space represented the constant struggle for African American students on campus. Students also felt that the space was in response to the culture of the university and its negative relationship with students who were not historically represented at the institution. Although they all identified the problem, none of the students, none of them gave a possible solution to remedy what some considered a problem and others didn't.

As far as different responses from students, the main difference was the utilization of space for different people. Many of the students saw the space as an outlet for social energy that they had no other place to expose, notably the younger students saw it as a space to socialize and study on warm weather days. Regardless of the reasoning, they have all utilized the space in some capacity and their acknowledgement of the space solidified the nature of the inquiry because it applied to the students of today.

Overall, the students were pertinent in establishing and identifying the UI culture and race relations. They were also vocal in analyzing the space and what it means to the individual and the group. Understanding the student concepts of the different ideologies and experiences made the student interviews pivotal in conducting the research. If this project was to grow into a bigger project the interviews would help guide and explore different subsections within a larger topic.

Theory Testing

From the interviews, many students gave their different theories as to why how the utilization of that space came about. Many students had many different examples, ranging from some unique explanations such as, "Black students were not allowed to utilize the union historically", and to it is the "only place on the quad that has shade on sunny days". Generally two themes continued to surface, the first being that there was some historical significance to the utilization of that space, and the other being the time period for its inception, the 1960's. From research, one major event comes to mind that fits both categories and represent the theories of the interviews, Project 500.

Project 500 (SEOP) was an initiative by the university to enroll five hundred disadvantage students from underrepresented backgrounds. Most of the students targeted for the program were African Americans. The initiative to increase underrepresented minorities had five objectives, those objectives were as follows: "(1) to provide an educational opportunity for students who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to attend college; (2) to increase the number of minority students on the campus; (3) to develop educational programs and practices to aid disadvantaged students in their academic careers; (4) to expose non-SEOP students to the cultural and social experiences necessary in understanding different cultures; (5) to develop information to deal successfully with educational and sociological problems affecting students from disadvantaged backgrounds" (Williamson 66). The initiative developed a plan to sustain the students in the program and educate the student population on

understanding cultural diversity.

As the Black Power movement gained momentum nationally, locally it grew within the students at Illinois. One of the first protests staged by the Project 500 students was a march that occurred in September of 1968. The march went from ISR to the Illini Union south lounge, in an attempt to demand housing assignments. Twenty Black female students who refused to remove their belongings from ISR when they received their room assignments spearheaded the protest. They were dissatisfied with the living conditions of their assigned rooms and decided not to leave. The protest led to the arrest of many students for an “alleged unauthorized mass demonstration”, at the Illini Union (Williamson 81). The activism gained national attention and the protests legacy still lives within the African American students who currently attend the university, as a result many students feel that this is why the Illini Unions south patio is a space that is given so much attention by the African American students.

There has been very little written on the subject of self segregation and even less written on self segregation at the collegiate level. Through archival research I discovered the Black Year book from the 1960's and 70's. The purpose in utilizing the yearbook was to examine candid photos of students African American students with the purpose of discovering whether they utilized the south patio space. The rationale behind examining the yearbooks came from my experience working on the 2002 Black yearbook and noticing the abundance of students taking pictures at the space in question. After going through the sporadic yearbooks over a thirty year period, I came across a yearbook that proved the theory of the Project 500 demonstration wrong. The 1964 Impodium, Black yearbook, showed students sitting and socializing at the Illini Union's south patio four years before the demonstration took place.

There were no other theories that gave significant evidence as to the root of the beginning of the utilizing of the space by African Americans. The theory test did not prove successful, but it did raise another interesting question, how has an unspoken tradition gone on for so many years without someone exploring what it means. The significance of the space has spanned generations but has not developed any real reasoning for its inception or its longevity. Although many of the current students who were interviewed know about the space, it could not be traced back through individuals.

Pattern Behavior

In 1997, Author Beverly Tatum answered questions about segregation that was discussed in her groundbreaking book, “Why are the black kids sitting together?” From that interview she discussed how race relations in an educational setting differ from the elementary to high school. “Young children do interact across racial lines fairly comfortably at the elementary school grade level. If you visit racially mixed schools at the elementary level, you will see kids interacting in the lunch room and on the playground. To the extent that neighborhoods are segregated, their interracial friendships might be limited. But you see much more cross-racial interaction at the elementary level than you do at the junior high or high school level” (O’Neil 12). Tatum’s argument would leave you to believe that the race relations at the collegiate level would become progressively worse.

An article that discussed self segregation stated, "Minority students and suburbanites alike claim that their self segregation fosters self respect, cultural identification and social acceptance. One Northwestern student for example, explained that it was a relief to live with other Blacks, where she didn't feel a duty to enlighten white classmates about Black hairstyles, ethnic foods or musical tastes. Studies have shown that Black students who live with Black roommates and who belong to African American organizations graduate at a higher rate than those who don't" (Nueman 6). This article links an important subject to self segregation, what other avenues does this method affect.

