

CAMPUS CLIMATE AND DIVERSITY ISSUES: LISTENING TO STUDENTS

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated first and foremost to my husband and partner in life, William A. Skelly, for always being present, supportive, and engaged with me in life-long learning and genuine caring for students of all ages.

To my parents, James A. and Anne E. Mernagh, and my parents-in-law, V. Robert and Joan C. Skelly, whose love and support provided me, early and throughout my life, with the tools necessary to live, learn, and love. Most recently, to my mother, Anne, and mother-in-law, Joan, who continue to demonstrate that true determination in the face of adversity is a gift of love.

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ABSTRACT

Our colleges and universities do not exist in a vacuum and, thus, the responsibility of higher education professionals to assure an accepting, supportive environment for all students is paramount. The first step toward achieving true pluralism on any college campus is to discover what the current campus climate for diversity is. Through listening to individuals, qualitative methods can allow the researcher to hear diverse perspectives that quantitative methods might likely miss. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences and perceptions of students at Montana State University-Bozeman (MSU-Bozeman) in order to assess the current campus climate, specifically with regard to diversity issues.

The research design was a qualitative phenomenology triangulated with document analysis. The study focused on the phenomenon of campus climate as experienced by the students who were interviewed. Individual interviews performed during the 1997-98 academic year and supplemented with university-level document analysis allowed for comparison of student perceptions and University intentions and actions. A total of 68 undergraduate students who were enrolled for the 1997-98 academic year responded to open-ended interviews. These included students who identified themselves as African American (8), Asian American (12), Caucasian American (24), Hispanic American (12), and Native American (12).

Findings include a brief overview of results for each of the student groups involved in the study, which highlight the differences among student groups. A discussion of the implications for practice tied to the improvement of general campus climate is included; these implications stem from the shared experiences across all groups of students interviewed and, thus, would improve not only the general campus climate for the entire student body, but at the same time also improve the campus climate for diversity. Finally, a discussion of specific implications for practice related to improving the campus climate for diversity is included. These recommendations are based on the experiences of each of the groups of students interviewed, the document analysis completed, and the review of the literature regarding the study of campus climate.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education System in the United States faces many challenges as it moves toward the future. One specific challenge that professional educators face is the facilitation of community building across campus for all students, faculty, and staff. Higher Education environments reflect our society at large, and, thus, are troubled by societal issues. Prejudice, discrimination and subsequent acts of ethnoviolence are causes of tension on campuses across the United States (Ehrlich, 1995). The recent national and state level attacks on affirmative action are specific examples of how societal woes regarding diversity issues affect campus communities.

Each year, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities (AGB) publishes a paper that highlights their top ten public policy issues for higher education. In 1996, this list included both affirmative action and campus climate. The AGB contended that, “The deterioration in the campus climate in terms of race and gender relations, the incidence of crime, and the growing shrillness of debate could have public-policy implications in the courts and through legislation” (p.5). The 2003–2004 issue of this paper again included two challenges faced by higher education and tied to the issue of diversity on campuses: affirmative action and the educational challenges that universities and colleges will face as the numbers of diverse students entering colleges and universities rapidly increase.

The societal issues of racism, discrimination, and elitism seem to work in tandem to create instant challenges for institutions of higher education to address. Most Caucasian American students come to college campuses having had little opportunity to interact with students of color. In contrast, students of color who arrive on campuses typically have broad experiences dealing with the white majority population throughout their lives (Ehrlich, 1995). In 1989, the results of a survey conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE) showed that over 40% of administrators in higher education felt that their campus climates were poor, or no better than fair, for minority students (Ascher, 1990).

Students who represent the majority population on predominantly white campuses seem uncertain and confused about dealing with students of color (Bourassa, 1991). Their fear and discomfort result in their voluntary segregation or separation from students who are different than they are. White students at times deny that racism exists and often speak of reverse discrimination. At the same time, students of color face alienation and frustration on predominantly white college campuses (Harris & Nettles, 1991). Past negative experiences with whites may lead to a lack of trust regarding social interactions. Both white students and students of color bring to campus what they have learned about each other throughout their childhoods.

The concept of *critical mass* (Ascher, 1990) is important to the development of pluralism on college campuses. Schools should strive to establish minority student subgroups that equal 20% of the total student body. The concept of critical mass should not in any way be considered a quota, but rather a condition sought to allow students of color

a comfort level at predominantly white institutions. While simply increasing the numbers of minority students on campus might be an expected initial step toward diversity, “increasing the racial/ethnic diversity on a campus while neglecting to attend to the racial climate can result in difficulties for students of color as well as for white students” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999).

The California Postsecondary Education Commission defined campus climate as, “the formal and informal environment--both institutionally and community-based--in which individuals learn, teach, work and live in a post-secondary setting” (1992a, p.2). Harris and Nettles (1996) also described campus climate. “The attitudes, behaviors, and pre-college characteristics of students combine with the norms, ideologies, and values of their institutions to create a campus climate. The climate of an institution is therefore comprised of interactions between student characteristics and the characteristics of their institutions” (p. 331). Kuh (1993) expanded on the concept of campus climate by describing it as the process by which all institutional constituents experience their university.

Ethnoviolence, acts of prejudice meant to harm others due specifically to their connection, either perceived or actual, to a particular group is nothing new on college campuses. As Ehrlich (1995) reported, there are some intriguing differences in the incidents that occur today when compared with incidents of the past. The conflicts that occur on campuses are given much greater news and media coverage than in the past. Present day incidents tend to be more violent, as our society has lately experienced more open and hostile opposition to civil rights and civil liberties. Minority groups, more

empowered now than in the past, also oppose incidents of violence in a more assertive manner.

The 1980s on college campuses saw increases in student self-interest. Dalton (1991) suggested that, “The increase in bias-related incidents among college students must also be seen in the context of some fundamental changes in these students’ values and experiences and of their struggle with developmental tasks” (p.8). According to Perry (1970) one of the central challenges for students during the college years is dealing with both academic and social diversity. The current campus peer culture seems to be more tolerant of intolerant behavior than ever before (Dalton, 1991).

Bourassa (1991) claimed that, “A successful college education must prepare all students to live in and contribute to a society that is increasingly racially diverse” (p. 21). Students progress through the higher education system in differential patterns. Edgert (1994) pointed out that, while individual student characteristics are often cited as the reasons for these differential patterns of progress, the concept of campus climate is drawing attention as another key explanation for the variety of ways that students navigate the arena of higher education. It is evident that higher education professionals face great challenges and grave responsibilities regarding the development of campuses that not only tolerate, but *celebrate*, diversity. Pettigrew (1994) and Ehrlich (1995) each pointed out that prejudice is a learned response and, thus, can also be unlearned. Perhaps this fact in and of itself is cause for hope and hard work.

Statement of the Problem

As a society we are faced with many challenges associated with diversity. We all hold a share of the responsibility to facilitate and enhance genuine acceptance and collaboration among our citizens. Our colleges and universities do not exist in a vacuum and, thus, the responsibility of higher education professionals to assure an accepting, supportive environment for all students is paramount. It seems sensible then that the first step toward true pluralism on any college campus is an attempt to discover what the current campus climate for diversity is. Do students simply tolerate differences, or is there a sense of true acceptance and celebration of differences among students? How do students of color feel, and what are their experiences and perceptions regarding the campus climate? What do white students think about diversity on their campus? Do University documents address diversity issues, and, if so, what do they communicate to students, faculty, and staff about the institutional commitment to diversity?

Smith, Wolf, and Levitan (1994) addressed the study of diversity issues in the higher education arena. They lauded the idea of conducting research from the perspective of transforming the institution and also encouraged a variety of research methods be utilized by researchers. They encouraged researchers to utilize a variety of qualitative methods, "Hearing the voices of individuals and attending to their experiences of the institution has validity not represented by group means" (Smith et al., p. 3). The authors added, "Because qualitative methods do not set limits for size, the approach can acknowledge the experiences of individuals and small groups and allow for hearing a diversity of perspectives that quantitative methods traditionally overlook" (p. 4).

The promotion of diversity as a genuine value on campuses is always important, but especially so when a predominantly white institution (PWI) is situated in a geographical area that inhibits cross-cultural experiences for students prior to their matriculation. These students may have their first opportunity to interact with individuals who are different than they are upon their entrance to the higher education arena (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Hurtado and colleagues also noted three keys to improving the campus climate for diversity. First and foremost was the need for comprehension of the environment as perceived by different racial/ethnic student groups. Facilitation of opportunities for purposeful and ongoing interactions between or among students, faculty, and staff of diverse backgrounds was also noted as an essential ingredient for climate improvement. They also recommended that interactions take place in a variety of environments across campus. Finally, the authors recommended an understanding of the educational benefits of diversity. The ways in which diversity affects the quality of student learning, as well as the development of life skills necessary to succeed in society, should be seriously considered in planning initiatives (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999).

Through this study I strove to take an important look at the perceptions and experiences of the student-body at one particular predominantly white campus. I listened to students' stories and analyzed what they shared in an attempt to understand their common and uncommon experiences according to race and/or ethnicity, gender and experience level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to explore and describe the experiences and perceptions of students at Montana State University-Bozeman (MSU-Bozeman) in order to assess the contemporary campus climate with specific regard to diversity issues. I also examined the university-level documents related to campus climate diversity issues in order to describe University endeavors as well as to identify and clarify ideas and approaches that would further inform campus decision-makers regarding institutional challenges that emerged throughout the course of the study.

Research Questions

The major research questions that guided my exploration throughout the course of this study were:

1. What experiences and/or perceptions do undergraduate students at MSU-Bozeman have about campus climate with specific regard to diversity issues?
2. How do undergraduate students' experiences of the campus climate for diversity differ by race/ethnicity, gender or experience level?
3. How are undergraduate students' experiences of the campus climate for diversity similar?
4. What do existing university-level documents communicate regarding campus climate for diversity issues faced by MSU-Bozeman constituents?

Overview of the Study

This exploration was well suited to qualitative inquiry for several distinct reasons (Merriam, 1998). The research questions I asked pertained to students' experiences and perceptions regarding campus climate and diversity issues. I sought insight into *how* students felt and *why* they felt the way they did about these key issues. One of my main goals, as investigator, was that this endeavor be an integrated writing that thoroughly described and interpreted the explored issues from the perspectives of the students I interviewed.

I employed a qualitative phenomenology triangulated with document analysis research design in the performance of this study. My study focused on the perceptions and experiences of students and attempted genuine, empathic interpretation of what was communicated. An additional focus was the interaction among individuals, especially as they related to the social problems, challenges, and concerns that were imbedded in the research questions. As is typical, the educational context of this study binds these foci broadly to teaching and learning (Merriam, 1998). Patton (1990) described a phenomenological study as "one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience" (p. 69). Throughout this study I focused on the phenomenon of campus climate as experienced by the students who were interviewed.

Qualitative data were also collected through the analysis of university-level written documents that addressed the key concepts of campus climate for diversity. Document analysis, according to Patton (1990) "yields excerpts, quotations, or entire

passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys” (p. 10).

Context of the Study

MSU-Bozeman is a four-year public, comprehensive, land grant university with an enrollment of approximately 12,000 students. It offers undergraduate and graduate programs in a variety of academic pursuits, such as liberal arts, physical sciences, agriculture, architecture, business, nursing, education, and engineering. The University is located in a Rocky Mountain setting of rural Montana. The large majority, approximately 87%, of undergraduate students attending the University are White Americans. University events held each spring semester that celebrate diversity include a Native American Pow-Wow, events honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and an International Food Bazaar. While some diverse student populations have representation tied to official University student organizations, others do not. Thus Native American students have a student club and a separate environment; however, other student groups involved in my study do not. There is also an official organization for students over traditional age (SOTA), the Women’s Center, and a newly formed Diversity Awareness Office, which sponsors a variety of diversity-related offerings. MSU-Bozeman faces a particular diversity challenge in that, to achieve a truly pluralistic campus community, it must go beyond the stated University recruitment and retention goals of minority groups

at existing statewide levels or percentages. The University employs a New Student Services recruiter who is charged with attracting Native American students to campus.

My study, conducted during the 1997 fall and 1998 spring academic semesters, employed individual interviews in the collection of qualitative data. I utilized a purposeful sampling technique in order to ensure that a balanced sample was achieved throughout the course of the study. I strove to interview equal numbers of students by race/ethnicity, gender, and experience levels. I interviewed students who identified themselves as African American, Asian American, Caucasian American, Hispanic American or Native American. In addition, document analysis allowed me to explore pertinent university-level documents and written policies related to the research topic. I collected demographic information through the use of a short, demographic information form that I asked students to complete prior to their individual interviews.

This project focused on exploring the concept of campus climate for diversity at MSU-Bozeman. I studied campus climate for diversity with specific regard to the quality of interactions experienced and/or perceived by students in a variety of environments: on campus academic environments, on campus student life environments and off campus community environments. Through the use of individual interviews, I was able to describe and interpret the experiences and ideas of undergraduate students.

A review of official university-level documents and policies that related to or addressed campus climate for diversity in any way allowed for a more thorough understanding of University goals and objectives. This review, in combination with the individual student interviews, gave me greater insight into the degree of congruity

between the issues that students communicated and the endeavors of the University related to those issues. This review also aided me in identifying the diversity challenges which MSU-Bozeman faces as it approaches the future.

Significance of the Study: Relation to Practice and Policy

One of the missing pieces in the study of campus climate has been the lack of research devoted to the analysis and comparison of thoughts and perceptions held by various racial/ethnic groups on campuses. Student perceptions vary by race and ethnicity, but not many studies have compared perceptions across more than one or two groups of students. Hurtado (1992) expressed the need for such multi-group research efforts. My study involved analysis of qualitative data according to five racial/ethnic groups, by gender, and by students' experience level with the University. While the study of campus climate across higher education institutions is critical from a national perspective, the importance of efforts made on individual campuses and with individual students must not be underestimated. Students' experiences and perceptions begin at individual institutions, whose leaders have ongoing responsibilities to assess current climate issues, support ongoing positive efforts, and facilitate change as necessary. Because each campus is unique, individual campus cultures must be taken into consideration, and there is no better way to do this than through this type of in-depth analysis.

My study has the potential of enhancing practice and policy on an institutional level by providing initial qualitative multi-group information about campus climate with regard to diversity issues for MSU-Bozeman constituent groups. It also adds to the qualitative body of knowledge regarding a variety of student groups (racial/ethnic, gender, experience level) by sharing these students' thoughts and experiences about their experiences on a predominantly white campus. In addition, my study provides a picture of how Caucasian students feel and what they think about the climate for diversity on campus. Finally, this study augments what is known about the challenges and issues faced by the administrators of predominantly white higher education institutions in their attempts to improve the campus climates for diversity on their home campuses.

Definitions

Campus Climate

The concept of campus climate was defined in this study as the integration of individual and group interactions experienced by the students who co-existed in this particular higher education environment. Students responded to questions that were designed to discover how they felt about the quality of their interpersonal interactions across a number of environments that included academic environments, student life environments, and community environments. Special attention was paid to students' experiences of their campus climate in regard to diversity.

Diversity

While the scope of this study did not allow me to consider all aspects of diversity, a broad view of diversity was assumed throughout. Diversity was considered through a number of particular lenses in this study including race, ethnicity, gender and the experience level of students at the University. Other aspects of and experiences with diversity were shared by student participants and were given appropriate attention in the findings reported. Some examples included socio-economic status, national origin and sexual orientation.

Ethnoviolence

Ethnoviolence describes acts of prejudice meant to harm others due specifically to their connection, either perceived or actual, to a particular group. Groups may be defined in a variety of ways. Some include those described above: race, ethnicity, and gender. Other possible examples of groups subject to ethnoviolence include those identified with sexual orientation, physical disability or characteristics, or religious backgrounds.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

Several delimitations of my study need to be addressed. I interviewed only undergraduate students enrolled at MSU-Bozeman. This delimitation narrowed the scope of the study considerably. Data collection through individual interviewing took place during the Fall 1997 and Spring 1998 semesters, and, thus, the time line utilized was a

delimiting factor as well. The utilization of individual interviews and document analysis are also delimiting factors that narrow the scope of the study.

Limitations

As is the case with all qualitative studies, the ability to generalize findings beyond the research environment is often limited. The fact that only undergraduate students were interviewed might also be seen as a limitation, as other University constituents were not included in this particular study.

The data collection methods of individual interviews and document analysis were also limitations. The individual interviews were limitations to the extent that the quality of the interviews was a function of my interviewer skills in combination with the characteristics of each individual participant. The results of document analysis were also a function of my ability as a researcher in completing the analysis.

Summary

Chapter one provides the reader with a general overview of the topic studied and the research procedures that I utilized throughout the course of the study. The second chapter includes the review of the literature as it relates to the study of campus climate. The literature review was organized to provide a variety of connections for the reader. The first of these connections includes an introductory overview of the socio-cultural forces regarding diversity that impact our college campuses. These forces are seen as external to the institution itself; societal and historical influences that have had overriding consequences for institutions of higher education. The second and most dominant focus

of the review includes an overview of the study of campus climate for diversity. I focused on what other researchers have done in exploring campus climate, including pertinent findings of research efforts.

