Discourse from #TheRealUW: What Tweets Say about Racial Concerns at a Predominately White Institution

Karl Vachuska * and Jack Brudvig

Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706, USA; jbrudvig@wisc.edu
* Correspondence: vachuska@wisc.edu

Abstract: In March 2016, after a series of hate crimes victimized students of color on campus, students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison started #TheRealUW movement against racism on campus. In order to exemplify racism on campus, students of color took to social media to share personal experiences and opinions on racism, affixing "#TheRealUW" to their posts. In this article, we analyze what students of color on the social media site, Twitter, spoke about and took issue against. The plurality of #TheRealUW tweets centered primarily on instances of subtle or explicit verbal racism. These experiences had impacted a variety of aspects of students of color's lives, including mental health, housing, access to spaces, and overall quality of education. Students also discussed isolation, marginalized representation in the University's decisions, and their relationship with authority. The many tweets clearly demonstrate the breadth of racism at predominately white institutions and indicate that inequality of peer and faculty social resources, opportunities, and experiences is a significant perpetuator of a variety of forms of racial inequality at predominately white institutions, but that racism in institutional and systemic forms is also an area of concern for students.

Keywords: race; race relations; higher education; predominately white institution; students of color

1. Introduction

#TheRealUW was a social media campaign beginning in mid-march 2016 in which students of color at the University of Wisconsin-Madison took to social media to share their experiences of racism at the university, affixing "#TheRealUW" to their posts on various social media sites. The months before had been a challenging time for minority groups at UW-Madison, as dozens of hate and bias incidents were reported to University administration, with many being publicized in media and informal social spaces. For students of color at this large predominately white institution, outcome disparities are quite significant. The 4-year graduation rate for white students (61%) is nearly twice that of black students (38%) (Retention and Graduation Rates 2017). A 2017 survey also revealed that 50% of students of color at UW-Madison feel they do not "belong" on campus (Campus Climate Survey 2017).

Much research has been done on the experiences of students of color at predominately white institutions, with much focus particularly on Black students. In this research, however, we will not look at one particular race, but instead look at the inequalities non-white students face on the campus relative to their white peers. By examining students' experiences as exposed on the social media site, Twitter, we find that a significant source of racism is inequality of social experiences and opportunities between students of color and white students. We further find that this inequality manifests itself in a number of forms of racial inequality, including inequality of mental health, experience within housing, access to spaces, and overall quality of education. Despite the localized context of racism, we find institutional inequalities, racially motivated misconduct of authorities, and a lack of diversity to still be significant areas of concern for students of color.

2. Literature Review

The experiences of college students of color remains a multifaceted and pressing topic of social research. In reviewing the relevant literature, what emerges are several interconnected themes rather than a single grand narrative. In particular, a meta-analysis of the issue "consistently calls attention to the isolation, alienation, and stereotyping" with which students of color contend in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (Harper and Hurtado 2007). Such racial tension is hypothesized to be especially acute "in environments where there is little concern for individual students", a symptom of many large PWIs with enrollment in the tens of thousands (Hurtado 1992). At such large institutions, the unique concerns of minority groups are less likely to receive unique attention; unsurprisingly, there is a significant disparity between minority students and their white counterparts in their detection of problems in the campus climate (Hurtado 1992).

Despite this disparity, almost all students interviewed in a study of five large PWIs, irrespective of race, "deemed their institutions negligent in the educational processes that lead to racial understanding" (Harper and Hurtado 2007). In other words, it does not go unnoticed when universities "have diversity plastered everywhere" while failing to facilitate constructive cross-racial engagement, treating race as an unspoken four-letter word (Harper and Hurtado 2007). Failures such as these are among the chief reasons that "isolation, alienation, and stereotyping" is felt so acutely by students of color, while remaining undetectable to many white students. The more engagement students (especially whites) had with peers outside their race during their undergraduate years, the less likely they were to display racial bias (Levin et al. 2003). Of course, it is difficult to tell in which direction the causal relationship is stronger.

Perhaps nowhere is campus racial stratification more pronounced—and white students more blind to this fact—than on frat row. The Interfraternity Council president at one particularly large university claimed that "If we did not have the Black frats, our chapters would have more diverse members", ignoring the fact that only twenty-nine students held membership in these black fraternities (Antonio et al. 2004). Indeed, the persistence of an unwelcoming fraternity climate for students of color is one of the more explicit vestiges of higher education's elitist and racist history. The continual recurrence of blackface minstrelsy at fraternities, along with their fondness for caricaturing and debasing hip hop culture, is a reminder that black performativity as a source of humor and entertainment among whites is still alive and well (Patton 2008).

The historical basis for campus climate deficiencies is further shown by the disparities in faculty representation, or, for that matter, most positions of power within the institution (6% Black faculty, 4% Hispanic faculty (NCES 2017)). Not only is this lack of representation frequently cited by students of color as a reason for their perceived lack of belonging, it also helps us understand the "consciousness-powerlessness paradox" preventing necessary changes from occurring: despite their awareness of student alienation, most staff (especially those of color) indicated their "reluctance to call attention to these trends for fear of losing their jobs or political backlash . . . of being seen as troublemakers" (Harper and Hurtado 2007). This tendency becomes quite understandable in light of the fact that even among faculty, Black and Hispanic professors achieve tenured positions at a substantially lower rate (4% Black, 3% Hispanic (NCES 2017)). Instead, staff indicated that they would "privately strategize with students" to help them make the best out of a bad situation, but "felt powerless in voicing observations to senior administrators and White colleagues" (Harper and Hurtado 2007).