Housing at the University of Illinois is not specifically segregated by race, but there is a clear difference in the racial make-up of the campus dorms. Many people feel the need to segregate because they come from racially segregated neighborhoods and this would be their first experience with students from different races. Some universities are catering to the self segregation of students, "The preference of many ethnic groups to live among themselves is reflected also on the nation's college campuses. In the last decade, race specific dorms, curricula and clubs have become commonplace" (Nueman 6). Self segregation is spreading and the debate of whether this is helping or harming society is continues.

It is established that at the University of Illinois and other campuses, housing segregation is an issue, but many people feel it is reflective of their home communities. Many home communities are becoming more segregated amongst the middle class. African Americans, which used to be the standard for integration. "Black suburbanites talk about providing positive role models for their children and having play groups where their child is not the token Black. "It's a perfectly natural phenomenon," the article continues by stating, "People tend to want to be with those whom they share tradition, background and experience. America is not a melting pot; it's a salad bowl. All of us— Jews, Koreans, Puerto Ricans—live in our own communities. It's only made an issue when Blacks engage in it." "When Black people live together, that's called self segregation, whereas an all-white community is just looked upon as normal because of demographics" (Nueman 6). This reasoning is linear to one of the student interviews where one of the students cited that it is never looked that white students are segregating from Blacks.

As stated in the aforementioned article, Black suburbs are becoming a staple near major cities, and were evident in the population of students that were interviewed for three were from racially segregated southern suburbs of the Chicago land area. Students state that segregation is no longer confined to the poor, but is crossing economic boundaries as students feel the need to develop a sense of self. Many people criticize the self segregation but having that segregation in education has developed more focus on why it exists. It is impossible to assume that if you come from a country that has sections of segregation that it would disappear by the time we enter college. Another way to examine it would be how attitudes are developed from peoples backgrounds and it is highly unlikely that their positions would drastically change as they enter college.

Analyzing the argument of how self segregation shapes the culture of society, there are two distinct differences in how critics view self segregation. Advocates for the segregation in education, “say a comfortable school environment encourages academic commitment and makes students more productive members of society”, while opponents “insist programs solidify stereotypes and promote long-term social intolerance. Moreover these critics would say schools excluding other groups while accepting tax dollars violate civil rights” (Figura 38). This argument could also be argued about Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), and their serving African Americans predominantly. The flaw of the argument against segregation is that it does not prove people to have heightened racist attitudes. The proponents of the argument have not proved the overall benefits of segregation to society, especially those who societies that are not segregated. The gist of both arguments relies heavily on personal choice and does not consider the greater affects of the decision to segregate in education.

The Inevitable Conclusion

The gist of this project barely scratched the surface of many issues that have not been address in the African American community at the University of Illinois, or the campus community as a whole. The fact remains that the space mapped and analyzed served as a gateway to a way of life for many individuals, not exclusive to African Americans. With few solid research experiments on the topic of self segregation being conducted, there is a thirst and a need for more research to be conducted.

The theory examined about the self segregation did not determine the origin of the segregation but it did expose how long it could have possibly existed. Further research with older African American alumnae would prove crucial in exploring the topic of both self segregation and the utilization of the Illini Union as a sanctuary for African American students to feel at home.

The university as a subject of this inquiry, it was both enlightening and disheartening to understand the issues associated with campus life. Being a student at this institution I thought I realized the status of African American students and their culture, but as the demographics change, so does ideology of the students. The university itself seems to remain idol and accepting of the status quo as traditions that segregate students and tools, such as chief Illiniwek, divide the campus more and more, many believe the students will eventually live separately in every aspect of education. The campus’ unwillingness to change the promotion of segregation becomes inadvertently relevant.

One of the factors that stated in an article of research and by one of the subjects identified a pivotal part about this kind of research; why are the Black students the studies of these types of inquiries and not white students? Is society established in a manner that conformity and assimilation is expected and if you go against the grain it would be considered problematic.

The more research I conducted the more problems surfaced which makes me want to continue these types of inquiry. The university and society as a whole needs to understand the need for this kind of research and the benefits of conducted it. Because of the research, I am more aware of many issues that are on campus and the need for change before the problems associated with the

norm are not dealt with and it becomes the norm to segregate from certain problems instead of handle them. Although this project was never designed to analyze the sociology of African Americans in today's society, it does give a brief glimpse of what other factors apply in interrelated subjects.

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Users' Comments on this Unit

- Start thinking and writing about connections to your reading. Another person to interview: Prof James Anderson, who was a student here in the late sixties and/or early seventies. I mentioned your project to him. Bring interview questions to our meeting on Thursday. - *by pfortier@uiuc.edu*
- Update needed! Readings! Insights from interviews! - *by pfortier@uiuc.edu*
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