Chapter three is a detailed account of the research procedure. It includes specific information regarding the assumptions of qualitative design, the design of the study, the researcher's role, data collection procedures, data and document analysis procedures, and verification of research procedures. Chapter four, the initial findings chapter of the study, includes description of the campus climate environment that students experience in common. Chapter five, the second findings chapter, includes descriptions of the differences among students' perspectives regarding campus climate for diversity. Chapter six, the third findings chapter, includes the ideas gleaned through the document analysis of appropriate university-level documents. Chapter seven includes a discussion of the implications of the study, along with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter includes a review of the literature as it relates to the study of campus climate in general, as well as with specific regard to diversity issues. This is a complex topic, and thus I hope that the organization of this review will provide the reader with a variety of topical connections that help to clarify and synthesize the most important ideas. The first of these connections includes a brief historical overview of issues that cannot be ignored as one considers the impact of the social challenges regarding race and gender in our culture. These historical and social influences have had, and will continue to have, overriding consequences for institutions of higher education.

The second section of this overview involves the study of general campus climate and issues deemed most important by researchers at this point in time. Finally, and most importantly, I have provided a review regarding the study of campus climate for diversity. I focused on what other researchers have done in exploring campus climate, including pertinent findings of research efforts and recommendations for best practices on college campuses.

Historical Perspective

Many historical and current external forces continue to impact the climate on our college campuses. The first step in the movement toward equal access to higher

education was the passing of the 1862 Morrill Act, which set aside land in every state to either sell to raise funding for education or to use as the locations for educational institutions (Thelin, 1994). As a result of the Morrill Act, the first land grant institutions arose, helping to begin the breaking of socioeconomic barriers to education. In 1890, the Second Morrill Act required that equal opportunities be granted to students of higher education at federally funded land grant colleges. It also noted that higher education opportunities could be separate but equal, the results of which included a largely segregated world of higher education. This second act paved the way for the building of Historically Black Colleges and Universities to better serve the needs of students of color. In 1994, an addition to the Morrill Act, *The National Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Act of 1994*, a provision of The Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act, conferred land grant status on 29 tribal colleges across the United States (Place, 2003).

In 1896, *Plessy v Ferguson* reinforced the separate but equal doctrine that had risen from the Second Morrill Act. This remained in effect for 58 years, until the United States Supreme Court overturned it in 1954 with *Brown v Board of Education*. The Court ruled that segregation within the public school system was unconstitutional. Despite these rulings, discrimination continued, leading to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which gave power to the U.S. Attorney General to file lawsuits on behalf of plaintiffs and prohibited the release of federal funds to segregated colleges. An integral part of this legislation was Title IV, which bridged the gap into the private sector by

prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs receiving federal assistance (American Council on Education, 2001).

The Higher Education Act of 1965 furthered progress in opening doors to education. The act created the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and Guaranteed Student Loan programs and transferred College Work Study to the Office of Education. For the first time, the U.S. government showed an explicit federal commitment to equalizing college opportunities for students in need (Gladieux, Hauptman, & Knapp, 1994). At this time, the phrase affirmative action was officially given life (Howard, 1997, p. 29):

A series of social cataclysms in the four-year period following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 combined with a set of new perceptions and analytic approaches generated by the Act itself served to transform the vague term ‘affirmative action’ into a set of federal and state policies addressing new racial, ethnic, and gender realities.

Affirmative action has long been an issue that engenders extreme reactions among the American public. In recent years, affirmative action has been debated more intensely than at any other time in our nation’s history. There are several arguments traditionally articulated against affirmative action. The first is that “the only way to create a color-blind society is to adopt color-blind policies” (Plous, 2003). The reality is that color-blind policies often place students of color at a severe disadvantage, because they are unable to account for social inequities in the economy, workforce, and educational system. Many also argue that affirmative action has not successfully increased female and minority enrollment in higher education. Several studies have documented important gains in racial and gender equality as a direct result of affirmative action policies (Bowen

& Bok, 1998). An additional argument against affirmative action that is frequently asserted is the idea that you cannot fight discrimination with discrimination. However, affirmative action is not discrimination; it is an effort to overcome discriminatory treatment through inclusion. Finally, other arguments against affirmative action typically center on the idea that in our current society we already have a level playing field for all and that support for affirmative action means support for preferential treatment that favors unqualified candidates over qualified candidates. (Plous, 2003).

In 1978, the most important case in the history of affirmative action was heard and adjudicated. *The Regents of the University of California v Bakke* set legal precedence for the permission of affirmative action policies in higher education admission policies. In 1998, despite Justice Powell's compelling arguments in support of the educational benefits of diversity, *Bakke* was overturned in *Hopwood v Texas*. This case dealt with special admission standards for minority students. The court ruled against the university, arguing that a federally funded institution may not use race as a factor in admissions decisions (Kauffman & Gonzalez, 1997). A number of important state-level decisions also have serious implications; Proposition 209 in California prohibited state and local agencies from using preferences based on race or gender. The state of Washington has also followed suit, passing similar legislation. Since the *Hopwood v Texas* ruling, a variety of challenges to affirmative action in higher education contexts have been made and the trend seems to be ongoing. In two notable cases involving the University of Michigan, *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, undergraduate and law school admissions policies have been challenged by White students who were denied

admission, and resulted in different rulings on diversity in district courts, resulting in appeals to next legal level. Thus far the University of Michigan has succeeded in this legal challenge, arguing on the basis of the educational value of diversity as a compelling state interest (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin, 2002). The U.S. Supreme Court “upheld the right of schools to consider race in admissions decisions, though it limited the ways in which it could be used” (Jaschik, 2004).

The American Council on Education (1999) responded to some of the more recent legal threats to affirmative action by issuing a statement, *On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education*. The statement was endorsed by 68 higher education associations and clearly spelled out support for diversity as critical to providing quality education. The final paragraph of the statement synthesized the critical issues facing higher education as a community:

Achieving diversity on college campuses does not require quotas. Nor does diversity warrant admission of unqualified applicants. However, the diversity we seek, and the future of the nation, do require that colleges and universities continue to be able to reach out and make a conscious effort to build healthy and diverse learning environments that are appropriate for their missions. The success of higher education and the strength of our democracy depend on it.

Campus Climate

“The attitudes, behaviors, and pre-college characteristics of students combine with the norms, ideologies, and values of their institutions to create a campus climate. The climate of an institution is therefore comprised of interactions between student characteristics and the characteristics of their institution” (Harris & Nettles, 1996, p. 331). Dey and Hurtado (1994), discussed students’ values and attitudes related to larger

social issues that impact campus environments, "...the continuing relationship between students and higher education is reciprocal and dynamic, and is informed by and shapes American society" (p. 249). Kuh (1993) discussed the importance of the university mission and philosophy to campus climate; the importance of congruence between what is written and the daily functioning of the institution as experienced by all is critical to overall satisfaction. The challenge of current social issues and how they impact our campuses was stated well by Altbach et al. (1999), "If the most educated community in the United States – those in institutions of higher learning – is experiencing racial problems, then there is cause for worry about the rest of society" (p. 462).

Cress and Sax (1998) explored several focal issues important to campus climates for the coming decade. In the compilation of their work, they used data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) that surveys nation-wide first-year students each year. The issues they addressed included: (a) college choice and access; (b) affirmative action and student perceptions of campuses prior to the beginning of their undergraduate careers; (c) competition and competence; (d) money concerns; (e) academic program and career plans; (f) values and attitudes; (g) gender; (h) health and well being; and (i) teaching, learning and technology.

More and more students who come to our campuses have parents who have earned undergraduate degrees (Cress and Sax, 1998). Differences between first and second-generation students are becoming apparent. Students are also much more savvy consumers. They typically apply to more than one or two institutions, even at times attending multiple orientation sessions prior to committing to their decision regarding

their institution of choice. While students report academic confidence, faculty and staff on campuses do not always agree with students' self-reported readiness for the academic rigor of higher education. Related to this is an ongoing concern regarding grade inflation at all levels of education, as well as a seeming lack of engagement on the part of students in the classroom setting or in regard to campus activities or politics.

Finances will continue to impact college climates, as some students struggle to make ends meet (Cress and Sax, 1998). Decreases in state funding, paired with increasing tuition costs typically mean that more students must work during the academic year to help support their involvements in higher education. Students also report that they see college as a means to make more money once they hit the job market. An ongoing trend regarding the importance of money versus meaning and education seems to be emerging. A variety of health issues, especially increases in the number of students challenged by emotional illness also have great impact on campuses.

Campus Climate for Diversity

“Central to the conceptualization of a campus climate for diversity is the notion that students are educated in distinct racial contexts where learning and socializing occur” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999). These researchers identified three main contexts; two external environmental contexts and an internal environmental context that affect campus climates and are integrated in nature. They included: (a) the external Government/Policy Context, (b) the external Sociohistorical Context, and (c) the internal Institutional Context.

The external Government/Policy Context involves, for example, state and federal programs and policies that have impacted and will continue to impact higher education. The legislation and affirmative action issues discussed in the introduction of this chapter provide good examples of phenomena that fall under this context. The external Sociohistorical Context involves more of the human experience tied to our history; the unrest and periods of protest during the Civil Rights Movement are examples. The attitudes and behaviors of people regarding important social causes fall under this umbrella.

The internal environmental Institutional Context for each specific university includes four dynamic aspects of campus climate (see Table 1). The interpretations of these aspects will differ by institution, and over time within institutions, but they provide a holistic framework from which to work when considering the state of the current campus climate for diversity and in identifying issues for planning and programmatic change.

Table 1. Internal Environmental Institutional Context for Campus Climate

The Historical Legacy of Inclusion or Exclusion

Resistance to desegregation

Mission

Policies

Structural Diversity

Diverse students and enrollments

Diverse faculty and staff

Psychological Climate

Perceptions of racial and ethnic tension

Perceptions of discrimination

Attitudes and reduction of prejudice

Behavioral Dimension

Social interaction across race and ethnicity

Campus involvement and diversity

Classroom diversity

Adapted from Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen (1999, p. 4)
The Historical Legacy of Inclusion or Exclusion

An institution must recognize the difference between desegregation as a means to an end versus the celebration of diversity for educational quality. Purposeful review of university policies and procedures is recommended as an important exercise in determining if current process in any way breeds unfair treatment. A clearly stated mission that truly gives meaning to the daily functioning of the university is very important. It may be a difficult issue for university leaders to face but:

We cannot achieve true cultural diversity on our college and university campuses until we recognize that we have a serious social problem: racism and inequality permeate our institutions. Because racism is not manifested on college campuses

with lynchings, cross burnings, and segregation does not make it any less real. It is systemic, and it is perpetuated by institutions that operate in the usual ways, ensuring continued exclusion despite the fact that those within espouse a commitment to inclusion. Yes, it is possible for people with goodwill to do bad things (Wilson, 1996).

Structural Diversity – The First Step to Improvements

The enrollment history of an institution, especially one challenged to attract students of color, can be difficult to overcome. Success is often created by a positive initial response to the entry of students of color by the institution. Improvements in the structural diversity of the institution are seen as the first step to improving campus climate for diversity; however, an increase in student numbers is only the beginning. The structural diversity of an institution impacts students' experiences in a variety of ways. An institution with a high proportion of white students provides limited opportunities for students to interact across racial and ethnic lines, thus altering student learning (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1998). Students of color also feel that they have a very limited number of social options from which to choose and may feel isolated as a result. Having a low number of students of color many times results in tokenism on campus and in those students feeling as if they are symbols and not valued as individuals (Kanter, 1977). An increase in diverse student numbers is not without challenges. Competition for resources among student groups and other constituencies can bring conflict and some level of frustration. With this in mind, it is critical that campuses create as student-centered an environment as possible to make students feel valued. When students feel that they are genuinely valued as individuals, they are less likely to feel tension regarding their race or ethnicity (Hurtado, 1992).

Increased numbers of diverse faculty and staff are also critical. Students of color feel a greater means of support and the quality of the educational experience is improved for all. Diverse faculty and staff members face many of the same challenges that students of color do on primarily white campuses (Hurtado et al., 1999). An increase in diverse faculty members also brings broader perspective and representation to campuses.

Psychological Climate

The psychological climate for diversity involves students' thoughts about group relations on campus. This varies by individual and within ethnic groups. Thoughts about how an institution responds to diversity, perceptions of the presence of discrimination, and attitude regarding those who are different all play a part (Hurtado et al., 1999). The importance of peer groups and faculty roles in the socialization process cannot be understated. A study investigating the campus racial climate and adjustment of Caucasian and African American students (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999, p. 153) found that:

“...for both groups, exposure to a campus climate of prejudice and intolerance lessens commitment to the institution and, indirectly, weakens decisions to persist. In view of this commonality it stands to reason that institutional policies and practices that address the students' needs rather than his or her ethnicity would be effective not only in fostering tolerance among students but in retaining all students, be they minorities or non-minorities.”

The work of Chickering and Reisser (1993) has also supported the notion that students' attitudes can change and that reduction of prejudice while in college can occur. They charged that, “...academic institutions have a responsibility to equip their graduates with tolerance and empathy as essential survival skills” (p. 150). In another study, Nora

and Cabrera (1996) strove to “document the role that perceptions of prejudice and discrimination play within a theoretically based model of college persistence among minority and non-minority students” (p. 122). The model that they proposed had two domains: social and academic – but these were not seen as independent entities. The direct influence of pre-college academic ability as it impacts ability and motivation to do college level work was also addressed. Results of this study indicated that, “Like other stressors, experiences of racism and alienation are seen as being associated with psychological distress and poor academic performance” (p. 124). These stressors led to greater feelings of alienation on the part of students.

Behavioral Dimension

The behavioral dimension of campus climate consists of the state of general social interactions on campus, individual interactions across racial and ethnic boundaries and the interactions that occur between different groups of students on campus. Student involvement, in both formal and informal interactions, is essential to the overall quality of the educational experience. Formal interactions occur in the classes students attend and as they participate in student organizations for example. “Although some suggest that racial/ethnic student organizations and minority programs contribute to campus segregation, a series of studies refutes this perspective” (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 54). Informal interactions between students and faculty also greatly assist in helping students feel engaged in their institutions.

Student Learning – The Core Issue. The great wealth of a diverse student population lies in the quality of the educational experiences for students enrolled on diverse campuses. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002) studied the impact of diversity on two general groups of educational outcomes: learning outcomes and democracy outcomes. “The impact of diversity on learning and democracy outcomes is believed to be especially important during the college years because students are at a critical developmental stage, which takes place in institutions explicitly constituted to promote late adolescent development” (Gurin et al., 2002). The results of their study found that students’ interactive experiences with diversity, both in and out of the classroom, had positive affects on all of the educational outcomes they studied. The overall effects of the students’ informal interactions were found to be even more important to their development than their in-class experiences. The results of a study by Smith et al. (1997) also confirmed that students develop cognitive skills, as well as a deeper understanding of cultural differences, as a result of well-designed diversity-related course work.

The importance of paying particular attention to the teaching process in the teaching of diversity-related courses is critical because facilitation skills are critical in teaching what at times can become emotion-laden issues. Hurtado et al. (1999) build on the educational importance of diversity by offering suggestions for faculty interested in either teaching a class that focuses on the topic of race and/or diversity or in building diversity-related themes into already existing core courses. Students are, at times, uncomfortable about discussing these topics; therefore, an instructor must have a comfort

level tied to dealing with students' reluctance. They encouraged collaborative learning and creative alternatives to the typical 16-week course.

Students' Experiences on Predominantly White Campuses

The typical transition challenges faced by all students as they arrive at higher education campuses are stressful enough. However, students of color who arrive at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) are faced with added stress related to their minority status on-campus. Minority students attending PWIs were found to experience stress based on five factors; these included the social climate, interracial stresses, racism and discrimination, stress within groups, and stress related to achievement issues (Smedley, Myers, and Harrell, 1993). Students of color involved in this study communicated several key stress-related issues including: (a) a lack of professors of their race; (b) a lack of students of their race; (c) racist institutional policies and practices; (d) difficulty forming friendships with white students; (e) rude and unfair treatment tied to their race; (f) discriminatory treatment; (g) pressure from those they are close to accusing them of acting white; and (h) having doubts about their abilities to succeed academically.

Between 1985 and 1989, a research study by Hurtado (1992) sought "to examine comparative institutional data that may help identify contexts for racial conflict" (p. 540). The study focused on a student cohort attending 116 different PWIs. The schools had a 3:1 white to minority student ratio and black, white, and Chicano students were included. Three main issues were studied including social context, institutional context and student perception and ethnic group differences. Results of the study showed that

“...approximately one in four students at all four-year institutions perceive considerable racial conflict; however, this proportion is higher in university settings (approximately one in three students)” (Hurtado, 1992, p. 551). Black students were more critical than any other group. Hurtado also noted that, “...white students may view the prevalence of ‘niches’ developed along mutual interests and ethnicity as increasing racial tension on large campuses.” A key finding of the study was that the possibility of racial tension might be increased in environments where students perceive a lack of concern. Across all student groups, perceptions of low racial tension were related to feeling as if campuses were student-centered in their approach to students.

Social context issues addressed the fact that, “...even on relatively calm campuses there are differences in students’ racial attitudes and considerable social distance among students of different racial or ethnic backgrounds” (Hurtado, 1992, p. 541).