One of the most compelling pieces of evidence for PWIs disadvantaging black students is the marked contrast—in both described experience and academic outcomes—at PWIs compared to historically black colleges (HBCs), which around one-fourth of black students attend. One of the most serious consequences of student alienation at PWIs is disengagement with—and consequently, decreased interest in furthering—their education: 75% of Black Ph.Ds, 75% of Black army officers, 80% of Black federal judges, and 85% of Black doctors spent their undergraduate years at HBCs, despite

the fact that only 15% of Black master's or professional degrees are awarded by these institutions (Roebuck and Murty 1993; Brown and Davis 2001).

These findings make a clear statement about the source of the college achievement gap: It is not for a lack of sufficient preparation, but a lack of the social and cultural capital needed to create an environment conducive to success. The lack of social networks that "provide information and influence" along with the undervaluation of particular forms of cultural knowledge (e.g., "refined" versus "unrefined" tastes) make it harder for students of color to find their place in an environment based on social networks or systems of valuation different from their own (Brown and Davis 2001). By contrast, environments where black cultural capital is more valuable are highly conducive to success.

As an example, one way black students carry greater cultural capital at HBCs has to do with religious affiliation: 60% of students enrolled in HBCs identify as Baptist, compared to 20% at PWIs (Mcdonald 2011). The African Methodist Episcopalian Church, as well, is affiliated with or has an especially strong presence on many HBCs. Given that religion is, in some sense, a built-in social support system, sharing it with a majority of one's peers is among the most powerful sources of belonging students can feel.

However, the relative success of students of color at HBCs applies to secular institutions as well. Walter Allen (1992; via Brown and Davis 2001) identified how several of their unique characteristics help explain this phenomenon: (1) Greater dedication to the "maintenance of the Black historical and cultural tradition" through coursework and extracurricular activity; (2) More representation in key leadership roles; (3) Greater economic empowerment (HBCs often have "the largest institutional budget within the black community"); (4) More role models "to interpret the way in which social, political, and economic dynamics impact Black people"; and (5) Greater emphasis on producing graduates who are competent in researching, understanding, and addressing issues of concern to minorities.

These qualities stand in marked contrast to those of PWIs, where, despite their promotion of diversity, educators tend to address racial issues through the lens of "color-blindness"; that is, a belief that all social categories "should be dismantled and disregarded, and everyone should be treated as an individual" (Richeson and Shelton 2003). Multiculturalism, on the other hand, might be viewed as the opposite approach: such differences should be acknowledged, taken into consideration, and even celebrated; failure to do so "undermines the cultural heritage of non-white individuals, and, as a result, is detrimental to the well-being of ethnic minorities" (Richeson and Shelton 2003). Support for the multiculturalism argument came from an Implicit Association Test administered to 52 white Dartmouth undergrads. First, half of the group read passages promoting a color-blind approach to racial issues, while the other half read one promoting a multicultural approach. After this, they were administered the test, with the color-blind group scoring significantly higher in their pro-white bias (Richeson and Shelton 2003).

This sheds light on a commonality that Davis et al. (2004) found in interviews with black undergraduates: "Students were aware of how important it was to them to be the same as others in learning and social settings", again describing the "isolation, alienation, and stereotyping" induced not necessarily by overt acts of racism, but by being in the presence of a large cohort of students simply unaware of their own biases, subtle or unsubtle. Indeed, we would expect, almost by definition, that someone espousing a "color-blind" ideology, as many on college campuses do, would perceive themselves to be less biased than average. However, as the Dartmouth study bore out, such an approach may not necessarily result in lower bias after all: quite the opposite.

The personal descriptions gleaned from Davis et al. (2004) take this a step further, falling into categories showcasing which themes are most prevalent at PWIs: (1) Unfair or condescending treatment from the college (e.g., classroom offenses or administrative unresponsiveness to complaints); (2) The feeling by black students that they always "have to initiate the conversation" in order to make any connections with hesitant white students and faculty; (3) The resulting appearance of one's differences; when black students were not feeling unnoticed or "invisible", this was replaced by (or was

felt simultaneously with) "super visibility": the feeling that they "have to represent every black student in here"; and consequently (4) The tired refrain: "I have to prove I am worthy to be here".

Contrada et al. (2000) identify "stereotype confirmation-concern"—that is, "the chronic apprehension about appearing to confirm an ethnic stereotype"—as one of the top sources of ethnicity-related stress. On the other hand, "own-group conformity pressure" is a commonly felt stressor which, for example, may discourage African-Americans from excelling academically to avoid "acting white". Transitioning from one situation where the latter stressor is more salient to another situation where the former stressor is more salient—namely, the transition between high school and college—could conceivably create cognitive dissonance not conducive to academic success.

According to Jennifer Crocker and Steele (1998) the negative effects of such social stigmas are determined in part by an individual's appraisal of the "identity threat" posed by the "stigma-relevant stressor as potentially harmful to his or her social identity, and as exceeding his or her resources to cope with those demands". This can set off a chain of undesirable effects. Most individuals possess built-in threat-reduction mechanisms, which lead to "involuntary stress responses such as anxiety, vigilance to threat, and decreased working memory capacity". Other potential coping strategies include "blaming negative events on discrimination, identifying more closely with the threatened group, and disengaging self-esteem from threatening domains". Needless to say, improved well-being and academic performance are rarely seen as byproducts of these reactions.