Administrators were encouraged to recognize that racial conflicts should, even in limited numbers, be considered an indication of a more generalized concern stemming from unresolved racial issues on campuses as well as in their communities at large. It was also noted that if the dominant group on a campus perceives that their position is threatened in any way, problems might occur or continue.

A number of institutional context interpretations were offered regarding campus climate issues. Selective and large schools attracted more protest oriented students and large schools were typically seen as impersonal in nature, which promoted less student satisfaction. It is critical that schools pay attention to dealing with institutional, programmatic, and individual level concerns. Administrators were also reminded that

institutional priorities regarding policy decision-making should be paid close attention since some practices preserve prior social inequities. One example was the comparison of institutions that required high academic achievement prior to admission, versus open enrollment schools, which allow achievement to be proven during college enrollment.

A study by Loo and Rolison (1986) investigated climate issues at a small west coast campus with an enrollment of about 6000. This particular school enrolled a low proportion of minority students compared to statewide levels. Their objectives were to, “assess the extent and nature of sociocultural alienation and academic satisfaction among ethnic minority students; to determine whether the alienation and satisfaction of the minority students differed significantly from that of white students and to assess similarities and differences in the attitudes of white and minority students” (p. 59). Results of the study showed that sociocultural alienation of minority students was significantly greater than for whites, and that about 70% of all students perceived that this was the case. Academic preparation was a concern voiced by the minority students, but not by white students. Although minority students preferred classes taught by ethnic minority faculty, they were academically satisfied overall. They felt supported by faculty and comfortable in class, and also appreciated the academic student support services that served them specifically. Any thoughts of dropping out were not connected to academic factors for minority students, but more to factors tied to alienation. White students felt that the university was more supportive than minorities did. Minority students felt a general lack of support from the university related to the small numbers of students of color on campus, along with a lack of social and cultural opportunities. Both groups of

students felt a need for increases in the number of students of color on their campus, although white students also voiced concern with minority students all hanging out in one place. White students saw this separation as a negative. They did not understand that minority students chose to live where they did based on the supportive environment that was offered within the larger campus environment.

The investigators suggested a number of institutional factors that can counter academic and sociocultural alienation of minority students and promote their academic success. These included increasing the number of students of color; providing strategically placed “pockets” of support across campus to serve residential, social, and academic needs; developing great student support services to effectively serve minority students; increasing the number of minority faculty and staff; and purposefully encouraging faculty to be supportive and accessible.

A quantitative study by Nora and Cabrera (1996) also looked at the issue of student lack of adjustment to PWIs. They surveyed entering first-year students at a PWI in the Midwest and found that, “On the average, minorities were more likely to perceive a discriminatory campus climate, sensed more prejudice on the part of faculty and staff, and were more prone to report negative in class experiences than were whites” (p. 130). They found that the most important factors to minority students’ academic experiences were encouragement from home, and a low level of perceived prejudice and discrimination on their campus. Students whose perceptions were of low levels of discrimination across campus were more likely to have good experiences with faculty and academic staff members while, “...minority students who perceived higher levels of

discrimination on campus and in the classroom were less likely to experience academic and intellectual development.” (p. 133). White students also perceived discriminatory behaviors, but minority students reported higher levels of perception regarding instances of prejudice and discrimination than their white counterparts.

Planning for Change: Key Issues and Ideas

Planning for change in campus environments is a complex process. Hurtado and Dey (1997) expressed that, “At the outset, it should be recognized that there are a number of stages in the campus’s journey to becoming a multicultural institution; planning and change efforts need to be aligned with different stages of an institution’s awareness of multicultural issues” (p. 418). The researchers went on to describe three stages of institutional awareness to be considered in planning: monocultural, nondiscriminatory, and multicultural. The monocultural stage involves the lack of recognition about the need to consider changes in regard to serving diverse student groups. An institution described as nondiscriminatory has a top-down philosophy; minor adjustments are made through changes that typically are not communicated across campus. Evaluation tends to be ad hoc in nature, typically undertaken as a result of external forces instead of proactive institutional planning. A multicultural institution is one whose constituents have agreed upon and committed to the work of serving diverse students; this goal is recognized as important to the campus as a whole.

Campus climate implications for policy and practice may be interpreted to have four dimensions of institutional context (Hurtado et al., 1998). These dimensions include

enrollment history, structural diversity, psychological diversity, and the behavioral dimension of the institution. The understanding of institutional enrollment patterns over time can be informative, as attention to these details may assist campus leaders in addressing important issues of policy and practice. An increase in the number of students of color, on a campus that is lacking in structural diversity, is a key first step toward ensuring a quality education for all students. Psychological diversity involves the perceptions of students, faculty members and staff regarding the institutional commitment to the importance of diversity. The behavioral dimension of the campus in regard to diversity involves what actually happens between and among students, faculty and staff on a daily practice basis to communicate the importance of diversity.

Enrollment History

Hurtado et al. (1998) encouraged administrators to move toward diversity as an important value on an institutional basis. Consideration of whether “embedded benefits” still exist on campus is key to identifying developmental changes. Recognition of the importance of student organizations was also stressed. Changes in enrollment patterns are particularly important in states and communities where high schools and local populations continue to be primarily white, as coming to college may be the first chance for many students to encounter and interact with someone of a different race or ethnicity. Campus level efforts are critically important, especially in light of the political climate and state level initiatives impacting higher education systems across the country. The need to study colleges and universities that have historically served students of color was

also noted as an essential element for future developments, in order to adopt and utilize effective practices.

Structural Diversity

In order to increase the numbers of students of color on campuses, a necessary first step toward improving the overall educational experience, a number of suggestions were made. Admissions policies are one key focus to study. Analyzing how specific policies and procedures might be changed to move toward appropriate levels of structural diversity may be instructive. Financial aid policies should also be considered closely. Working hard to allocate as many dollars as possible to programs that are most helpful to disadvantaged students, such as grants and work-study, was also encouraged.

Psychological Dimension

Campus leaders must be agents of change on their campuses in regard to assessing what adjustments need to be made in order to ensure a healthy psychological climate. Assessment of educational programs currently in place, with an eye and ear for the importance of systemic and comprehensive educational programs, is a critical role of university administrators. They must make any necessary adjustments to ensure a fair and just institutional climate for all campus constituents given the understanding that attitudes and perceptions also have a dynamic life across campus populations.

Behavioral Dimension

In order to encourage ongoing improvements in interactions across individuals and groups, administrators and other key personnel were encouraged to send clear

messages about the expectation that interactions between and among all groups are held in high esteem (Hurtado et al., 1998). Important faculty roles included the integration of diversity topics into course content. Faculty members were encouraged to utilize cooperative, active learning activities; administrators thus have an obligation to train new teachers on their campuses in regard to the most appropriate teaching and learning strategies. Faculty support must be provided that will enable them to learn about, develop, and implement student-centered approaches to teaching and learning in their classrooms. The importance of faculty-student interactions, both in and out of the classroom, must be considered and encouraged.

Encouragement and support of ethnic student organizations and support services is vital. Multicultural centers play an important role on campuses; consideration of mentoring programs that bring broad-based involvement from members across campus as well as interactive resolution activities was encouraged. Clearly stated policies and procedures regarding judicial matters are also important to the resolution of issues that may arise. Purposeful planning and provision of regular and consistent opportunities for students to interact cross-racially need to be considered.

In a later study, Hurtado et al. (1999) shared 12 recommendations for practice. The recommendations were noted in a suggested sequential order for practice. They also addressed ways an institution might optimize benefits of the structural diversity that it would be able to achieve:

1. Affirm the goal of achieving a campus climate that supports racial and cultural diversity as an institutional priority.

2. Systematically assess the institutional climate for diversity in terms of historical legacy, structural diversity, psychological climate, and behavioral elements to understand the dimensions of the problem.
3. Guided by research, experiences at peer institution, and results from the systematic assessment of the campus climate for diversity, develop a plan for implementing constructive change that includes specific goals, timetables, and pragmatic activities.
4. Implement a detailed and ongoing evaluation program to monitor the effectiveness of and build support for programmatic activities aimed at improving the campus climate for diversity.
5. Create a conscious effort to rid the campus of its exclusionary past, and adopt proactive goals to achieve desegregation that includes increasing opportunity for previously excluded groups.
6. Involve faculty in efforts to increase diversity that are consistent with their roles as educators and researchers.
7. Create collaborative and cooperative learning environments where students' learning and interaction among diverse groups can be enhanced.
8. Increase students' interaction with faculty outside class by incorporating students in research and teaching activities.
9. Initiate curricular and co-curricular activities that increase dialogue and build bridges across communities of difference.
10. Create a student-centered orientation among faculty and staff.
11. Include diverse students in activities to increase students' involvement in campus life. Ensure that programming for diversity involves general support services as well as coordinated activities and support programs for students of color.
12. Increase sensitivity and training of staff who are likely to work with diverse student populations.

Smith and Schonfeld (2000) summarized research efforts on diversity into four dimensions: “(1) access and success of underrepresented students, (2) campus climate and intergroup relations, (3) education and scholarship, and (4) institutional viability”

(p. 17). They identified seven important implications for practices on campuses (pp. 21-22):

Campuses must be intentional in their efforts to manage and address issues of diversity if they are to achieve the educational benefits of diversity in all its manifestations...Developing and acknowledging our faculty's, staff's, and students' multiplicity of identities – for example, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religion – and the complexity of those identities, is critical and will facilitate community in ways that bring dynamism and richness to

the campus...Faculty engagement with issues of diversity – particularly educational and scholarly issues – is required...The most successful efforts at managing and enhancing the benefits of diversity invite boundary crossing – between disciplines, student affairs, and academic affairs, the institution and local communities...Success with diversity in all its dimensions requires institutional commitment...We have to recognize that students from different groups and backgrounds will have varied responses to diversity...Research being done throughout the country suggests that a much more profound level of institutional evaluation of diversity initiatives is required.

Summary

Through the writing of this literature review, I covered a number of topics that I felt were especially important and helpful to a broad-based understanding of the study of campus climate for diversity. This is a topic that cannot be understood without at least an overview of the socio-historical influences that have impacted our nation and as a result higher education as well. General campus climate issues that will affect improvements for all students were discussed as preparation for a more detailed look at campus climate for diversity issues. The findings regarding the experience of students of color at Predominantly White Institutions were important to the overall understanding not only of students' experiences, but of the need for leadership in the area of building more diverse student and faculty-staff populations. Finally, I reviewed some of the key recommendations for institutional assessment of current campus climates, planning for appropriate changes and ideas for implementation.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURE

The Assumptions of Qualitative Design

The two major paradigms which investigators utilize in social science research today are qualitative and quantitative research. The two paradigms are distinct in nature, each consisting of unique assumptions. A researcher, who employs a qualitative approach as I did throughout this study, is interested in making meaning of a situation by observing or becoming part of the research environment as it exists naturally and learning about what happens in the environment from her/his subjects' points of view. A qualitative approach is unobtrusive in nature, and a number of qualitative approaches are available. Some examples include one-on-one interviews, document analysis, focus group interviews and participant observation. While the qualitative researcher may begin with a tentative plan of action, he/she is open and flexible to change depending upon what he/she encounters in the field (Creswell, 1994).

Qualitative data includes such things as insights, ideas, reflections, and reactions that help the investigator to identify important trends and issues. The analysis of qualitative data is a rigorous undertaking as it involves the repetitive study of the data in order to understand overriding themes and ideas. Written documents are another source of qualitative data that help to provide a thorough understanding of what is being studied.

Guba (1978) discussed some of the basic premises of the qualitative approach to inquiry. A qualitative investigator approaches a research project from the philosophical

base of phenomenology. The overall concern is to understand human behavior from the subjects' points of view. Describing and understanding what happens in the field is a large concern of the researcher. The researcher is interested in building theory from the ground up; in discovering phenomena that exist in the research environment.

The qualitative researcher seeks to understand by searching for a view that is holistic in nature. An open-minded exploring nature is important because the qualitative researcher knows that studying people in a natural context will result in the discovery of important and worthwhile knowledge. The design of the qualitative researcher's study is incomplete at the beginning of a study. It emerges throughout the study and is flexible in nature; it depends on what is found in the field.

The qualitative researcher does not try to manage the research environment, in fact he/she tries to avoid this as much as possible. The researcher sees reality as a flexible entity. This view of reality is grounded in the respect that the researcher holds for the perceptions of the people he/she studies.

In addition to valuing the perceptions of subjects, the qualitative researcher also understands that the values and assumptions he or she brings to the research are important and must be considered throughout the study. This awareness of the researcher's values helps to ensure that the quality of the study is not undermined. The researcher also assumes that values are diverse in nature. Qualitative researchers believe that social constructs such as educational institutions must be studied in context. Studying people in their natural environment can result in learning about how meaning is constructed in their lives.

Patton (1990) described qualitative inquiry in terms of ten inclusive themes. Qualitative inquiry is naturalistic inquiry. It is dynamic, flexible and ever changing. Each individual case studied is respected for its unique contribution to the whole. The researcher investigates real-world situations in an open and flexible way, which facilitates an inductive approach to data analysis. Qualitative data captures the personal thoughts and opinions of those studied through personal contact with the researcher. Furthermore, it is understood that the researcher's personal experiences will affect the study and that complete objectivity is not possible.

Several important characteristics of qualitative research were outlined by Merriam (1988). The process is often the focus of qualitative research. The researcher is not so much interested in outcomes as in discovering how certain things occur. The search for meaning is inherent in qualitative research. "It is assumed that meaning is embedded in people's experiences and mediated through the investigator's own perceptions" (Merriam, 1988, p. 19). Qualitative research usually involves fieldwork of some type, and the researcher's role as the primary instrument in data collection is of utmost importance. The researcher's desire to describe examined phenomena utilizing inductive reasoning is key.

This exploration was well suited to qualitative inquiry for several distinct reasons (Merriam, 1988). The research questions I asked pertained to students' experiences and perceptions regarding campus climate and diversity issues. I sought insight into *how* students felt and *why* they felt the way they did about these key issues. The amount of researcher control I held was limited throughout the course of my study. This study was

not experimental in nature. My desire was that the study would ultimately be an integrated writing that thoroughly described and interpreted the issues being explored.

Design of the Study

I employed a qualitative phenomenology triangulated with document analysis research design in the performance of this study. Patton (1990) described a phenomenological study as “one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience” (p. 69). “Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 144) or topic of study.

The roots of phenomenology are grounded in the work begun by the German philosopher Edmund H. Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl assumed that knowledge comes from individual experience and each individual’s interpretations of their experiences. Patton (1990) discussed important implications regarding phenomenology. The significance of knowing what individuals experienced and how they felt about those experiences is critically valuable to any phenomenological study. In the employment of this design, I focused on this type of information, thus individual interviews were my primary method of data collection. A phenomenological approach also assumes that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience” (Patton, p. 70).

My study focused on the phenomenon of campus climate as experienced by the students whom I interviewed. Understanding the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of students was of paramount importance. I attempted genuine, empathic

interpretation of the information students communicated to me. An additional focus of my research was the interaction among individuals, especially as they related to the social problems, challenges, and concerns that were imbedded in my research questions. This research approach also assumes commonality in human experiences, and thus, during analysis of the data, I mined both common experiences across all groups of students, as well as common experiences within each group of students.

I supplemented individual interviews with document analysis of university-level documents to glean important information regarding campus climate for diversity at MSU-Bozeman. Marshall and Rossman (1995) described the strengths of document analysis as "...unobtrusive and nonreactive: It can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way. The researcher determines where the greatest emphasis lies after the data have been gathered. Also the method of procedure is explicit to the reader" (p. 86).

The Researcher's Role

Since the beginning of my professional career in 1981, I have been involved in higher education. Over the course of the next twenty-three years, I played a variety of roles in the higher education arena. In general, these roles involved teaching, coaching, academic advising, academic administration, academic support, student development/ services, and retention activities. My experience also included working at a number of different types of institutions including three small private colleges, a two-year college, and three mid-sized state universities.

As a doctoral student at MSU-Bozeman, I had a number of experiences working on qualitative research projects involving undergraduate students as well as staff on campus. One study investigated a group of first-year students and their reasons for coming to, and staying at, the University. Focus groups, individual interviews, and document analysis were utilized in the collection of qualitative data. A second study dealt with exploring the experiences and perceptions of women graduating from the University in the “hard” sciences. Focus groups were utilized in the completion of that study. A third effort involved a more informal evaluation study involving focus group interviews with Freshman Seminar facilitators. I gained a general familiarity with both the research setting and informants as a result of these efforts and past experiences.

I was responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the data throughout the course of the study, as well as preserving the anonymity of my interviewees. As a qualitative researcher, I was also the primary data collection agent, responsible for conducting the individual student interviews, as well as carrying out the document analysis of university-level documents. Another primary responsibility I held was the ongoing analysis of the qualitative interview data during the research project.

The importance of clear communication of the biases held by qualitative investigators cannot be understated. I, as the author of this study, brought with me definite opinions about the subject matter and predispositions about how students would respond during individual interviews. Based on my experiences in the higher education environment, I believed that students of color would have many more special concerns and challenges, as members of a student body attending a predominantly white

institution, than Caucasian students would have. I also believed that students of color would have much broader experiences dealing with the majority population, than white students would have dealing with diverse populations.

Another of my biases included the belief that female undergraduates would, in general, have greater concerns than male students and that they would share these concerns more accurately and in more depth than their male counterparts might. I also felt that experienced, more mature students would be more connected and engaged with their university, and therefore have greater abilities to share what might be deemed more important opinions with me. These assumptions had to be continually considered throughout the course of my study, in order that all students' opinions be listened to and analyzed openly and honestly and that results be communicated as accurately as possible to reflect students' perceptions and experiences.

Data Collection Procedures

My research study was conducted at MSU-Bozeman during the 1997 fall and 1998 spring academic semesters and utilized individual interviews in the collection of qualitative data. In addition, document analysis allowed me to explore pertinent university-level documents and written policies related to the research topic. The collection of demographic information was achieved through the use of a short demographic information form that I asked each student to complete.

A purposeful random sampling technique was utilized in order to ensure that a balanced sample was sought throughout the course of my study. The Office of the

Registrar at MSU-Bozeman supplied me with master lists of students who had identified themselves as members of each of the student groups targeted for interviewing, according to gender. For example, one of my lists included Native American females, while another included Native American males. Each list also indicated a student's initial term of undergraduate enrollment, which allowed me to also identify students as inexperienced or experienced as defined by the parameters of my study.

I randomly identified students belonging to each group and contacted them by phone to ask for their participation in the study. I also utilized a random numbers set for each group of students to establish the order in which I would contact students to request interviews. Individual interviews were then scheduled for those students who agreed to be involved. This process continued until the balanced sample sought was achieved. I interviewed similar numbers of male, female, experienced, and inexperienced students from each group as well. Thus, a total of 68 undergraduate students who were enrolled at the institution for the 1997-98 academic year, were involved in my interviews. These included students who identified themselves as African American (8), Asian American (12), Caucasian American (24), Hispanic American (12), and Native American (12).

This project focused on exploring the concepts of campus climate for diversity at M.S.U.-Bozeman. I studied campus climate with specific regard to the quality of interactions experienced and/or perceived by students in a variety of environments on and off campus. Students were given the opportunity to voice their opinions, perceptions, and experiences related to diversity issues on and off campus. Through the use of

individual interviews, I was able to describe and interpret the experiences and ideas of undergraduate students.

A thorough review of official written university-level documents and policies that related to or addressed campus climate and/or diversity allowed for a more thorough understanding of University goals and objectives. These documents and policies, in combination with the individual student interviews, gave me greater insight into the degree of congruity between the issues that students communicated to me and the endeavors of the University related to them. This review also aided me in identifying the challenges which MSU-Bozeman faces as it approaches the future.

Demographic Information

I administered a short Demographic Information Form (see Appendix A) to each student participant at the beginning of his/her interview session. This form allowed me to collect useful demographic information regarding each student's age, race/ethnicity, citizenship, gender, hometown setting, living and work situations, and college enrollment. I also asked students to confirm their local address and phone number.

Student Interviews

Due to the sensitivity of the issues that were addressed, I utilized open-ended individual interviews that afforded participants the opportunity to explain their experiences and perceptions thoroughly and comfortably. This qualitative approach also allowed me the opportunity to probe for accuracy and understanding whenever necessary. I hoped that students were able to articulate a "full picture" of their thoughts and

experiences to me, as the interviewer. The average length of each individual interview was approximately sixty minutes, although the length of interviews varied, as necessary. I conducted a total of sixty-eight interviews. The Caucasian American students I interviewed were those originally from Montana or a neighboring state. This distinction was made due to the fact that the majority of Caucasian students attending MSU-Bozeman come from these areas and would most accurately represent this student population.

I contacted students by phone and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed, explained my study, and answered any questions students had. I also made special efforts to schedule interview sessions and sites according to students' schedules and preferences. Fifty of my research interviews were conducted face-to-face, while eighteen were completed by phone.

Inexperienced students were defined as new undergraduate students who had been enrolled at the University for one year or less. Experienced students were those undergraduates who had been enrolled at the University for more than one year. Eight African American undergraduate students were interviewed due to the small number of students who were enrolled at the institution when I conducted the study. I interviewed six male students; however, only three undergraduate females identified themselves as African-American at the time. I was able to interview two of the female students.

Document Analysis

I analyzed official university-level documents related to campus climate and diversity in order to clarify the goals of the University, to identify what currently existed,

and to aid in the discovery of the challenges that MSU-Bozeman faced as an institution in regard to related issues. Individuals representing each of the seven colleges, General Studies, and Renne Library were contacted in order to identify official university-level documents that, from their perspectives, related to campus climate and/or diversity. The Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, as well as Student Affairs Deans and Directors were also contacted regarding their knowledge of official documents. This document analysis in combination with the results of student interviews lent support to my efforts in describing the current situation thoroughly and accurately.

Data Recording Procedures

The data recording procedures I utilized included the facilitation of semi-structured open-ended interviews. I employed an Individual Interview Guide (see Appendix B), which helped provide a beginning structure for each interview. I used a micro-cassette recorder to audiotape each interview, so that only limited interview notes were taken during interviews. Immediately after each interview, I noted my thoughts and perceptions in a research journal that I kept throughout the course of the study. My use of a research journal also facilitated ongoing reflection and organization of my thoughts and ideas related to the project. I transcribed each of my interviews and also utilized a Document Analysis Protocol (see Appendix C) to record important information about individual documents.

Data Analysis Procedures

I completed full transcriptions of each student interview. During the transcription of interview tapes, I often noted my thoughts and ideas as part of the transcript itself. These notes were bound by parentheses to ensure that they were always recognized as my thoughts and not as part of the actual interview discussion itself. This practice proved especially helpful to me during the first round of data analysis. As suggested by Neuman (1997), I utilized three levels of coding for both methods of data collection. These three levels included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

At the beginning of data analysis, I completed open coding. This involved the initial application of codes or labels to the data during the first readings of the transcripts/documents. As suggested by Patton (1990), I utilized the interview guide as “a descriptive analytical framework for analysis” (p. 376). Thus, I analyzed the interview data according to five main topics; prior experiences, interactions in academic environments, interactions in student life environments, interactions in community environments, and culminating thoughts and suggestions. The interactions in academic environments topic included three sub-topics; classroom interactions, faculty-student interactions, and interactions in other academic settings.

Axial coding took place during the second round of my data review in order to assign organizing themes or ideas to the initial list of open codes that were developed during the first round of data analysis. During axial coding, I watched for ideas or labels that seemed to make sense as a group. At this stage of analysis, I utilized files labeled with main interview guide sections, to keep my thoughts and ideas organized by topic.

Finally, the third round of selective coding occurred near the completion of my data analysis. During this time, I looked purposefully for the interviews that best illustrated the research themes that emerged throughout the course of the study. The identification of themes helped me to compare and contrast my findings and facilitated the inclusion of particularly valuable quotations throughout the manuscript.

A Document Analysis Protocol (see Appendix C) was also utilized throughout my document analysis of official university-level written documents and policies. This protocol allowed me to identify in an organized fashion, important information about individual documents and to note categories and themes which emerged throughout the three levels of analysis as noted above.

Verification of Procedures

Trustworthiness

According to Merriam (1998) internal validity or trustworthiness involves “the question of how research findings match reality” (p.201). I incorporated three strategies throughout this study, meant to ensure trustworthiness. Two types of data collection procedures were utilized during this study in an attempt to verify the accuracy and understanding of discovered information. These included individual interviews and document analysis. I also included ongoing verification during individual student interviews through the utilization of interviewer summary statements at the conclusion of each question and answer phase. Each student I interviewed was given regular opportunities to provide thorough and accurate explanations and/or clarifications of their

thoughts and opinions. I also had the opportunity to ask probing questions throughout each interview to ensure the accurate communication of students' experiences.

A second method of verification included the use of periodic peer reviews of the data analysis. Three peer reviewers, each with significant experience in higher education, were involved in this endeavor. I reported to peer reviewers regarding the themes that emerged during data analysis in order to ascertain critical feedback related to process, meaning, and understanding. Two of my peer reviewers contributed an Academic Affairs perspective. Both were faculty members: one a professor of Adult and Higher Education, the other an associate professor of Library Science, both with extensive qualitative research experience. The third peer reviewer shared a Student Affairs perspective and was a Retention Coordinator.

At the beginning of my study, the researcher biases I brought with me to this endeavor were addressed as part of the *The Researcher's Role* section of this document. It was acknowledged that I brought with me an individual set of assumptions and philosophical perspectives and that there was no way the two could be separated.

External validity or trustworthiness "is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). Merriam (1998) discussed four different views of external validity or trustworthiness, helpful to qualitative researchers. These included working hypotheses, concrete universals, naturalistic generalization, and user generalization. The commonality of these four views lies in the basic idea that people can transfer what is learned in one situation to other similar situations that they encounter. These views accorded the readers of

qualitative studies credit for their abilities to apply what was appropriate to their own situations.

Transferability

Generalizability, while usually a goal of quantitative studies that are based on statistical results, is not typically sought through qualitative studies, although transferability of results is. The concept of reliability involves the extent to which research findings can be replicated. Again, this concept is more in tune with quantitative research studies. Qualitative researchers believe in the concept of multiple realities, and thus expecting a study to be repeated in another setting and the findings to be similar is an impossible expectation. Merriam (1998) proposed the idea of reliability or transferability in qualitative studies as, “whether the results are consistent with the data collected” (p. 206). Creswell (1994) added that, “the uniqueness of a study within a specific context mitigates against replicating it exactly in another context” (p.159). However, specificity of explanation regarding what a study is about and the steps employed in completing the study were deemed important to the reader’s understanding of whether a similar study might be completed in her or his own environment.

The Qualitative Narrative

As is typical with any qualitative research, the findings of my study were written utilizing a descriptive, narrative style. This study was reported as a “realist tale” (Creswell, 1994, p.159). I attempted to write in a direct manner, utilizing quotations provided by the students I interviewed, as well as the documents I read. The detail

provided by the informants was integrated with my interpretations to provide a holistic understanding of the research topic.

CHAPTER 4

COMMON GROUND: CAMPUS CLIMATE EXPERIENCES
AND OPINIONS SHARED BY STUDENTS

As students shared their thoughts with me throughout the course of this study, certain opinions and experiences came to light as being shared across all student groups. This initial findings chapter is based upon the common experiences and opinions of students that emerged throughout my study, regarding the general campus climate, as well as the campus climate for diversity. For a number of the issues that I explored, students' responses varied more within groups than between or among groups. The second findings chapter, chapter five, explores how findings varied across student groups, and seeks to highlight differences in perceptions, opinions and experiences of each of the groups of students I interviewed.

Students' Understanding of Diversity

I asked a number of initial interview questions in order to glean not only students' prior experiences with diversity, but to also more fully understand their related opinions and beliefs. Students shared both narrow and broad definitions and understandings regarding diversity with me.

Students, at times, discussed diversity in very broad terms that included a variety of interesting thoughts. Their definitions included breadth in terms of race, philosophy,

educational background, traditions, interests, talents, inner differences, sharing of environment, and openness to all things new and unfamiliar. One student stressed the extremes of outer appearance and inner difference, “I guess just diversity meaning just different people. Um, where it could be physical appearance, the outer looks or it could be the person inside. Um, so just a difference within people that you’re surrounded with.” A broad sense of the idea or understanding of difference was also addressed, “Um, I guess one word would be different or differences. Um I think of a lot of, a variety of not just cultures but um, a variety of different subjects or things. So, I see them as kind of mixing, but aware of each other.”

An experienced male student who was involved as a Residence Assistant (R.A.) on campus mentioned how a class he had had during his R.A. training changed the things he thought about in relation to diversity. He stressed being open-minded to the consideration of things one did not know or that were different from what one might typically experience, “Um, well, all these facts and stuff are spewing from my class, but I don’t know. Just mainly more cultures and other ideas than what you hold for yourself, I guess. There’s lots around that you [as a student on this campus] probably aren’t used to.”

Other students shared even broader thoughts regarding openness to difference, as illustrated by this individual’s thoughts regarding geographical environment:

Hm, with diversity I feel it’s, that it’s a little bit of everything. I mean in regard to people and what you experience with people. And not even that, your environment, a little bit of everything. Like I’m maybe used to the city or something, but being in the mountains now, I’ll broaden my diversity of environment by going somewhere else. I think diversity is having a little bit of

everything so you know you won't be too ignorant. Say, if you were to come across anything [different], you'll know you have experience [to draw upon].

Another experienced male student expressed his thoughts on diversity very poetically, "When I hear the word diversity, the first thing that comes to my mind is we're all unique in our own way no matter who we are individually and collectively."

In general, students shared supportive opinions regarding interracial dating and relationships. A number of students had prior experience with mixed relationships, personally or with parents or stepparents. They mentioned parental influence and societal pressures as important to the development of attitudes about relationships, "The only thing that my Mom ever says to me is, 'I don't care who they are or what they look like as long as they treat you right.'" Other students described the opposite experience, noting societal pressures and the idea that students might think about interracial relationships in a negative way just because their parents do, and not take the time to develop their own opinions. A number of students also mentioned that from their perspectives it was a rare thing to even see a mixed couple in Montana.

Those supportive of mixed relationships were either a child of a mixed relationship, involved in a mixed relationship, or were of the opinion that the most important thing was to have that special connection with another person, regardless of the other details. A number of background and generational issues rose to the surface. One student shared her perspective with me this way:

Oh, go for it! Yeah, definitely. I think it's pretty cool actually. It hasn't been that long since uh there was like the desegregation thing and so I think especially in Montana there's still a lot of friction. And I know that there are a lot of parents at home, I guess [with] older ideas that don't really see interracial dating as a good thing.

Another shared, “Well I think individuals are old enough to make their own choices and I think it’s society that says, ‘oh you shouldn’t be doing this, you shouldn’t be doing that.’ I think the people are entitled to their own lifestyles and if they want to go out with somebody that’s their business.” A myriad of emotions and issues were apparent as another student shared his opinion with me:

I don’t feel it’s the color of the skin that makes a relationship, it’s how much you share with the person. Right now I’m just faithful to who I want to be with and she’s of my ethnicity also. She just happened to be there and I connected with her. If it had been somebody of another ethnicity that I would have connected with, then I would have been with them. But there’s also people that thrive, that see how society will treat them you know. Many people make decisions based on how they feel society will perceive what they’re doing. I feel that our society is really screwed up so, it’s felt that interracial, multiracial relationships are wrong. I feel that that’s how our society treats a lot of things, you know cause *we black and white everything*. We do, which is unfortunate.

Reactions to Affirmative Action: A Touchy Topic

Students shared a variety of opinions regarding affirmative action with me. Very few students were able to express opinions for or against affirmative action, however many responses involved a level of confusion, ambivalence, or discomfort with the subject. At the beginning of my study, affirmative action was discussed toward the beginning of my interviews with students. After completing the first few interviews, I began to ask this question toward the middle of the interview process. It seemed that students needed more time to become comfortable with and trusting of me in order to address this topic.

Students who shared ambivalent opinions about affirmative action felt unable to respond to the question, sharing that they had no background knowledge regarding the issue:

Oh man, (big reaction) you know I'm not really too up on affirmative action as far as the whole thing of it. But isn't it something about you know even though this person has been working hard enough to get where they've gotten, they turn them down to just like make it equal for someone else?

Students were, at times, uncomfortable taking a stand; they felt stuck in the middle and confused about the issue. The following students' comments illustrated this confusion:

Well, I mean, it can go both ways. People say it's reverse discrimination. I mean it's really hard. I mean it's good in some cases and it's bad in some cases you know, but it helps minorities to get into college and whatever. Well I think it's, I mean, we wouldn't have these situations if everything was fair from the get go, but, whatever. I really don't take a side. I mean I'm just in the middle.

Um, gosh (pause). There are advantages and disadvantages. First there's the argument against it, that it's reversed discrimination and I don't agree with hiring a less qualified person for the job but you know if they're; I don't think anybody should be turned down because somebody should allow another ethnicity in [to a school or work environment]. I mean there's another; I don't know some cases I've heard that without affirmative action, some companies were able to use the ethnicity thing against an employee and not hire an employee because of that. I don't know, there; I wouldn't say I'm for it or against it. I know there's advantages and disadvantages of it, of affirmative action.

Students who expressed disagreement with the idea of affirmative action in contemporary society had a feeling that affirmative action had done the job it was meant to do. They felt that it was beyond usefulness, or that it was a policy that they perceived as condescending in nature. Students also utilized the ideas of quotas and reverse discrimination, and described experiences they had heard about that they felt demonstrated abuses of affirmative action policies. Others felt that decision-making should be based on academic achievement and/or quality of experience, and not have

anything to do with race, ethnicity or gender. One student from California took this stand in agreement with what had been going on in his home state:

Actually um I think people are making a bigger deal of it than it actually was and I think they're doing what they're supposed to be doing [reversing California law]. Because they, the reason why they put it in there was because some of the minorities weren't given a chance to get some of the upper level positions or just positions at all. Affirmative action forced that upon some businesses so now actually some of the people who weren't able to get the jobs, got the jobs so they can show that they can do the job. So now in the future [employers] won't have just a tunnel vision. That's why I feel that that's why they got rid of it. They feel like they did what they had to do. They gave us our chance to get into a business and you know I guess we got the job there and now some employers have their eyes open now.