3. Background

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is a campus of about 43,000 students, located in Madison, WI, the capital of Wisconsin, birthplace of the progressive movement, and a city of about 250,000 people. UW-Madison is approximately 75% White, 5% Asian, 5% Hispanic, 2% Black/African-American, and 9% International (Enrollment Reports 2017). About 61% of students are from Wisconsin. (Enrollment Reports 2017) Public school students in Wisconsin are about 73% White, 4% Asian, 10% Hispanic, and 10% Black/African-American (Public School Enrollment Data 2017). Despite this greater level of diversity, most white students in Wisconsin come from school districts with much less diversity. In 2016, 47.1% of the school districts in Wisconsin enrolled 90% or more white students, and 76% enrolled 80% or more white students. (Public School Enrollment Data 2017) A lack of cross-racial interactions for many incoming students leads to challenges for white students encountering greater racial diversity in college, fostering greater self-segregation (Nacoste 2015).

UW-Madison has a history of racial issues on campus. In the 1980s, a series of racial hate incidents prompted protests by black students on campus (Yamane 2002). In response, the University made an institutional change: a three-credit ethnic studies requirement in order for undergraduates to graduate (Yamane 2002). Seen as a victory then, some students see the requirement as not enough today. Cross-racial interactions are incredibly limited on campus, and students describe campus as "the most racially segregated place I've ever seen", as students of color spend time primarily with students of color and white students spend time primarily with white students (Vetterkind and Palasz 2016).

In early March 2016, a hate incident occurred at one of the predominately minority learning communities (Herzog 2016). A male student attacked and harassed a black female student, calling her "poor" and telling her "she didn't deserve to be here, that she wasn't pulling her own weight because she was on scholarship" (Herzog 2016). The perpetrator also called her "all kinds of names relating to her race, her class, and her gender" (Herzog 2016). Finally, the perpetrator spit on her (Herzog 2016). A few days later, #TheRealUW began trending on social media as students shared experiences of racism, bias, discrimination, and discontent with the university (Herzog 2016). Although the movement seemed to be triggered by a single hate and bias incident, there had been rising racial tension throughout the school year (Schneider 2016). A variety of hate incidents had gone public in the months preceding, with incidents ranging from anti-Semitic to anti-Native American (Schneider 2016).

The hashtag trended on multiple forms of social media, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The hashtag grew quickly with thousands of tweets being tweeted and retweeted within the first few

days. Quickly discovering it, the University's administration released multiple statements in response, and media outlets released a number of journalism pieces about it (Schneider 2016). Dialogue initially centered on the exemplification of students of color's stories of racism on campus; however, discussion of current events was also brought into the dialogue, including discussion regarding an incident in which a black student was arrested in class. There was no focus on just one race, and students of all minority races shared their experiences.

The movement shifted from a digital movement to a physical movement, and "TheRealUW" demonstrated all over campus, such as at dining halls on campus and even at a campaign event for 2016 presidential candidate Bernie Sanders (Schneider 2016). One of the most prominent demonstrations of #TheRealUW movement was in response to the arrest of a black student in class that occurred in April, one month after the movement initially began (Savidge 2016). In response to the deemed-inappropriate conduct of police, students marched across campus, occupying a library and blocking off a street for several hours (Savidge 2016). Although social media participation was briefly ignited in the wake of this event, as twitter will show, minimal content has been generated by students since then.

In this analysis, we examine uses of the hashtag "TheRealUW" on twitter. We selected this medium because it appeared this was the platform most students were sharing their experiences on. The open access to Twitter content coming from public accounts also made the site a prime choice for analysis. We examined the 2644 publicly available tweets that included #TheRealUW and were published between March 2016 and August 2017. Despite such a wide time frame, a majority (2315) of the tweets were published just in March or April of 2016. We excluded 357 tweets that appeared to be published from accounts that were non-individuals (Universities, groups, organizations, media outlets, etc.) Tweets were coded into the categories below on the basis of their own content or referenced content. Since tweets must be short, assumptions occasionally had to be made on whether a tweet implied something that was not stated. #TheRealUW was colloquially known to refer to racism at UW-Madison, and it was assumed in certain tweets that individuals were implying their statement demonstrated racism based on "#TheRealUW" being affixed to it. Some tweets did fit into multiple categories, and many tweets examined did not fit into any of the categories so will not be discussed.

4. Tweets

4.1. Verbal Racism

One hundred twenty-six tweets described first-hand experiences as the victim of perceived explicit or implicit verbal racism, bigotry, or perceived discrimination. Another eighty tweets described others' experiences. Many of the incidences described would be defined as microagressions, while other examples were explicitly racist. Experiences of microagressions, instances where students were slighted with a racial implication, were shared in a variety of contexts, and while many were miscellaneous, a few distinct trends did emerge.

Students of color described incidences in which they were often stereotyped based on their race, and assumed to be a student-athlete based on their status as a student of color on a college campus. One student tweeted "I started a running tally of how many times my black male friends are mistaken for athletes".

Incidences of students' tweets also included instances where race was inappropriately referred to in classrooms. In one such trend, students of color often complain of general discourse among white students in which they doubt the validity of students of color being accepted into the university on equal terms or receiving a scholarship under equal terms. One student tweeted "#therealUW where if you have a sports scholarship they worship you but if your scholarship is for anything else you don't deserve to be here".

Other instances of racism students experienced on campus were quite explicit, and directed at a particular student, or generalized as part of discourse among white students. While one student tweeted how they overheard two white students flat out say "they hate every Asian, wished UW was

back to normal & white", another tweeted "My story? Being laughed at and told "F**king Asian. This is not the place you should be" on a night out".