Another student voiced his opinion against affirmative action with me:

Oh, that's tricky. I am, I'm against it and I think it's because I don't like the idea. It sounds to me that um, that the races need help. I remember this summer, I was walking with my Mom and we were talking about this and she was saying that there was a study. She had read some study that someone had done recently saying that African Americans', that something was different with their brains than other races, so that they could not learn. And that's what affirmative action sounds like to me; that we're not able to do it on our own.

Students used words such as “iffy” and “tricky” and “touchy topic” in describing to me how they felt. The perception that quotas were still in existence came up numerous times. Various students expressed anti-affirmative action opinions, even though they had personally gained from the policy. One student explained her position to me this way:

I decided that I was against it, even though because of Affirmative Action I got a bunch of scholarships and stuff. That was all happy and everything for me, but it really does give people an excuse to feel different and inferior. It does, it makes you feel inferior. Like when I was starting to get my financial aid things, um, I looked at the scholarships and it was like you know if you're this, if you're Mexican, you need help. I'm like mm, you know, like I can understand how that could make someone feel, even though it's good to have the help, it's also a vicious cycle of needing the help, and I think it's like a figure eight. It just makes it worse and worse and worse.

Another student's comment to me represented another common anti-affirmative action stance, "I don't think they should base anything on race. I think it should be all on academic achievement, and community involvement and everything, including jobs."

Students who voiced strong opinions in support of affirmative action based their opinions largely on what they felt was a continuing need for the policy due to ongoing societal discrimination. One such contribution included:

That's a real good question and it's a tough one (with feeling). Um, I guess I used to have to say I was full for it. My only feeling against it is I definitely wouldn't want to be given a job just because of my color or my cultural difference from everybody else. But at the same time, I've had so much racism against myself in particular that I'd hate not to be given a job because [affirmative action] wasn't in place. I guess, so many people think that racism is over and what not and we watch things on T.V. and I've dealt with [racism] so many times you know it's out there. So that's a hard question to answer. I think that it needs to stay in place. I think that if we took it away, things would go back a lot to the way they were.

An experienced female Native American student expressed this view to me in support of affirmative action:

In most instances I'm for it. Um, the argument that was presented to me was well, 'I'd like to be hired based on my qualifications, not just because I'm a woman or I'm an Indian', and stuff. But I don't see that. The way I see affirmative action is, ok you have the same qualifications, however you know, you're a man. There's more jobs out there [for men]. I'll pick [or be chosen for] this job because I have the right and I'm a woman. You know, um, it get's a lot hairier than that I guess. Um, but, my thing is I'm from a reservation, I've lived there all my life and affirmative action plays a big role on that reservation. And um there's so many vying for the same jobs and stuff that you know the minorities don't always get a fair shake, so I think affirmative action helps in that instance.

Class Size and Student Learning

When I asked students about the classroom environments and interactions that they had experienced, students seemed to concentrate on a number of issues. Class size was a consistent concern. Large classes provided little opportunity for getting to know people. Differences were noted regarding core course atmosphere, large lecture atmosphere, and the atmosphere of coursework taken in the academic major.

Large lecture classes seemed to be the bane of most students' experiences, "Well, I have two pretty big lectures. One's Microbiology and there's like two hundred people in that, but in that class there's this girl who went to my high school, so I just sit with her and we just joke around and are bored together." This general lack of engagement and challenge to learning in large lectures was noted repeatedly by students, "It's really boring when I listen to the lectures. It's like, I guess right there I'm like a robot. You know I hear it but I have to go home and read it again [as I retain very little]."

This poor level of engagement and student attitude regarding learning in large lecture environments was shared with me in a variety of ways, "Everyone's like real friendly, but they don't really care. Well they care about their grades, but they don't really *care* [about doing the work to learn]." A Native American male student uniquely characterized the lecture-type classroom design as a "pit", emphasizing the physical positions of instructor versus student in classroom environments:

I would definitely have to say the size of the classroom is probably one aspect of it, um for example in a classroom that's um, oh I guess it would be they call it the pit design you know. The instructor is way down there in the hole and there's like 200 seats, what not. To me it seems like the interaction between students is very minimal in those classes. Where as if you're in a smaller classroom where the

instructor's placed at the same level as the students and the students are pretty much side by side, maybe like forty desks or what not, it seems like the interaction is a heck of a lot more.

The Importance of Interaction and Learning Relationships

Students at times felt more of a progression toward the development of relationships in smaller size classes, depending upon what teaching strategies the professor utilized, as well as the opportunities for hands-on help and attention. Small group work was mentioned as one way professors have of facilitating interaction among students. The perceived level of teacher involvement and creativity was an important factor addressed. Sometimes students were alienated by a lack of academic support regarding technology ties to class requirements; confusion over computerized and/or web-based homework procedures was one example. At times, specific classes were mentioned as positive experiences. One student's description of her Freshman Seminar course experience illustrated this point, "It's a very personal class and it's more of trying to get to know you as an individual and help you to become what you want to become."

For many students coursework in their academic major made the difference. One student shared the wonderful experience he had had in the Architecture Program:

With Architecture it's really because you're always involved with people. And I'm always with the same group of people since day one of first year architecture. I've liked these people for five years. It's a very friendly environment and it's almost like they're a family really because they're my best friends. You know and in a lot of majors you don't get that and I have a real close bond with my fellow students and my professors and that started the first year and I'm in fourth year now.

A number of students discussed with me the change they felt in the quality of class interactions as they moved beyond their first year experience, “Once I started getting into the higher level classes, you really started interacting more and developing friendships and developing relationships that are strong and you know helping each other and everything.” The thoughts students shared also illustrated the differences that existed among major fields of study at the university. As one student noted:

I’m truly dependent upon people helping me with my bachelor’s thesis I’m working on now. It depends on the friends that I have made over the four years to really be able to survive. So, um interaction there is really vital. I’ve been working with three people in particular who I share a project with. My project is to direct the film. Their projects are to film or design the scenery and stuff like that. So we depend highly on each other.

Another student noted the change he perceived after changing his major:

Now with my English major most of the classes are a lot smaller, so you get a lot more interaction and the teacher encourages a lot more interaction. Plus we form groups and stuff to interact with other students and usually those groups carry on outside the classroom in helping each other to work out different problems and stuff.

Nontraditional Students

According to the students I interviewed, nontraditional students were seen as more academically active and serious; they often ask more questions, speaking more often than traditionally aged students with professors. Any appreciation for older students varied greatly. Almost half of the students I spoke with expressed frustration with them:

Um, I don’t know. I see the nontraditional students asking a whole lot of more stupid questions than what just normal or like traditional students would ask. Well yeah, cause you’re trying to learn and there’s somebody just like asking all these really [unrelated] questions that don’t have anything to do with anything

else. You lose your train of thought because the teacher's too busy trying to answer their question instead of trying to teach the class.

Others gave older students great credit for what was seen as taking time out of an adult life to return to school. One student discussed the difference observed in the commitment to and understanding of the higher education experience:

I think the, more of the attitude is with me personally and my friends, more power to you if you can come back and pull it off. It's definitely, like there's a lot of kids in college right now, not because they want to be here but because it's expected upon them from their parents and pushed upon them from their family. But, to [nontraditional students], it's like they're here because they want to be there, so I have more respect I guess you'd say. It's like more power to you.

A second student went beyond this idea of support, as she expressed to me her greater comfort level interacting with older students, both in and out of the classroom, than with those who would typically be considered part of her own peer group. Her thoughts mirrored those of other students, that older students were more reliable and trustworthy regarding academic efforts:

Well, this is another one of those strange ones. Cause I've never really gotten along good with people my age group. I've always gotten along a lot better with the older people. Here I was 18 years old and associating with the ones that were old enough to be my Mom and Dad. And so I never really associated with my own [age] group. And then at the same time, I can understand that you know you don't want to deal with your Mom and Dad on campus. So, it really depends on the person's personality and how they choose to think of me. I've always *preferred* to have the older students in my group because I know I can count on them. Actually there's been a few exceptions, but for the most part, I've personally chosen to, to deal with more of the older students rather than the younger students.

A number of students mentioned a social gap between traditional and nontraditional student groups as being apparent. One student described a group project

attempt at bonding as a group that went awry. I felt a lack of civility or attempt to understand differences, as this student shared this experience with me:

Actually, I'm in a group right now and one is an older guy that's probably closer to my Father's age and we went this last weekend to a football game to bond with each other and it kind of turned out where the three of us younger people stuck together and we, I mean we went and got food together and we kind of left him there. And we all felt bad, but we didn't know how to react in a situation like that. I mean cause he has different interests than we do. So I think that a lot of the time, [nontraditional students are] left out of the picture.

An experienced student provided me with an enlightening synopsis of her reaction to older students and her change in attitude toward them. She also highlighted how maturational changes, both her own and those of other students, have, from her perspective, made a difference in the connections between these two student groups:

I think [interaction between the groups] is more accepted in upper division classes. The lower division classes have a tendency to, as a freshman, I *really* was irritated with older students here. And I should not have been because those were the leaders in the class. They asked the questions, they had the communication going on, brought more issues out in class and that made it better but it was always them talking, and they always had a comment and they always had something to say. *And now I'm becoming one of those people.* Within my entire class, everybody is like that now. But if I were to go back to a freshman level class, back to first Calculus, whatever, I'd be asking the questions, provoking the teacher. I know I'd be sitting in the front and the students behind me would be heckling me just because I was older than them and I was asking the questions and everybody else was bored with the class and didn't want to have anything to do with it.

Overall Fairness Noted in the Classroom Environment

Students shared with me their characterizations of the interactions that occurred between faculty and students during classes, as well as their one-on-one experiences with faculty beyond the classroom setting. Regardless of the size of the environment, most

students noted a sense of overall fairness in the classroom. Most interactions in classes were described as questions and answers about the course material. Students sitting in the “front row” were seen as the most involved in large lecture settings. Students noted the use of teaching assistants in larger classes and noted a specific difference in their more positive level of connection with faculty in smaller seminar-type or upper level courses.

One student’s comment to me that, “Ninety percent of my instructors, you know, they work very well with the students. They like to interact” seemed to characterize the general feeling among students. Students described situations in which faculty went above and beyond expectations to help them. An inexperienced female student shared her perception of a faculty member who had made an extra effort to respond to a topic she had addressed in a written assignment:

Our first report was like an event that happened to you in your lifetime and I have had [a life-altering event] happen to me. And she, when she handed me my paper, it just said on there you know if you ever want to talk, we can talk about it. Just a real comforting thing and she even came over to me and patted me on the shoulder and she said, ‘Theresa, I’m sorry’. That right there means a lot.

The levels of effort, openness, and enthusiasm offered by both professors and students emerged as critical links to the quality of students’ experiences. Instructors teaching smaller classes were also seen as taking more responsibility for connections with students; students did not always feel that the first step in connecting was up to them, “The professors in the small classes can probably name every single person in the class. And the one in the large lecture class could probably name not even five. And, um, they just know your opinion basically and I mean they remember stuff you’ve said.” In larger

classroom environments students sensed any connection was up to them, but also noted an understanding of the challenges that faculty teaching in this environment must face:

I think it's just because like the lower level classes, it's just they have so many students at a time, that they can't even really [interact]. Cause I've seen the same professors in smaller classrooms and they can actually go out there and talk to their students and see how they're doing and stuff. But some of the other classes, they're just so big, that they don't really, they can't do that. They might want to but they can't.

Students also perceived a wide range of quality regarding teaching skill among professors and teaching assistants and about how the level of such skill affected their learning experience. One student discussed with me her concern regarding professors' teaching abilities:

Some of them just haven't been given the tools to teach. I think they really have it in their hearts, but they are given a time line to where they have so much to do and maybe they don't know all the material that well, so we have good days in class and we have bad days. But then on the other hand, I've had a T.A. that was very enthusiastic and explained things clearly, knew everything forwards and backwards.

Another student shared with me that based on her experience, a great job of teaching can be done by faculty regardless of the size of the teaching environment:

Oh, well a lot of it depends on the teacher. I've had teachers that, I mean know every single student by name, even the large classrooms. I have been in a really large classroom, um, with one particular professor, that he knew everyone by name, a huge classroom. He like experiments a lot, he would like run up and down the isles lecturing, but he got everybody to interact with each other as well as him and it was, actually it was an amazing experience. I wish I could take that class again. And then I've had teachers where I don't even remember their name any more, you know?

Differences according to academic program also emerged. A student enrolled through one college noted a more informal connection with professors; being on a first-name basis was mentioned. However she did not feel that same comfort-level

approaching faculty from a broader array of departments. A greater comfort level, at times, was noted in terms of approaching teaching assistants.

Concerns Regarding Faculty-Student Interactions

Students communicated a level of concern and challenge with asking for academic assistance and described these challenges as limiting their interactions with faculty both in and out of the classroom environment. One experienced student spoke of the differences in faculty-student interactions according to the level of the class:

The senior level classes are nearly one-on-one it seems like as compared to before, like the freshmen level classes. There's a significant difference even within the same teacher. The teacher will come in to a freshman level class, be very dominant and very bold so to speak. Kind of putting his presence out there, and in a junior and senior level class, really friendly, more conversational and more approachable...and it's the same teacher. Um, probably trying to in a freshman level class, trying to invoke who is in power and trying to make sure that if you're a student, you're doing a student's work. But by the time you're a junior or a senior, uh, the teacher's not so worried about if you're gonna do the work. It's granted if you made it that far, you're probably going to do the work, and you're probably going to finish doing the work, but a freshman level class from what I understand is probably more likely to uh, or a freshman is more likely not to continue on to the sophomore level if they're not meant to be.

This opinion, shared by a variety of students, spurred a number of important questions worth consideration. Is this type of generalization made throughout institutions of higher education? Is it assumed that first year students are not worth as much time and effort, and, if so, what about the system facilitates this type of mind set and allows it to continue? Issues of power and influence also came to my mind. Are faculty members aware of the impact they have on new students? Do faculty development initiatives include what is needed regarding self-assuredness in the classroom and communicating

trust in a first year student's ability to succeed? This would seem to factor strongly into the connection a student might make during their first year and their choice to return or not for their second.

Students also shared other areas of concern regarding their interactions with faculty. The importance of taking time with students was expressed by many and illustrated by one inexperienced female student who had greater life experience due to her age, but still felt that her needs were not always recognized or met:

I would say that ninety-nine percent of the interactions students and their professors have are very good. Very good. And it's just that one percent who don't give a darn. They need to realize, I always say, the students are paying for their education. I don't know if that's off kilter, what I'm saying but um, you're [the faculty] here cause we're here and you need to take time to deal with us. But you know that's the way I look at it. And like I said, a long time ago, I probably wouldn't say anything. I'd be scared to say anything. Even me, as old as I am, I need attention. I need someone to say o.k. well you're doing good today, or if I'm not, let me know. And just that little time, saying ok, I'll make this time available for you.

Students also expressed concerns regarding faculty members "talking down" to them or those whose comments and style were beyond what students could keep up with and comprehend:

Like the other day, I had a problem with a circuit and uh, he finally got to me. And he was just all, 'No, no, no, you're doing it all wrong, blah, blah, blah', and he did it like that [very quickly] and then he left. So I had to start over and I didn't know what the hell he was trying to say to me. You pretty much, you ask your question and he'll go over it real quick and then leave. It's a 100 level class so you know we're all pretty much beginning and he's way up here (raising her hand above her head) and he has a hard time coming down to our level I think. And just assumes that we know what's going on or something along those lines. And he's on to the next question from somebody else.

Students shared their hesitancy in approaching professors with me as illustrated by this student's comment, "Going into their office I always feel something, like I'm

intruding. I don't know, some of them are receptive, but some of them seem sort of indifferent when you show up, you know. Then that kind of makes you not want to [try again]." A senior offered an explanation of how this approachability issue changed for him over time and how it affected his experience:

I think [my one-on-one interaction with faculty] is pretty good now. When I first came to college here, I tended to avoid it actually. You know going to the office and everything. But my last year, going to their office hours, and talking to them and asking questions and that, I find it actually worked a lot better, because then you got to know them. And it was kind of nice walking on campus and seeing one of your teachers and actually saying, "Hi, how are you doing?" I think [the change in interaction] shows in my grades. I think uh, I've gotten a lot better, because asking questions and getting to know them and hearing what they've got to say about it, has definitely helped me in my studying and my test-taking. Before I was just kind of winging it, kind of, on the tests.

Another student told me of her hesitancy in approaching a faculty member to share a special experience in her life that tied directly to their course material. The faculty member's lack of caring certainly had a negative impact on her learning experience, "I want to tell him that I've been to Italy and I've seen the paintings that he's been describing and I have this like, I have this brochure from one of the things that we're talking about, and I don't feel like I can do it."