Incidences of subtle racism tend to be more common than incidences of blatant racism, and although on an individual basis are arguably less traumatizing, the cumulative effects of them can be "devastating" (Solorzano et al. 2000). Discourse among students agreed with this finding, and seemed to indicate that these acts of subtle racism were so frequent of an occurrence that they shaped their everyday experience at UW-Madison. One student tweeted "Not from the past, I still get that kind of comments everyday" affixed to an article about students' microagressions on campus.

Instances of blatant racial harassment have been found to affect the emotional health of students of color, leading many to fear for their safety (D'Augelli and Hershberger 1993). As one student wrote, "Something is profoundly wrong with our campus culture if POC (people of color) can't walk down the street without fearing verbal abuse #therealUW" Another student tweeted "my march madness has been dealing w racist events happening to friends, fear/anxiety in white spaces & lack of motivation. #therealUW".

Instances of both explicit and implicit racism were widespread and well-documented, with several hundred students of color at UW voluntarily sharing stories that referred to particular instances of these that they had experienced, and these forms of racism overall made up the plurality of #therealUW tweets.

Outside of verbal racism, many tweets mentioned incidences where students of color believed they had been discriminated against by their peers on the basis of their race, barring them from an opportunity. As one student tweeted "Getting denied entry into a party while your white friends gain entry or getting followed out to ask if you'd stole something". Racial discrimination is nothing new, and students of color on college campuses do not seem to be exempt from any of the everyday occurrences that racial minorities have to deal with all across the United States. Another student tweeted "#therealUW where in an exam no one wants to sit by you in fear you'll copy off them". For students of color, discrimination manifests itself differently from verbal racism, where rather than just having unequal social experiences compared to their white peers, discrimination may block the social experience from occurring in the first place, creating an inequality of social opportunities.

4.2. Mental Health

Eight tweets identified instances of general explicit or implicit verbal racism and bigotry as negatively affecting students' mental health. Explicit or implicit verbal racism often borders on harassment, and the effects of social isolation also further how social inequality is reflected in a student of color's mental health (Landrine and Klonoff 1996). Only a few students made this direct connection in their tweets, but some described the impact campus cultural incompetence has on mental health quite pointedly. One student wrote "being a student of color at UW means jeopardizing ur sanity for the sake of educating your white peers". The scope of the incidences described in many other tweets made obvious the capacity of these experiences to inflict stress on an individual's mental health. Evidence, in fact, has long shown that acts of racism and hate can take a toll on an individual's health, particularly mental health (Wallace et al. 2016). Recently, it has been discerned that black students at predominately white institutions across the United States face a looming mental health crisis as they cope with the burden of overt and covert racism (McGee and Stovall 2015).

Some students' tweets, while not elaborating on the connection between racial issues and mental health, were simply students of color professing their claim to mental health challenges, within the context of #TheRealUW as exemplifying the prevalence and effect of racial injustices on campus. One student tweeted "This University has been such a strain on my mental health #therealUW" while another replied "my displacement to Wisconsin was the start of me truly losing it". For many students of color, the challenge presented in regard to deciding between a world-class education and enduring a toxic social environment can most likely be summed up in one tweet "Do I have to choose between my humanity and my education?"

4.3. Housing

Fifteen tweets identified instances of general explicit or implicit verbal racism and bigotry as negatively affecting students' housing experience. At UW-Madison, all on-campus housing is communal to some extent. Students further have little control over what on-campus housing they are assigned to, and for the sake of proximity to campus, are geographically limited from living too far outside of campus. This means, for the most part, that students of color have little control in getting away from white students and detrimental environments as a whole. Vera-Toscano and Ateca-Amestoy (2008) found that housing satisfaction is heavily determined by the quality of social interactions in and around one's dwelling. Shook and Fazio (2008) found that students in interracial two-person dorms reported lower levels of satisfaction and less involvement with their roommate.

Tweets by students emphasized how their own or someone else's roommate had acted in a racially demeaning way. One student tweeted a lengthy experience in which he had been accosted, harassed, and called a racial slur on the very floor of a residence hall where he lived. One student shared an experience where she worked in housing and a student's parents requested "a white person to help her move in". Explicit instances of racism such as this demonstrate how racism can manifest itself into an inequality of housing-related experiences between white students and students of color. One tweet shared an article of how a UW-Madison fraternity was suspended after a black member complained of the "hostile, discriminatory environment". Alongside the article, a student wrote "Sad that so many people don't feel safe or welcomed in their homes."

4.4. Access to Spaces

Eleven tweets identified instances of general explicit or implicit verbal racism and bigotry as negatively affecting access to spaces. Students of marginalized groups are often subject to spaces where they fear psychological of emotional harm (Holley and Steiner 2005). In these spaces, particularly ones subject to interpersonal interactions, students may "not feel secure enough to take risks, honestly express their views, and share and explore their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors" (Holley and Steiner 2005). For more general spaces, students may not want to even use these spaces, and will feel motivated to avoid them (Feagin and Sikes 1996). While some students will feel uncomfortable and inhibited from full participation in a classroom as a result, this also can mean that for various areas around the University, such as "residence halls and streets with popular off-campus housing", students of color will not feel comfortable being in these areas (Washington et al. 2016). The 2016 survey at UW-Madison found that students of color tend to avoid areas where white students congregate to consume alcohol, in fear of harassment (Washington et al. 2016). This further contributes to the notion that relations between students of color and white students facilitate a divide in the accessibility of the University's resources.

The inaccessibility perpetuated by acts of racism and exclusivity were highlighted in one student's tweet "Today I couldn't go out to watch the sun rise cos I am scared of this campus. I am scared to exist. & that is on you @UWMadison!". Instances of racism, verbal or subtle, provoke students of color to avoid places where white students congregate. Some students' tweets drew the connection between racism and avoidance more blatantly, as one student put it "I avoided campus/downtown because I didn't want to deal with being called 'n*gger'". Students' fear of racial harassment as well as general sense of discomfort in areas with many white students demonstrates the negative effects racism uniquely has on college campuses.

4.5. Quality of Education

Forty-three tweets identified instances of general explicit or implicit verbal racism and bigotry as negatively affecting a student of color's quality of education. On predominantly white campuses, racial divides manifest as social divides within classrooms, students of color feel isolated and vulnerable, and white students of the racial majority fail to foster an inclusive environment (Tienda 2013).

Disparities persist in students of color's contact with faculty compared to white students (Chang 2005). Positivity of students of color's perception of their campus as well as the general level of interaction with other students has been found to be correlated with increased contact (Chang 2005). Implicitly and explicitly racist statements and actions isolate and disengage students of color from equal participation in the classroom and from equal relationships with instructors.

Many students of color do not feel comfortable fully participating in classes for fear of psychological or emotional harm (Holley and Steiner 2005). Given long-held racial tensions, relationships between students of color and everyone else in the classroom can be predisposed to be stressed (Hurtado 1992). One student tweeted "#therealUW is when the Ochem TA tells the class to turn and work in groups and everyone turns their back on you" Being the numerically dominant group in a classroom offers a number of privileges to white students that students of color do not have (Tienda 2013). Students of color in predominately white classrooms tend to participate less than students of color in majority-minority classrooms (Howard et al. 2006). Another student tweeted "#therealUW where you find yourself silent in a class discussion when you know the answer but in fear of being undermine(d) you don't speak". For many students of color, fear provokes disengagement based on expectations surrounding racial tensions, even if nothing in that particular classroom has been provoked yet.

For many students, their relationships with their instructors, peers, and the classroom as a whole can be damaged by racist statements that went unresolved (Washington Department of Education 2010). Several tweets referred to these instances. As one student wrote "Arguing with your WHITE male professor on why using the terms mulatto and colored people are not acceptable in your AfroAM class #therealUW". Another student tweeted "when you get told to "go back to Mexico" by a person in your class and you call them racist and they say "oh sorry it's just a joke"." Countless examples such as these and others demonstrate how racial incompetence is fracturing relationships and structures for students of color in classrooms.

4.6. Isolation and a Lack of Diversity

Thirty-one tweets expressed sentiments that the isolation minorities face and a lack of diversity on campus are issues. Students identified two major consequences of belonging to a minority group at a majority-dominant institution. One problem directly stems from the isolation, alienation, and negative social effects that arise from them (Lewis et al. 2000). The other is inherently caused by the unique needs of that small group being ignored (Eriksen 2010). The effect of racial isolation on a campus as large as UW-Madison is concerning, and some students voiced their problems with it through tweets. As one student put it "I like this digital studies class but it would be even better if I wasn't the only black person in it". Isolation contributes to the alienation students of color at predominately white institutions feel, furthering their dissatisfaction with their experience there (Shingles 1979).

Students of color are inherently at a disadvantage by not having like-raced peers and faculty around them at all times, as white students are essentially guaranteed (Denson and Chang 2009). Another student voiced her concern with poor role-modeling on campus as she stated that "Not once have I seen a Hispanic professor. The only Hispanic faculty I have seen are three custodians in my residence hall". For students of color, racial isolation fosters alienation and difficulty finding role models, two distinct challenges not affecting white students on campus.

While it may be inherently challenging to be a minority at a majority-white institution, reflecting the state's diversity and offering equal accessibility to the state's students is also a significant issue at UW-Madison. Every minority group except for Asian is significantly underrepresented at UW-Madison relative to the state's public schools (Enrollment Reports 2017; Public School Enrollment Data 2017). Many students voiced their qualms with the University's lack of diversity and inaccessibility to minority races. One student tweeted "#therealUW where #Native students are less than 1% of student body . . . on their own land". Another student tweeted, "mos def think i'm deserving of my full scholarship, and i think many more students of color are that have been overlooked. #therealUW".

4.7. Lack of Institutional Support

One hundred eleven tweets described how the university marginalizes the needs of students of color. Students of color have frequently been disappointed in attempts at action, both on the part of fellow students who proclaim an interest in dismantling racism, as well as the University as a whole, which has a responsibility to do so. One student voiced her disappointment: "Everybody "wants" to be an ally. Sadly, the allyship that actually works ain't sexy enough for some of y'all". With an extremely liberal student body, there are many social justice organizations on campus and in Madison. However, white students, even with good intentions, still fail to foster supportive environments for students of color at predominately white institutions (Tienda 2013).

Outside of students themselves doing little to eradicate racism, the University administration and its faculty themselves fail to take proper action in creating a more inclusive campus climate. Administration at predominately white institutions can overlook the needs of students of color, resulting in continued disparities and tension (Nelson 1969). As one student tweeted "The danger in #Madison is that it always ends with conversations", suggesting that UW often responds to racial incidents with dialogues that lead to little change as opposed to actual action that might provoke something more substantial. Some students further substantiated the gap between white students and students of color's needs being met as a difference of perspective, with one student tweeting "You may all have the comfort of thinking these (are) isolated incidents, but we don't". As overarching discourse continues to demonstrate the significance of students of color's needs not being met, the phrase tweeted by multiple students speaks collectively for the perspective of students of color on campus: "I repeat: UW-Madison does not deserve its students of color".