Limited Faculty-Student Connections Beyond the Classroom

Students' one-on-one experiences with faculty beyond the classroom were very limited in number. The large majority of students had no interaction with faculty outside of class. Others typically experienced one-on-one interaction during faculty members' office hours or by chance around campus or in the student's work environment. A number of students expressed pleasant surprise at feeling recognized by their faculty

members outside the classroom setting, as if this was something they might never have expected. Students who had experienced one-on-one interactions with their faculty members shared wonderful stories with me. I found myself wishing all students' experiences could include these types of meaningful interactions outside the classroom setting. One student described an out-of-class dinner with her Freshman Seminar class as a highlight of her first semester on campus. Another student told me of her challenges in seeking help from faculty members and their subsequent support of her efforts on an individual level:

It's very um when I first got here I didn't have any interaction. Um, I think what I had to do was seek that interaction. And so I made myself available to try to talk with them, you know to try to explain this is how I am. This is how I've been. Sometimes I can't understand the concepts of things and I'm scared to ask, especially in class if they're a bunch of kids. I think God that questions so easy, they probably think that [she's less capable]. It's my own emotion trying to deal with what do *they* think of me trying to ask questions. But otherwise sometimes they'll give me lots of time to take my tests and this really helps. This one test took me two hours and a half to do. And just to let them understand that that's all I need, is some extra time. Then I'll go back over my questions and I'll ask them you know why I missed this question here? And they'll say why and I'll say because this is the way I understood it. And they'll look at it for a while and say yeah I can see why you understood it like that. And see that kind of clears up the air and it says boy if I'd of worded it this way, she'd have had it. And then we'll go to the next one and they'll ask me, how'd you understand this one and I'll look at the answer and say I understood this was what you're asking.

A third student spoke of help he had received from one of his faculty members regarding preparation of a scholarship application he needed to complete and submit:

Last semester I went to a teacher that I had a couple of semesters ago, and he was more than willing to help me... it was for a scholarship and I asked him how to prepare it. He looked at my application like, my resume basically and he was very nice and he told me come back if I needed anything. He was just really nice.

While students' connections with faculty beyond the classroom were rare, they made a great difference to students' experiences. One student described this out of classroom experience:

This past semester I've been involved in the soils department and so one of my professors there I feel is very good at explaining and very good at presenting the materials so that everyone can understand it even though some haven't had too much of a background in chemistry or physics or things like that. And um I was involved in this competition for MSU and so we had a barbeque and so we talked quite a bit. And I brought my older son who's interested in paleontology because I thought it would be a good experience to expose him to people, because he's going to be going here. And this professor, he enjoyed talking with my son, and he's just very down to earth, a different type of person. But I also feel that he's very secure and confident with himself. He knows his material really well and maybe he believes in it, you know he, he's enthusiastic.

Academic Advising Concerns

A lack of knowledge about how developmental academic advising can enhance a student's experience was prevalent among the students I interviewed. It was not unusual that students had only one advising experience since their initial semester at the university. Many had not met with an advisor since Orientation or a High School Days program. Others expressed a free-wheeling attitude about advising as something they did not really need or described their advising experiences as a type of nuts-and-bolts procedure, mainly related to the scheduling of classes. One comment by a senior, who had not really taken advantage of advising services, clearly illustrated a lack of understanding about the advising process, "I guess now is the time to start really discussing the career and all that kind of stuff."

Students' experiences with their academic advisors varied, although students tended to be much more concerned than happy about their academic advising situations. While a few students had very positive academic advising experiences, others felt a lack of connection with their advisors, were unhappy about inaccurate advice they were given, and felt that better overall communication of departmental information was needed. Many students reported having no contact at all with their advisor or the contacts they described were short and very prescriptive in advising approach. One inexperienced student expressed her concern with her advising situation this way:

Um, he hasn't helped me at all. I went in and he talked about, I don't know maybe he's going through a mid-life crisis or something but I went in to talk about a personal strategic plan that I'm supposed to plan for, the 5 years that I'm here and um he basically didn't help me at all. Not even on one class that I was looking at and so I need to do that all by myself now and I'm a freshman so I don't exactly know where to go. So I started asking my friends basically, but um, my advisor is friendly and everything but he doesn't help advise as much as far as the classes I want to take and should I take them or shouldn't I and what's good for me.

Another first-year student, who was enrolled through the Department of General Studies and taking a Freshman Seminar course, described her experience very differently:

Um, I'm in [the] General Studies [Freshman Seminar course] and I found that class very helpful. Taking that my first semester, cause we kind of, it's almost basic what we go over. It's very basic, but at the same time it made me feel more comfortable. Like, just now we're starting to schedule for next semester, and we had an advisor come in and talk to us about what our options are and if we had any questions about anything. We had a seminar to go see the Assistant Deans of the department that we might be interested in majoring in. Just being in that class has made me feel more confident in where I was headed, feel more confident with my environment on campus and I just, I think they did a lot [to help me].

An experienced student's thoughts mirrored those of others, regarding their earlier experiences and the types of things they wished they had known as first-year students.

She wished information sharing was more systematic or purposeful for new and continuing students:

Um, the only complaint I would have and I'm not sure how this would be remedied, is that I wish I'd known some things as a freshman that I do now. Because I just learned them through experience. The Chemistry Department has like a Chemistry Club sort of. And they invite everyone to come and they tell you, your advisor and you could do this and you could do that. But you know it's hard to get a hold of freshmen and say you need to come to this meeting because they tell you things. And a lot of the times they just ignore it or they just don't know that the meeting is there even. You know it took, um, every chemistry major has like a mailbox in the office, and I didn't even know that until half way through my sophomore year. That's the main way they get a hold of you. I had one particular teacher who just said there is a chemistry meeting and she posted it, so I went.

More developmental and positive advising experiences were shared by a number of students. One inexperienced student offered, "They didn't make decisions for me, but they were helpful in showing me what I could do. They gave me information about my options." A casual and comfortable relationship with his advisor was noted by another experienced student, "My academic advisor actually is one of my teachers. The one who I, I told you I clown around with. So, he's a great guy. I can go in any time and uh he helps me out with anything." Yet another student shared his positive thoughts regarding his connection with his advisor, stressing the strong outreach done by his advisor on his behalf:

It's pretty good. I've got pretty high quality of advising. I've got [faculty advisor name] for my advisor. He notified me two weeks before, I think it was two Wednesdays ago that we had our pre-registration meeting for EE. He notified me two weeks ahead of that with e-mail that that was coming up and to have a general idea of what classes I wanted to take so when we met, that we could just get squared away and he could tell me right or wrong and so on. Get my options out there; he's the one that got me squared away on my classes at the start of the semester as well. He let me know, if he hadn't called me up and told me, I would have had 8 credits out of my 17 that weren't gonna count towards my goal so.

Others students shared advising experiences with me that were not positive. They communicated feeling that many of their expectations were unmet regarding their advising situations. Their comments illustrated a lack of connection with advisors and a feeling that, at times, advisors were just going through the motions. One student described frustrations regarding red tape and a lack of answers that if rectified, would certainly make a positive difference for her:

Discouraging. Because, um, just when I, you know this is my second semester here and I've *just now* spoken with my academic advisor. And, um you know he was just like, 'Here is the sheet for your you know the things you have to do to major in this major'. He seemed like he cared. But you know he didn't like ask why do you want to do this or is this really what you want to do and after you graduate what do you want to do afterwards? I had to find out pretty much, well through myself and talking to professionals that I encounter like when I'm waitressing, and then talking to other students, that um [this major] isn't really the major I should be in you know, but he never said that because he didn't even take the time to find out. And then I went to [the other department] and they give me this sheet of like well these are the people you could talk to and these are the people you can't talk to or maybe you want to go to you know. *Help*, whatever and it's just like, *wow*, well who's going to answer my questions? You guys seem really cold and it seems like you're always being shuffled off onto somebody else, and it just makes you not want to go to anybody.

The influence of the opinions of peers regarding academic advising services, as well as students relying more on the advice of other students was apparent:

Well, [this opinion] is not just from me. It's basically from all my friends and classmates. The advising here is basically terrible. But scheduling and stuff, you know you hear, I mean you hear some rumors, but when you hear a lot, you know it makes you wonder. Cause like people, they give their advisor their schedule, they go over it and say o.k. and it ends up all screwed up because they didn't look closely at it. So, it's like they don't do their job anyway. I'd expect that they'd contact me, you know. That we'd do some sort of thing, but I haven't heard from them.

One student shared his view with me of the need for something different, especially for new students:

I think that [advising] is better as one-on-one interaction, and not just knowing the technical aspects of the academic program, but other parts. For example, the psychology of things, because in many cases students are, they are so confused [upon entry to the university] that they express some things completely opposite to what they could be feeling or they don't know how to express what they want and that type of thing. I think advisors should know more about [how to help the student interact meaningfully], not just the technical part.

A second student's thoughts supported and added to this emerging theme, especially in regard to faculty versus professional advisor roles on campus:

Um, my advisor, she's a wonderful woman but as far as helping me to, you know, to start she didn't really have a lot of time. And again, knowledge of the area that they're supposed to be advising. You know, I'm not doubting their integrity but yet they, you know they, I think it, what it boils down to is they don't have enough time for it. On top of the fact that they're most, they're professors, they're dealing with their own stuff. And I've always found the academic advising is one of the areas that has to more or less be maybe changed into just one job, you know somebody's one job. Um I've seen so many students you know that spend more time on credits, you know they're like ill advised. Myself, I know how to do it. I know how to take catalogue, and say well this is what I'm gonna do and this is what I'll do this semester and this semester and then I'll graduate. Um, so that's what I did with my advisor. I more or less just brought [my plan] in and said um this is how I'll do it. I need this class accepted as a substitute for this one cause I was transferring a lot of credits. And she was like, she just loved me, she was like, 'Woah, you're all set, it didn't take me much at all', but I think most likely it's their lack of time to put forth a lot of effort into advising.

A third student also shared with me her perception regarding her faculty advisor's attitude related to the advising role, which illustrated the pressures on faculty time and level of engagement in the advising process:

I'm the 'what if' girl. I always have questions. You know if I do this what will happen? My advisor seemed on the outside to be caring but when I was actually there, it's like you're fine, don't worry about it, you're fine, I'll sign the paper. And I didn't even know if I was gonna graduate and I was all scared and nervous, and I heard all these stories about people who thought they were gonna graduate and they didn't. But he was just like, you're fine, go, so I don't know. And so almost the opposite of what I have been saying about the professors [in the

classroom]. But [advising] is kind of something they *have* to do, they don't really want to do it.

An experienced male student discussed the advising experience he had had throughout his undergraduate career and the challenges he faced in working with his faculty advisor:

They were tough at first. Um, I was scared stiff of my advisor. I hated to see him. I'd dressed up tie and everything just to make sure that maybe I'd, the time before I didn't look good enough or maybe had given a bad impression of myself or something. He was just a tough advisor, but I've talked to some of my other colleagues and fellow students and they said, yes he is a tough advisor but wait until you're about a junior, he'll lighten up on you. And sure enough, it was by the time I was a senior, but he did become more sociable and I, I often thought about changing advisors, but he never gave me bad advice so he fulfilled his obligations, I thought. He [just] wasn't very personable at all.

I would sign-up for advising time, a half an hour slot and he would show up possibly ten to fifteen minutes late and never failed to always like, he'd always say, 'Well, just a minute' and he would ignore that I was there till he was done doing things, paperwork on his desk or on the computer and I thought he was kind of just cold. He didn't say, "I'll be with you just as soon as I finish this" or anything. It was very impersonal, but I think that's the only thing I wish I could of changed [about his experience]. It was *terrible*, no eye contact at all. I was always looking for positive reinforcement for the classes I had picked or negative reinforcement for classes that I should not have been taking or guidance other than the flow chart, but he never asked me, "What do you want to do?" or, "What kind of career are you after?" I felt kind of betrayed at the beginning, but by forcing myself to do that research, I feel better because I know all my options. I wasn't told what my options were. But on the other hand, I don't think everybody acts the same way as I did. [Other students] would have been worse off.

Avenues of Engagement

The students I interviewed lived in a variety of environments; in residence halls, Family Housing or off-campus apartments or trailer courts. A few were commuting to campus and living at home. They shared positive aspects of on-campus living including

social interaction opportunities, residence hall activities, and involvement in specific organizations such as the Residence Hall Association.

Proximity to the rooms of other students seemed to be a common denominator in how students became connected with each other. While some students noted this as a positive thing, others saw it as limiting their interactions in the residence hall setting, as illustrated by one student's comments:

I'd say the problem with like on my floor, there's not, you don't really know a lot of people basically. You see people in room meetings, like the first two everybody will show up and after that nobody shows us. So like people that are on your own floor, you never meet them. There's not really a lot of camaraderie unless you're on the other side or this side [as neighbors].

Another student described his positive experience living in a newer suite-designed residence hall, but also noted that there were fewer connections among students in that environment, as they tended to spend time primarily with their suite-mates. Students also described specific living options, such as living on a floor for students who were twenty-one years of age and older, as positive and worthwhile choices.

The students I interviewed found important connections in a variety of ways and on a number of levels. These connections included formal and informal involvements related to social, civic, spiritual, and academic pursuits. About half of the students I spoke with had no formal type of support group as part of their experience, but felt connections with individual people on-campus made an important difference for them. A number of students, especially those with greater personal responsibilities, such as spouses and children, felt a lack of support for their student role. One such student wondered, "And I think to myself, well what do I do for a release?"

Other activities and involvements that helped students make important connections included in- and out-of-class experiences. Students told me about assigned lab partnerships that bloomed into friendships, or described informal classroom conversations as the beginning of serious friendships. At times random pairings of roommates also turned into valued friendships. Students also spoke of how they made connections with students who were involved in similar academic programs of study or were taking other classes together. Official university activities also provided avenues of engagement for students including Athletics, Intramurals, Residence Hall Association involvement, Greek Life, ROTC, Indian Club, AISES (American Indians Science Engineering Society), and on-campus employment.

A student explained his connection through a fraternity based on common academic interests, “I come from an agricultural background, you know. And my brother’s like in an Agricultural Frat. And so I’m friends with a lot of those guys and I don’t know, it’s just where I’ve been for eighteen years, you know, ranching and farming.” Another student also shared with me a Greek Life connection, discussing her involvement in a sorority, and the importance of having a supportive group to depend upon:

They just seemed to care about everything, you know, and wanted everybody involved in the community, you know all the community service and they’re really up on like grades and stuff like that. So I thought that was really nice. And they always said that if you had any problems, you could always go and talk to somebody in the house because they’ve probably been through it you know. I thought that was really cool, that you could just go talk to somebody.

An inexperienced female student shared her thoughts regarding her on-campus employment at a daycare, which highlighted for me the developmental opportunities possible through purposeful student employment opportunities:

I think it's because especially the first few weeks I was here, you really lose track of who you are. This is just like *bam*, you know you're thrown into an arena [of higher education] and so the daycare it's just kids and you know, kids are just so, they just accept everything. You know you can forget about all your worries, whether you have to pay a bill or not, because you just don't have to worry about it. You just get down and play with them and you make their day. And it makes my day to play with them so. The staff is outstanding. It's four ladies who have just dedicated their lives to this daycare and the kids, and each one of them is really unique and has great qualities. Like you know, that the kids, or you and I want to learn from [them] and um. And then the other girls who I work with are all students too. Most of 'em are engaged or married, so that's interesting for me to you know, it's like, how does it feel to be married? Don't you feel young? Yeah I really like the whole atmosphere. It's neat to be involved in something like that. To have that kind of connection.

Informal activities that students shared an interest in also provided important connections for them. These included things like social partying, recreational activities and a love of the outdoors. Common living spaces were also discussed as critical to a number of the connections students had made, as well as relationships they had already established with students prior to coming to MSU. Many of the students I interviewed had friends also attending the university who they remained close with. They maintained relationships with students who had attended the same high school or had been involved in their church youth groups at home.

Residence Life Efforts Make a Difference

Students shared their thoughts regarding their involvements with the Residence Hall Association, their Resident Assistant and attendance at floor meetings held by their

Resident Assistants as important experiences for them. One student who looked forward to greater privacy in her future off-campus living environment gave great credit to her hall staff for their efforts while she was living on-campus:

But I think definitely the [Resident Assistant] and the [Resident Director]; everyone works very hard to make this a very homey environment. A safe environment. I think they do an excellent job but um like I said I'm an independent person and I'd rather have my own place and like my own personal time.

The importance of the quality of a student's Resident Assistant (R.A.) and the potential for this student group's ability to positively impact the campus community came through loud and clear during my interviews. Many students shared very positive experiences with me, "My R.A. is just great. She's always willing to help, you know. It's been pretty good, they're always like trying to get us involved, you know, go to all these organizations, you know, so I think it's pretty good."

A student involved in a leadership role in his residence hall shared his thoughts about his environment with me, "In the residence hall, I'm the, I'm just doing a lot of activities there. I'm the floor president, the hall senator. Some great guys you know. Some people stay to themselves, some people are real active and wild and stuff like that you know. You are on your own and it's more relaxed."

One experienced male student described the benefits that he felt came from living in the residence hall environment. That it helped him to branch out and meet students, something that he would not have done if left to his own devices as a first-year student:

Yeah, the benefit I got out of living in the residence halls is you're forced to do the social [interaction]. You have no choice because there's so many people there all the time. I made a lot of friends then. Whereas, I think if I would have

jumped into an apartment my freshman year by myself, if I could have afforded it, I would probably be a hermit. Go to class and fix my meals and I'd go to class.