4.8. Criminal Justice System/Authority

While only five tweets described first-hand experiences of being mistreated by law enforcement/authority, sixty-one tweets expressed the sentiment that this was an issue. In the history of the criminal justice system or authority as a whole in the United States, there has been a historical legacy of mistreatment of people of color. Today, this historical legacy has been improved upon substantially, but inequalities persist (Brunson 2007). The criminal justice system today is set up in a way that systemically oppresses individuals of color (Murakawa and Beckett 2010). Police officers themselves and individuals carrying the right to physical legal authority have been found to tend to be biased against individuals of color, particularly black people (Johnson 2004). Students of color affirm that they believe their experiences of mistreatment by authority are racially based.

One student tweeted her experience of how she received a disciplinary referral to the University for watching Netflix too loudly and was documented as "sassy". Many students' tweets referred to a particular incidence in which a black student was arrested and removed from his lecture class for alleged graffiti. Students voiced how the incident demonstrated that the University had a greater commitment to arresting this student than they did to any other aspect of his life: "They care more about him getting locked up than him graduating". One student tweeted "The first thing I want to know when choosing a great #university is will I get arrested in class?", while another replied "And will the color of my skin make it more likely?". The mistreatment of students of color by law enforcement was also referred to in some tweets in miscellaneous examples of biased treatment.

Tweets described incidences where students of color were the victim of a crime and there was insufficient action on the part of the authorities. Several tweets exemplified the injustice in how students of colors are directly victimized without authority acting fairly in response. Referring to a race-based hate crime incident on campus, one student tweeted "the fact that no charges were pressed for the harassment in Sellery, but I was LITERALLY ARRESTED for smoking pot".

In terms of hate crimes particularly, students repeatedly expressed discontent with how the police and the University respond to incidents of racial hate. One student summed it up as follows: "being a student of color, you always feel unsafe on campus". Students of color shared multiple stories of harassment or violence in which the perpetrator was met with no or subpar legal repercussions.

One student shared a story of how a Latino friend was the victim of a blindside attack by four white men, and that the police drove by and took no action in interfering. This was exemplified by tweets from #TheRealUW, which reveal that students of color continue to perceive racism as a threat to their relationship with law enforcement and other forms of authority.

5. Discussion

The unique social experiences and opportunities affecting students of color are a focal point of concern for students' dialogues. These inequalities manifest themselves in multiple aspects of the lives of students of color, including mental health, housing, access to spaces, and overall quality of education. This central inequality of social experiences and opportunities refers to the individual racism that white students and faculty impose on students of color. This individual racism can be blatant or subtle racial statements or individual discrimination. The experiences of students brought to light uniquely how these instances—which do not affect white students—play a role in the lives of students of color, fostering a set of race-based inequalities on a college campus. Although research has well-analyzed the unique experience of students of color at a predominantly white institution, this research draws a line between the experiences and manifestations of particular racial inequalities. Although students' testimonies on #TheRealUW overwhelmingly focused on individual acts affecting students, students of color also voiced their concerns on distinct issues, such as institutional and systemic racism and disparities.

As the University of Wisconsin-Madison deals with widespread incidences of social racism, students of color at other universities protest in response to slightly different racial issues. In the spring of 2015, students of color at the University of Virginia held demonstrations following the beating of a black student by campus law enforcement officers (Townes and Ollstein 2015). Students also expressed frustration with businesses discriminating against students on the basis of race. In 2017, students of color at American University in Washington D.C. demonstrated after bananas were symbolically "lynched" along with racially hateful messages scrawled around campus (McLaughlin and Burnside 2017). Juxtaposed to students of color at UW-Madison starting #TheRealUW movement in the wake of an act of individual racism, these three examples highlight different forms of racism on three different campuses that all elicited strong reactions from students of color. Despite the distinct incidents, in the wake of each of these events, students of color at all of these universities acknowledged microaggressions as a significant issue they face (Townes and Ollstein 2015; McLaughlin and Burnside 2017).

Much of the racism described by students of color at UW-Madison was subtle and appeared to be unintentional on the behalf of the perpetrator. At many universities around the United States, the racism students of color take issue with is blatantly hateful, such as the appearance of white nationalist fliers and recruitment materials at over 150 different college campuses in 2017 (Crawford 2017). Given the lack of experience with diversity that many incoming students at UW-Madison come in with, a higher level of unintentional racism, particularly at UW, would make sense, but would be difficult to conclude without comparable data from other universities.

During the summer of 2016, UW-Madison began experimenting with a cultural competency program for incoming students. This program, called "Our Wisconsin", was initially tested on around 1000 incoming freshmen and was "aimed at increasing knowledge about cultural differences and promoting community among incoming students" (Hoverman 2016). Results indicated that students were more likely to agree that learning about diversity was important, felt more comfortable talking about race, and were more likely to question a friend about a biased or stereotypical comment after completing the course (UW-Madison Expanding Diversity Training Programs 2017). The program was later divided into two mediums in summer 2017, one that would be required for all incoming students, and a second that would be optional. A Black Cultural Center was also opened on the campus in 2017 and University Health Services also expanded their mental health services with outreach specifically for students of color (Campus Climate Progress Report: Fall 2017). Several other small initiatives to promote the conversation on race and inclusion have also been developed. The University of

Wisconsin-Madison is certainly taking action to attempt to shift the racial climate, but the impacts of these changes still remain unclear.