Another student voiced concern about her Resident Assistant situation and illustrated how the students involved as Resident Assistants can impact a residence life atmosphere in many important ways:

I don't know I guess my R.A., she doesn't really participate with us. She doesn't really communicate with us, so we never really do any activities together. And so that's really bad. I can't stand that. Cause I could not, I could maybe name five out of maybe twenty or twenty-five kids on our floor and I just feel like I don't really know anybody there.

A number of the students I spoke with found their residence hall experiences to be not only pleasant, but at times, empowering, "It's just really different and it's nice having the freedom away from your parents and um the campus certainly provides you with a lot of stuff you can do."

Another experienced student concurred as he remembered his Residence Life experience in a very positive light and attributed it, in part, to his easy transition to campus during his first year of study:

I think the Department of Res Life on this campus does a really nice job on making the transition from high school to college really good. I look back on it and stick my finger in my throat going, my god, I can't believe I [did those things]. That I went to Mocktail Night you know in North Hedges, where they pretend that you're gambling and stuff. But I really, I think they do a nice job of [stressing] individuality um and I've never gone to any other campus, so I don't really know what it's like [elsewhere], but um my transition from high school to college was very, very mellow and I think largely it had to do with the fact that this campus is small and tight knit.

Issues with Freedom, Privacy, and Money

While about half of the students I interviewed saw the opportunities for social interactions as a positive aspect of their living environments, others felt that they had outgrown the party scene or were in ways overwhelmed by it:

A lot of people want to experience life. Not really college life, but just social life, including myself. I mean social is important too but, it's overwhelming. I graduated a year ago [from high school], so I think that, I've talked with other people that are freshman here and graduated a year ago and took some time off and that's a huge growth period. We graduate from high school and you know, you have your whole life in front of you and you don't have any guidelines to follow and stuff like that. Last year I just took a year off and I moved out of my house and I bought a car and I just did my own thing and I realized that I had to go to school to get where I wanted. Um, I know a lot of these kids have no idea of that. They don't realize that yet. I just think that [being on your own] completely makes you realize what you want in life and what you don't want. Yeah, but I've slipped right back down, [into the social scene] so the first few weeks I was just like, I can't handle this. It was just really overwhelming and then um I just started letting go slowly like uh, being more social and being able to expect that we're always going to have company over and you know just stuff like that but it's really hard to concentrate though.

Lack of privacy and money were at times concerns for students, as they spoke about living on-campus, especially beyond their first year experience:

Last year I think it was better [living in a residence hall] because I think it was my first time being in a college environment. So to get adjusted I liked being around the students and this is the best way to be around students. Um, I think this year is a lot different because I'm tired of, I mean I don't mind being around the students, but I'm tired of you know, with living in Hedges, living in that type of environment. You have students who want to party and all that and drink and all that so, being around that is tiresome right now. The people are all right. I have no problem with the people, it's just, things that can occur sometimes and I mean it gets to the point that you want your privacy. To be out away from the dorms, but the thing is with me, I'm not out of there because I don't have transportation to go anywhere. I'm not one of the richest persons in the world so I'm not able to do a lot of things I want to do.

One of the experienced female students who interviewed with me enjoyed the time she spent in the residence hall environment on her particular floor, but became tired of the disrespectful disturbances of students living on other floors in the same building:

In North Hedges, I was like on the fifth floor and it was a really good floor. Everybody was clean, everybody was quiet, everybody was nice. We got compliments from the custodians. It was a really good floor. But the problems I had were with [students living on] other floors. They were loud, especially like the people above me. They would turn their stereo up. People would knock on your door at three in the morning asking where the party was. They'd come up and they'd puke in our halls. It was really very awful. I was very glad to leave.

Students who had made the transition from living in the residence hall environment to Family Housing or their own off-campus living spaces shared their ideas, noting that an increase in privacy was a plus, but that finances could also be tight at times. An experienced student described for me his thoughts about his Family Housing environment and his transition to it from an on-campus residence hall:

Nice. It's quiet. I lived in the dorms for three years. I lived in an apartment with a roommate for a year and those four years prior were chaotic and noisy. I lived in S. Hedges and the brick walls don't go all the way to the ceiling and they're not insulated for sound and you just, you hear everybody all the time. You had hardly any privacy there. It's a dorm. But, um, now that I'm married, I live in Family Housing in a house and there's space between my house and the next house and there's no one above me or below me to bang on walls or make too much noise. Right now I like it a lot.

Students were often grateful for their Family Housing opportunities due to the lower cost of living as compared with an off-campus environment. However, they also shared with me thoughts of feeling crowded, especially when children were involved:

Mm, crowded (laughs). Um I've changed all over the place too. I've been in Julia Martin, Mackintosh, and now I'm in Paisley. Um, just because of the, that wasn't because of the neighbors or anything, it was like the house. The houses themselves. I really like Paisley Court. I like my neighbors. They are real nice. But um, like I said, I'm from a small area and I was raised in the country and at

times it gets a little hectic for me. It does for my children too, cause they're always wanting to build, they've been kicked out of so many trees around family housing (laughing). I mean trying to build them a fort up in a tree and then I'm like, oh, and I feel so sorry for them, you know. Cause they don't have a whole lot of room to do what little boys need to do. It's just crowded.

Off campus living was seen as providing more privacy and freedom, "Just living off campus now, you get more privacy I guess and so you get to do what you want to do. You can play your music whenever you want to. Um, come in and you don't have to check-in if you want to have somebody over."

Limited Exposure To and Opinions Regarding Student Services

I also asked students about their interactions with Student Service Office personnel on campus, as these services are designed to be helpful and supportive of students' needs. In order to avoid any confusion about the services students were addressing, I also shared a master list of Student Service Offices for students in order to prompt responses about appropriate offices/services. While the functions performed by these areas on campus remain vital to students' satisfaction and experience, students had very limited exposure to or opinion about them. Overall, students seemed to see these services as providing a means of getting everyday details accomplished and were relatively happy with their experiences, as illustrated by these students' comments:

I get what I need and I get out. So I can't say that it's been; nothing on a personal level. Ok, walk in, tell them what I need, get that and get out. I mean if I had any questions, they were willing to answer, but basically I knew what I needed, you know when I went to the Registrars Office or when I went to the Health Center. I knew what I needed and they pretty much told me, ok you can do this and this and this and ok, thanks, you have a nice day. That was basically it.

Mm, too busy, too slow. They're just like in real life, um just like going to any other place of business that you need to do things, you know like to the doctor's office or to WalMart or anywhere else. It's just like any other interaction. I don't see it any different than anything else. It's almost like we're a small town within a town, so I haven't had any problems, I haven't seen any problems, it's just like a normal day.

Older, more experienced students had more general positive comments to make about Student Service and had more broadly used the services available to them. Specific examples of helpful connections made were also shared. One student described to me an experience he had with the Dean of Students:

I had something financial or something, and I lost all my classes and he immediately called me up and I went in to see him and he immediately put me back in all my classes. And so we got it all taken care of and he took me to Financial Aid and stuff and had me work things out with them. So he took time out of his time to personally get me back in school and that was just great.

One inexperienced female student who had interactions with a variety of offices including Financial Aid, the Bookstore, Intramurals, and the bank at the SUB described what she felt were very supportive interactions:

Sometimes at home when people aren't used to dealing with students that are completely lost, they're kind of rude. But everybody here seems to know, like at the bank, I have *no* idea what's going on with my checking account, but I can just go in and they're all really nice and they just will take the time to help me. It's seems like everybody's like that and they know I'm just a freshman and lost (she laughs). It seems like they're all really friendly and willing to help, so I feel comfortable asking questions. Oh yeah, like the intramurals and stuff. I went into Work Study and [a staff member] got me a job. He helped me find one and he was really helpful.

Throughout my interviews with them, students communicated a great deal of empathy and understanding for what they perceived as other limited shortcomings. One student spoke of feeling like the people she dealt with in campus offices seemed worn out in terms of the reception she experienced, "I feel like some people get sick of answering

the same questions over and over again. And um get kind of tired or I guess bored with the repetition that goes on with the thousands of people that are here.”

Students expressed concern about experiences with specific Student Service Offices. Their concerns typically involved lack of comfort with organizational level; the pace of services, either waiting too long for services or feeling rushed; and issues with university or departmental policy.

The common ideas and opinions shared among students during the course of this exploration, give me great hope that most students would be able to find a level of common ground for understanding each other, given consistent educational opportunities over the course of their experiences on-campus. While student differences must no doubt be explored and celebrated, perhaps the route to understanding might also be enhanced through the exploration of shared characteristics and opinions.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR DIVERSITY

As students shared their thoughts with me throughout the course of this study, certain perceptions, opinions, and experiences came to light that were specific to each group of students I interviewed. My initial findings chapter, chapter four, is based upon the common experiences and opinions of students that emerged throughout my study, regarding the general campus climate, as well as the campus climate for diversity. This second findings chapter explores how issues varied across student groups and seeks to highlight differences in perceptions, opinions, and experiences of each of the groups of students involved in my study.

African American Student PerspectivesBroad-based Experiences with Diverse Populations

The African American students I interviewed communicated a variety of experiences regarding their prior interactions with diverse populations before the start of their undergraduate careers. They dealt with predominantly ethnic environments, predominantly white, and/or mixed environments throughout their lives. As one student noted, “Well, I went to school in Los Angeles when I first grew up and the majority of us there were black. I moved to Orange County and went to school in Orange County for a while and the majority was white then.” Another student expressed, “I was an Air Force brat, so I’ve been all over and met [people of] many different cultures.” Other students

grew up in what they described as mostly a white environment. A few students also spoke of elite situations while discussing their prior experiences with me. These involved educational experiences including private boarding school and experimental education settings, “I lived in the suburbs and I went to a, um like um, Creative Learning Centers which was experimental education back when I was growing up. So, they’re very expensive, so you know. I don’t think I ever had any black classmates.”

We/They Language, Student Skills and Impact of Local Culture. Students talked about many positive approaches to the term diversity; however, the we/they language students used signified the barriers that exist for them. An interesting perspective was shared by a number of students who personalized what diversity meant to them, in terms of the interpersonal skills they had honed in dealing with difference. One student expressed his ideas this way:

Well when I think of diversity, I think of myself as being a person who’s able to make a transition from being in one setting to being in another. So I mean if I’m in a setting with my own, black of course, and you know we’re carrying on about ourselves one way and doing things the way we’re used to doing them. And then once I get to another place that I’m able to carry on in a sense that they can understand and that they’re used to seeing more. Being able to make transitions between different settings, whether it be settings or situations or you know, just being able to cope with different types of things than what you’re used to.

While students, at times, noted concerns regarding the local culture and issues of diversity, others described coming to Montana in terms of the slower pace of life as compared to their prior living experiences. One student also spoke with me of the positive risk-taking involved in coming to a place that was so different from where he originally hailed:

Um, it's a lot slower than what I'm used to. But in a sense it's good 'cause faster means more problems, I think, like back home I mean. I'm from a big city, so you know everything is on the run. I think it's kind of good that people head away to places that they're not familiar with or that they haven't been to before, just for the simple fact that it changes their life style. I can be more involved in school and don't have to worry about so many other distractions like I would back at home.

Another student expressed that he felt his experience living in Montana made him stronger and more able to handle whatever might come his way in the future:

The way I feel [is] that this is a good experience for me. I remember my Uncle saying, "You know, you should go to a black college. You know that they'll teach you more." and blah, blah, blah. But what I've learned over the years is that the world is diverse so if these people don't have a chance, if it was just all white people here at this college and then they go somewhere else to get a job and they don't know how to mingle or interact with other people from different cultures or minorities, they'll be more out of place. So hopefully this experience just made me stronger as far as me being out there in the real world. 'Cause when I go out into the real world there won't just be black people and football players. It's gonna be people from everywhere and now this, you know, I'll have experience with that situation.

Students' responses to diversity, addressed issues of concern that they felt were embedded in the local Montana culture, as illustrated by a variety of comments:

I think that [diversity] is important for *any* group, but this [school], yes I do think it is. Because once you get so used to having things one way for so long, you just get totally turned off to any new idea. Like any new people coming in, um. You know, I noticed there was an African group that was up here and it was like a couple of weeks ago and I didn't know what they were here for, but you know, they stood out. And you know people [were asking me], "Where are they from?" "What are they here for?" "You know what's going on?" So, I mean you can't avoid [diversity], the best thing to do would be to learn to deal with it or suffer the consequences of being the way you are now and trying to take that somewhere else with you. 'Cause it's not going to work everywhere else.

I have absolutely no hang ups about interacting with anyone around me. If I've found that one way or another they've had a problem with me because maybe I'm black or something like that, well then that's more of a reason for me, I mean, I might want things to be you know, peaceful, but I'm not gonna be the person

who's gonna sit there and try to talk to them all the time because I look at it like this. I'm in; I'm in *their* state.

One student distinguished a difference he saw between the ability to make connections with out-of-state Caucasian students compared to Montana students who hailed from smaller towns and had less experience with diverse populations. A third student commented that most of the Caucasian students he knew were more associates than friends, although he described one notable exception about a student from Montana:

When he speaks to me, he doesn't seem like there is something wrong with me. Like there's something he really needs to find out before he's able to speak to me. He can just speak to me and we have a conversation and I know where he's coming from and he knows where I'm coming from. So, I mean and he's from

Bozeman. *He's* from Montana. I mean if there were more people like that it would be a lot easier to interact with people on campus.

Students responded positively, in support of diversity on campus. The possibilities regarding improvements in communication between and among students on campus seemed very hopeful and yet in ways out of reach. As she shared this thought with me, this student's tone of voice seemed to question whether what she was posing was even possible:

Well, it shouldn't matter. I mean people should get along no matter what background you come from. We're here to get an education, I mean, we don't, we should see past the color of your skin or your gender. It doesn't matter what background you come from. I think everybody should be welcome, no matter what. It *would* be nice, I mean, to get to know each other.

Learning About Each Other: A Core Issue. To many students learning about each other was the core issue in regard to diversity. Taking a broad view of diversity was also stressed. A limited number of students had an international focus when relating to

diversity, while one student did not feel diversity was important at all, “I don’t think it is at all. Mm, because I don’t think that it’s really important that any school have any kind of diversity as long as the people that [are there]; as long as everyone is welcome.” In contrast, another student spoke with me about the possibility of leaving the institution for reasons tied to a lack of diversity on campus, as well as her own lack of experience:

I think it’s time that I go somewhere and find diversity, you know ‘cause I’m really, I’m really as white as you could be. You know I’ve always lived in white communities. I’ve always had white friends. I’ve always dated white guys. I came here because it would feel like home. ‘Cause we used to live here and stuff like that and I think I was coming here to prepare myself to go somewhere more diverse.

As I discussed interracial relationships with students, a number of students felt the need to separate dating from marriage, feeling differently about the two situations.

Students also spoke of societal influences that weighed on them, including that of their parents’ and the reality of their situation in regard to dating while living in Montana:

I’m a black male on this campus. Ninety-nine percent of the girls on this campus are probably not black. So, um, you know you date who you’re here and there with. When it comes to the marriage approach, that, it might be a little different. I told my parents plenty of times that I’ll marry who I want to marry and you either have to like it or [not]. Because no one’s ever gonna choose for me what I’m gonna do. My Father has told me before anyone gets married; they need counseling just to understand people better, *period*.

Increased Recruitment and Preparation for Diverse Populations Encouraged. I

asked students what changes they might make on campus regarding the issue of diversity.

One group of ideas related to people as being the key, and included such things as more diversity on campus within the student-body as well as the faculty and staff, “More diversity, more black students, more Hispanic students, more Asians you know whatever,

all minorities. Just so everybody gets a taste of everything. And not just for my sake, but so that everybody wouldn't be caught in an uncomfortable situation because of the lack of diversity here." Increases in the planning for and development of social and academic support for students of color, prior to bringing students to campus, was also stressed:

Just diversity in as many aspects as possible. Of course it won't be a dramatic change. Last year I spoke with Affirmative Action and I just wrote a paper about diversity and during this time I was speaking about getting more African American students here and I was thinking how would that be possible? I said it would be up to [the school] to do it. But for [the school] to do it, it would have to adjust within the students in order to try to bring other students in. So, showing that you know we have certain multicultural courses available for example. It's more what you do here first before trying to bring something [or someone] from outside.

The importance of an increase in community awareness about the students of color on campus, their reasons for attending and their aspirations for the future, was also addressed:

If I could change another thing it's to (long pause), just basically make people aware. They have to make the community more aware that you know we are here and we're not here to make life difficult for you, but we're here to get an education, and you know that was offered to us. And you know we want to learn just like anyone else and we want to take advantage of, you know, the opportunities that you might [already] have and you know, we want the same.

White Students' Prior Experiences with Diversity Recognized. As students spoke of their experiences and opinions about the interaction between Caucasian students and students of color in classroom and other settings, several interesting points were made. They voiced a perception of the importance of white students' previous experiences in dealing with diverse populations. Students felt that Caucasian students were hesitant about, or not interacting with students of color, based on limited past experiences, "I'm

not going to be stereotypical or anything like that, but students from Montana, they're not used to seeing a black person, so maybe they won't know how to approach me and speak to me." Students also offered comments that indicated an open-minded approach and genuine attempt to understand the comfort level of other students regarding interactions with them:

I can't really say that white people act as one because some of 'em are cool, you know. Some of 'em want to get with you and see what you're about. Some of 'em are more hesitant because of stereotypes or what they see on TV or just you know. I'm sure if somebody's coming from a high school with twenty people in their senior class you know, I'm sure not a lot of them were black or I bet there isn't anybody black in their whole town. This may be their first chance ever to interact face-to-face with a black person. So I can understand how that might be a little bit difficult. But you know some of them are like that and some of them are cool. Some of them might come from Seattle or Portland and maybe are used to some African Americans.