The breadth of effects of negative social experiences and opportunities reaffirms the importance of increasing cultural competence at predominately white institutions. Institutional and systemic barriers, which are still of concern to students of color, drive racial inequality in terms of access to institutions of higher education. However, factors such as social experiences and opportunities further disenfranchise students of color that have already overcome one barrier, adding a second disadvantage for racial minorities. Particular effort needs to be applied to eradicating the individual racism that plagues the lives of students of color.

References

Allen, Walter. 1992. The Color of Success: African-American College Student Outcomes at Predominantly White and Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities. *Harvard Educational Review* 62: 26–45. [CrossRef]

Antonio, Anthony, Michael Chang, Kenji Hakuta, David A. Kenny, Shana Levin, and Milem Jeffery. 2004. Effects of racial diversity on complex thinking in college students. *Psychological Science* 15: 507–10. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Brown, M. Christopher, and James Earl Davis. 2001. The Historically Black College as Social Contract, Social Capital, and Social Equalizer. *Peabody Journal of Education* 76: 31–49. [CrossRef]

Brunson, Rod K. 2007. "Police don't Like Black People": African-American Young Men's Accumulated Police Experiences. *Criminology & Public Policy* 6: 71–101. [CrossRef]

Campus Climate Progress Report: Fall. 2017. University of Wisconsin-Madison. Available online: https://campusclimate.wisc.edu/initiatives/ (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Campus Climate Survey. 2017. University of Wisconsin-Madison. Available online: https://diversity.wisc.edu/climate/survey/ (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Chang, June. 2005. Faculty-Student Interaction at the Community College: A Focus on Students of Color. *Research in Higher Education* 46: 769–802. [CrossRef]

Contrada, Richard J., Richard D. Ashmore, Melvin L. Gary, Ellliot Coups, Jill D. Egeth, Andrea Sewell, Kevin Ewell, Tanya M. Goyal, and Valerie Chasse. 2000. Ethnicity-related sources of stress and their effects on well-being. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 9: 136–39. [CrossRef]

Crawford, Amy. 2017. *White Nationalists Are Targeting College Campuses, and These Students are Fighting Back*. Montgomery: Southern Poverty Law Center. Available online: https://www.splcenter.org/news/2017/05/02/white-nationalists-are-targeting-college-campuses-and-these-students-are-fighting-back (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Crocker, Jennifer, Brenda Major, and Claude Steele. 1998. Social stigma. In *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 4th ed. Edited by Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske and Gardner Lindzey. Boston: McGraw-Hill, vol. 2, pp. 504–53.

D'Augelli, Anthony R., and Scott L. Hershberger. 1993. African American Undergraduates on a Predominantly White Campus: Academic Factors, Social Networks, and Campus Climate. *The Journal of Negro Education* 62: 67–81. [CrossRef]

Davis, Mitzi, Yvonne Dias-Bowie, Katherine Greenberg, Gary Klukken, Howard R. Pollio, Sandra P. Thomas, and Charles L. Thompson. 2004. A fly in the buttermilk: Descriptions of university life by successful Black undergraduate students at a predominately white southeastern university. *The Journal of Higher Education* 75: 420–45.

Denson, Nida, and Mitchell J. Chang. 2009. Racial Diversity Matters: The Impact of Diversity-Related Student Engagement and Institutional Context. *American Educational Research Journal* 46: 322–53. [CrossRef]

Enrollment Reports. 2017. University of Wisconsin-Madison Office of the Registrar. Available online: https://registrar.wisc.edu/enrollment-reports/ (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2010. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.

Feagin, Joe R., and Melvin P. Sikes. 1996. How Black Students cope with Racism on White Campuses. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 8: 91–97. [CrossRef]

Harper, Shaun R., and Sylvia Hurtado. 2007. Nine Themes in Campus Racial Climates and Implications for Institutional Transformation. *New Directions for Student Services* 2007: 7–24. [CrossRef]

Herzog, Nora Laine. 2016. UW-Madison is Wild. *The Huffington Post*. March 16. Available online: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nora-laine-herzog/uwmadison-is-wild_b_9479720.html (accessed on 1 December 2001).

Holley, Lynn C., and Sue Steiner. 2005. Safe Space: Student Perspectives on Classroom Environment. *Journal of Social Work Education* 41: 49–64. [CrossRef]

Hoverman, Will. 2016. *UW-Madison Prepares Cultural Competency Program for New Students*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison. Available online: https://news.wisc.edu/uw-madison-prepares-cultural-competency-program-for-new-students/ (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Howard, Jay R., Aimee Zoeller, and Yale Pratt. 2006. Students' Race and Participation in Classroom Discussion in Introductory Sociology: A Preliminary Investigation. *Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 6: 14–38.

Hurtado, Sylvia. 1992. The Campus Racial Climate: Contexts of Conflict. *The Journal of Higher Education* 63: 539–69. [CrossRef]

Johnson, Karl E. 2004. Police-Black Community Relations in Postwar Philadelphia: Race and Criminalization in Urban Social Spaces, 1945–1960. *The Journal of African American History* 89: 118–34. [CrossRef]

Landrine, Hope, and Elizabeth A. Klonoff. 1996. The schedule of racist events: A measure of racial discrimination and a study of its negative physical and mental health consequences. *Journal of Black Psychology* 22: 144–68. [CrossRef]

Levin, Shana, Colette Van Laar, and Jim Sidanius. 2003. The effects of ingroup and outgroup friendships on ethnic attitudes in college: A longitudinal study. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 6: 76–92. [CrossRef]

Lewis, Amanda E., Mark Chesler, and Tyrone A. Forman. 2000. The Impact of "Colorblind" Ideologies on Students of Color: Intergroup Relations at a Predominantly White University. *The Journal of Negro Education* 69: 74–91.

Mcdonald, Nicole L. 2011. African American College Students at Predominantly White and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Ph.D. thesis, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA.

McGee, Ebony O., and David Stovall. 2015. Reimagining Critical Race Theory in Education: Mental Health, Healing, and the Pathway to Liberatory Praxis. *Educational Theory* 65: 491–511. [CrossRef]

McLaughlin, Elliot C., and Tina Burnside. 2017. Bananas, Nooses at American University Spark Protests, Demands. *CNN*, May 17. Available online: http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/17/us/american-university-bananas-nooses-hate-crime-protests/index.html (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Murakawa, Naomi, and Katherine Beckett. 2010. The Penology of Racial Innocence: The Erasure of Racism in the Study and Practice of Punishment. *Law and Society Review* 44: 695–730. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Nacoste, Rupert. 2015. Self-Segregation on College Campuses. *Utne Reader*, April. Available online: https://www.utne.com/community/self-segregation-on-college-campuses-ze0z1504zdeh (accessed on 1 December 2017).

NCES (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics). 2017. *The Condition of Education 2017 (NCES 2017-144), Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty*. Washington: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Nelson, Bryce. 1969. Brandeis: How a Liberal University Reacts to a Black Take-over. *Science* 163: 1431–34. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Patton, Tracey Owens. 2008. Jim Crow on Fraternity Row: A Study of the Phenomenon of Blackface in the Southern White Fraternal Order. *Visual Communication Quarterly* 15: 150–68. [CrossRef]

Public School Enrollment Data. 2017. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Available online: https://dpi.wi.gov/cst/data-collections/student/ises/published-data/excel (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Retention and Graduation Rates. 2017. University of Wisconsin-Madison Office of the Provost. Available online: https://apir.wisc.edu/students/retention-graduation/ (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Richeson, Jennifer A., and J. Nicole Shelton. 2003. When prejudice does not pay: Effects of interracial contact on executive function. *Psychological Science* 14: 287–90. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Roebuck, Julian B., and Komanduri S. Murty. 1993. *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Their Place in American Higher Education*. Westport: Praeger.

Savidge, Nico. 2016. Hundreds at UW-Madison Protest Student's Arrest, Racist Incidents. *Wisconsin State Journal*, April 22. Available online: http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/university/hundreds-at-uw-madison-protest-student-s-arrest-racist-incidents/article_d655c1d5-2815-5278-9400-4eb40379d719.html (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Schneider, Pat. 2016. #TheRealUW: A Social Media Movement is Forcing UW-Madison to Confront Its Race Problems. *The Capital Times*, April 20. Available online: http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/university/therealuw-a-social-media-movement-is-forcing-uw-madison-to/article_862905e8-5527-5f4d-ae92-39fe7d767e59.html (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Shingles, Richard. 1979. College as a Source of Black Alienation. *Journal of Black Studies* 9: 267–89. [CrossRef]

Shook, Natalie J., and Russel H. Fazio. 2008. Interracial Roommate Relationships: An Experimental Field Test of the Contact Hypothesis. *Psychological Science* 19: 717–23. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Solorzano, Daniel, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso. 2000. Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students. *The Journal of Negro Education* 69: 60–73. [CrossRef]

Tienda, Marta. 2013. Diversity ≠ Inclusion: Promoting Integration in Higher Education. *Educational Researcher* 42: 467–75. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Townes, Carimad, and Alice Miranda Ollstein. 2015. At the University Of Virginia, Students Say Martese Johnson's Beating Was the Tip of the Iceberg. *ThinkProgress*, March 19. Available online: https://thinkprogress.org/at-the-university-of-virginia-students-say-martese-johnsons-beating-was-the-tip-of-the-iceberg-158e04b447b5/ (accessed on 1 December 2017).

UW-Madison Expanding Diversity Training Programs. 2017. University of Wisconsin-Madison. Available online: https://diversity.wisc.edu/uw-madison-expanding-diversity-training-program/ (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Vera-Toscano, Esperanza, and Victoria Ateca-Amestoy. 2008. The Relevance of Social Interactions on Housing Satisfaction. *Social Indiciators Research* 86: 257–74. [CrossRef]

Vetterkind, Riley, and Emma Palasz. 2016. Confronting #TheRealUW: Marginalized students reveal experiences of an unwelcoming campus. *The Badger Herald*, April 5.

Wallace, Stephanie, James Nazroo, and Laia Becares. 2016. Cumulative Effect of Racial Discrimination on the Mental Health of Ethnic Minorities in the United Kingdom. *American Journal of Public Health* 106: 1294–300. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Washington Department of Education. 2010. *The Effects of Racism in Schools*; Washington: Washington Department of Education.

Washington, Reonda, Melissa Xiong, and Jeanette Kowalik. 2016. The Color of Drinking: An Exploratory Study of the Impact of the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Alcohol Culture on Students of Color. Poster. Available online: https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/host.madison.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/d/61/d6115798-3811-52ac-ac1b-98783ff6d6e6/580e0f35deace.pdf.pdf/ (accessed on 1 December 2017).

Yamane, David. 2002. *Student Movements for Multiculturalism: Challenging the Curricular Color*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.