Unfair Focus and Alienation in the Classroom and Beyond

Whether they were talking with me about their arrivals on campus or their experiences in academic or student life environments, students felt an unfair focus and feelings of alienation related to their being black. One student's had strong feelings of alienation as he spoke with me about his experience arriving at MSU as a first-year student. He described what he went through as a sort of culture shock and addressed the challenges in making the transition to a predominantly white institution and community environment:

I was used to seeing a diverse population, being in a diverse area. It was a *culture shock*, that's what it was, and any freshman is gonna miss home but I think for me and anybody else who came from [a different type of place] there's more difficulties because I was seeing diverse everything. And it just seemed like it's just Montana and Montana is just certain people and their certain view and it's

really disturbing. You feel confined. You can't move around or do anything. Slowly things change, you're able to speak to people.

Classroom interactions that caused discomfort on the part of African American students were also expressed throughout my interviews. One student noted, "Because I am black it does become more personal. You know the professors notice who I am usually and they notice if I don't come to class." Feelings of alienation in the classroom setting were shared, as illustrated by another student's comment, "I know I already stick out like a sore thumb, and I don't want to stick out any more than I already am, so I just don't talk to anybody." The reaction of other class members to his involvement during class was noted by an experienced male student, "Like in the beginning classes [during the first few classes of a semester] when you talk, like if I raise my hand and have a question, it's just like everybody stops and wants to know what does *he* want to know, you know?" The comments of one student stressed how he felt his natural reactions were stunted by the lack of connection and common experience he felt to others in the classroom environment:

I wouldn't say [I felt] un-welcomed, but maybe out of place. Just like you know, just being the only minority in a class and you know you don't really have anybody else to bond with and uh, you may see something that's funny but you can't even express it because nobody else, because maybe only somebody else who can understand what you're going through or who watches the same things you watch. But there isn't someone to talk to, so I just have to keep it inside. So just things like being the only minority in the class and sometimes I feel out of place.

Students spoke of a feeling of alienation not only among white students, but at times, with other black students as well, "Actually, ironically I have more of a problem, I would have more of a problem talking to people here of my own race. Um, I don't well,

for me it's hard because I sense sort of a gap between us. There's some that I talk to, but because I don't act that typical street way [I don't feel accepted by other black students here]. The lack of connection she perceived among black students on campus, was also noted by an inexperienced female student:

I'm just gonna make this comment 'cause I noticed it in my high school, too. I think it's so interesting that other black students on campus, that we all are sort of scared to be each other's friends and I don't know [why]. But it's a bummer because we could be a great support system for each other.

While students' initial reactions about their comfort level interacting with other students in the classroom setting were positive, they seemed to end up talking about challenging situations or feelings, and their strategies for dealing with them. One student, whose use of the word *it* intrigued me, put it this way:

Oh, I'm really comfortable with that. I really don't concentrate on the fact that I'm black. I have things that I know that I'm proud of about my past and my ancestors and stuff, but I don't concentrate on that issue. I'm just friendly with everybody. I really like everybody, but the thing is that I've never really dealt with having to; I've always dealt with it, living in a white community and more of a small town area. So that's just what I'm used to, so *it* doesn't faze me any more. *It* used to I think, maybe when I was younger.

The idea of feeling overly noticed was communicated by students throughout my interviews with them, as if they were in a fish bowl and being watched. While most students addressed their awareness of a cautious discrimination instead of plain or direct discrimination, a limited number of specific instances describing direct discrimination were described. One student I interviewed shared an experience he faced in one of his classes, with students refusing to speak to him, "The only people who ever talk to me, there's probably two people in the whole class that I really talk to. They won't give

different people a chance.” Another student told me of her tendency to avoid campus interactions:

I, you know, stay away from school stuff, school oriented stuff. And when you're at school, you're just surrounded by people and I get like anxiety attacks, I'm not comfortable around all these people that I don't know. I get kind of sad sometimes or I just go home in the middle of class, you know and I'll just be like wow [asking myself], why'd you do that, you know? 'Cause it seems like I'm just hurting myself by doing that. Um or if I have that feeling, sometimes I'll make myself stay at school and I'll be really uncomfortable, but still I'm happy at the end of the day because I actually made myself stay. But um no, I'm kind of uncomfortable here, so I don't hang out with anybody here. When I come here I like wear earphones and study.

One thing is that I'm not the same age as the majority of the people [although I'm not much older]. I kind of feel out of place in that way, you know. Another reason is that I feel like I stick out a lot, like I just am a big look at me. I just don't feel like I can ever blend in, so it's like you always have to, you know, you sneeze in class and everybody looks at you. You walk out of the class before everyone else does and everyone looks at you. You walk down the hall and you notice that the majority of the people are looking at you and not necessarily talking about you, or saying anything bad, but it just gets kind of uncomfortable when you feel that all eyes are on you most of the time. It's just something you're always aware of. And that can be tiring.

A third student's comments communicated a very similar routine, “I'll be honest with you. My whole thing is, I go to school and once I'm done I go directly home and wait for the next day to begin, and just wait for the weekend to come. I really don't hang around on campus any longer than I have to.”

While a number of students felt welcomed on campus, many of the African American students I interviewed described times when they felt not welcomed or out of place and alienated. One student spoke of his experience with ROTC, “When I first got ROTC, it's like the people over there wouldn't talk to me or anything except for like my Major. He'd talk to me and that's about it. In time, I started making a few friends. Even

now, not all, some still don't talk to me. Really, I learned that it doesn't really matter."

Descriptions of many "fishbowl" experiences were communicated to me, as illustrated by these additional students' comments:

A few weeks into [my first semester], I just felt like everybody, because I'm the only black girl everybody noticed me and I feel like people watch me really closely to see how I do everything and it gets so like, *just stop watching me!*

Um, I think maybe when I just walk up into a place and it seems that everyone just turns and looks at me. There's really nothing ever said, but when you see so many eyeballs on you, I mean, you know this white guy just walked in and no one's looking at him. You know, they're all staring at me, what's going on?

Breaking Down Barriers Seen as a Responsibility. When asked about their perceptions of the comfort level of other students interacting with them in the classroom setting, African American students spoke of feeling a personal responsibility for the comfort of others. Students revealed to me a great sense of self-awareness when addressing this issue:

I would say it would probably be kind of difficult [to interact with me]. But um just because I've been told I can look pretty scary. I guess because I just have a stern look on my face. And you know just when I'm not thinking about it; I'm just thinking, not thinking about anything either, um so I guess it kind of makes it kind of difficult for people to approach me.

While some students tried to break down barriers in a purposeful way, others avoided this role as not being up to them. One student offered this as her objective, "To be approachable, that's my whole goal, to be approachable about most subjects, you know?" Another student expressed the importance of ongoing communication to break down initial barriers, "I'm sure some do and some don't [have a comfort level interacting with me]. People I talk to and that I'm becoming friends with now, they treat me like a

normal human being instead of, you know.” Another student addressed with me the difference he perceived between group and individual interactions, and his skills in dealing with people:

I can cater to each individual, to each person. You know what they're used to and what not. So I know how to talk to this person 'cause I know what they like. I know how to talk to this group, but um, I sometimes think that people sometimes, (pause) they'll overlook you sometimes. Because it's like their main group is their main group and that's usually who they'll hang with. Maybe because I'm black and maybe most of them might not have, not most of them, but some of them might not have ever dealt with maybe sometime in a one-on-one type of atmosphere. It's not the same, as when they're with their whole group, you know what I mean? I mean like they can converse with you more and be friendly with you when they're with that group but if it's just you with them, I think that sometimes they just don't know how to deal with it exactly and how to go about [communicating one-on-one].

Dealing with Stereotypes. Students talked about a variety of concerns they face trying to deal with stereotyping. The media's influence was addressed with specific referral to the effect that television plays in the cultivation of stereotyping. Students also communicated to me a strong ability to empathize about the effects societal stereotypes must have on white students:

In English class last year one of the students said, “I never met a black person. The only black person I've seen is on television.” So, it would be easy for me to be upset because of that you know, but then you know it doesn't upset me because it's a shame that they haven't been able to see the world you know. Our nation is diverse. I mean if you're gonna be stuck in this micro sphere, you know not going out and seeing other people you're not really gonna know how other people are. So, I'm not upset. If they [had other experiences], it would be a lot easier for them to know how I am. So most of the comments [that I have experienced] were the feelings that go towards me, that people don't want to come up to me. The stereotypes that they see, or that they hear, and all that. So they're afraid, which is understandable. To see somebody or just seeing them on a television show or just hear about them, but not really know how their environment is or how they really act. Maybe I would assume they'd be a certain way [if I were in the same shoes].”

Another student also described to me how he dealt with preconceived notions:

My Mother always told me, “Try to prove them wrong”. And I always try to at least be social and say hello. I know some students who stayed in my own apartment building who happened to be in one of my classes and they came over one day to study. One of my roommates is pretty big and, [one of my classmates said], “You guys look so mean. I’m scared to say hi like you’ll just growl at me or something and just give me a mean look. But you seem to be nice guys.” And I was like, “Yeah, most of us are”. But you know it’s just how other people think.

A third student spoke of his experiences playing intramural sports. He did not consider himself a talented athlete, but was left feeling that great generalizations were made about his athletic abilities simply because he was black:

The only thing that I’ve really noticed is like for instance we’re playing intramural football right now. And I’ll go out on the field and I’ll have my Steelers jersey on and stuff. I’m looked at. People will just start guarding me and stuff like that. Like he’s black, you’d better guard him. He’s fast; he can jump high, which in *some* cases is true.

Professors’ and Advisors’ Discomfort Noted. Students felt that their color sometimes got in the way in terms of how their professors and/or academic advisors interacted with them, both in and out of the classroom. One student described her awareness of discomfort on the part of her professors to me:

They notice me because I’m a different color and they sort of don’t want everybody to notice that they’ve noticed me. I don’t know how to explain it. They like step back, they step forward, and then they step back. Because they’re supposed to have so much knowledge that they’re supposed to share, I would expect them to you know [not let the differences interfere with academics].

Another student shared an experience that involved assumptions made by a faculty member in addressing him, “He learned my nickname and he calls me that. Which definitely feels weird ‘cause usually only my close friends call me that and stuff.”

Overall, students perceived a willingness to help on the part of professors, even if they

had not had any one-on-one experience with them. They expressed no instances of what they felt would describe as direct discrimination during individual encounters with professors.

One student described for me an uncomfortable situation he had experienced regarding his advisor's inability to recognize who he was, even though he had been working with her for an extended period of time:

One time she called me by some other name. I mean so, I mean I know she sees a lot of faces, [not many like mine], but it shocked me. I mean she said, "Do you want to go by Tony?" I mean that's not *even close* to my name. [Advisors] only tell us half of the story. I get more advice from [other students] who've been in the program. Oh, the secretary, I mean she was pretty nice. She told me like what classes I should take, showed me how to fill out my four year plan. She told me, gave me advice.

From Simple to Serious Discriminatory Situations

Throughout my interviews, I asked students to share how they felt about their living environments, both on and off campus, as well as their thoughts and perceptions about the types of interactions that occurred within their environments. Students discussed important connections they had made with individuals across campus and also shared their thoughts about the places they felt most at home on campus. When I asked students if they had experienced or noticed situations that they would describe as discriminatory, students again spoke of situations that occurred both on and off campus. In both cases, frustration seemed to be the overwhelming descriptor of what students communicated. On-campus incidents ranged from what students described as simpler, frequent complaints, to much more serious issues. One student told me at first that things

on campus were much better than when he first arrived, although then seemed ambivalent about that fact:

It's much better, even though it was [only] two years ago, it seems like it was a lot worse [then]. Or maybe it was just the way I was feeling as far as you know some people look at you as if surprised to see a black person here or a black person in this building. I don't know if it's just the different people we have here now or is it just the way I look at it. You know 'cause maybe I was just a little defensive [when I first arrived on campus].

Another student cited an overdone friendliness that she perceived around campus:

No, I think, [my friends and I] always joke about this because we think that a lot of people here, they haven't really dealt with any kind of um ethnicity, so they're extra friendly and that's not bad at all.

A student spoke of an incident that he had observed on campus that he also thought involved the influence of alcohol, and a group of male students treating a female student very poorly:

I've seen someone made fun of. A girl who was a little heavier than someone else. Which I didn't think was cool one bit you know and it made her cry about it. I've seen em go up to her and make jokes about her to her face and you know made her feel bad and cry about it. I mean who has the right to sit up there and make someone feel bad about how much they might weigh or something like that? I say there's a line to you know how much fun and how much you can joke about something. But I mean I wouldn't try honestly to hurt someone's feelings when I know it can really damage them and maybe even for the long run, you know what I mean?

The most serious situation students told me about involved a near car collision on campus, the results of which turned ugly, and included racial insults being made and a weapon being brandished:

Um, I guess just recently I was involved in, well I was there at the time, so I wasn't involved in anything, I was just there at the time...wrong place, wrong time. But I was with two other students who are also of the same ethnicity. So we almost had a collision with another car, I would assume residents of Montana because that was the license plate. But they gave us a rude gesture and so the

driver of the car I was in backed up and asked him what was the problem and the guy pulled out a gun on us. I was asked to go to the Student Board and conduct and all that and I was asked at the time did I feel that it was racially motivated? I told them that maybe the gun being pulled out wasn't racially motivated but him making the gesture towards us, and before he had pulled out the gun, he had made some comments toward us that were racially motivated. One thing leads to another, so it could have been racially motivated that the gun was pulled out.

When I asked if he would be comfortable sharing the comments that were made, the student added, "Like you guys should go back to where you came from and [they] called us monkeys or something like that." Another student I interviewed later, alluded to this same situation, and discussed his perception of a follow-up incident that occurred on campus within just a few moments after the first:

Well [the black students] go to eat and [the white student who had pulled the gun on them], comes walking in right behind them afterwards. Um, well, they go ahead and you know kick this guy's ass and I would have done the same myself. Now, somebody else might think it's wrong, but you know I just don't see. Maybe it might be different, no I don't think it's different for a black kid, because anybody else that I spoke to about this, they said it was quote unquote "bullshit". Excuse my language. It doesn't make any sense how someone can pull a gun on you and you think the next time I see you it's gonna be you know [o.k.], especially five minutes later. You know, I mean their adrenalin was already flowing and these guys are already pissed off because they had a gun pulled out on 'em and now the worst part about it is that my friend who beat this guy up is in a world of trouble. But the guy who pulled the gun out, there's minimal stuff being done to him.

Level of Engagement and Connection: Coping Strategies. A number of interesting coping behaviors utilized by students became apparent to me over the course of this study. Students consistently offered excuses for the unacceptable behavior of others, voiced their tendencies to avoid certain types of situations, and discussed their awareness of their own perceptions in describing the difficult situations they dealt with on a regular basis. An experienced African American student offered one example:

You get looks regardless, wherever you go, so you're gonna deal with it one way or the other. It's just how you perceive it and how you go ahead and deal with it. I could be a rude person about it if I wanted to and ask everyone, "What the hell are you looking at?" But, I mean that's not gonna do nothing but make more problems for me.

Students also described themselves at times as not paying much attention to what goes on around them on campus, which made me question whether they are truly connected to their environment, or if their coping strategies involve purposeful separations from what is unpleasant:

When I came to Montana, you know I know it's a predominantly white state and everything and I'm not here to force anyone to be open minded about my color or race or the culture that *they* think I come from. So, if there have been prejudices, I really don't pay any attention to them. Like I, it doesn't absorb and stick into my memory, it just kind of rolls off my back. Because that's the way they were raised, that's the way they are, that's where they came from. I'm not here to change them. I'm not here to teach them, and as long as it's not taking something away from me, I don't care if they're like that.

One student described hearing stories of discrimination, but then also spoke of how different peoples' perceptions are regarding what is discriminatory and what is not, "Something may occur but my perception, I have heard from people I know that they've been discriminated against, but I mean that's how they feel. I mean people see things in different ways, so what I may feel may be discrimination is different to how somebody else feels."

Common living spaces, as well as relationships they had already established with students prior to coming to MSU provided connective experiences for students. One student noted that he was most comfortable with students of his same race, "I feel more comfortable interacting with them because I know they're comfortable and they know I'm comfortable and we see the same reactions from people here." Another student

described having different groups of mostly Caucasian friends for a variety of activities and involvements. Sadly, other students told me that they had no group of people on campus with whom they felt comfortable. One inexperienced student described his situation this way, “Hm (laughs), um as of yet there isn’t. Well, I guess my floor would be, um, my social group now. As far as race or anything no, or any other group, no. Maybe I just haven’t had enough time.”

Student-Athletes

Throughout my interviews with African American students a number of concerns emerged regarding the experiences of those individual students who also happened to be recruited student-athletes on campus. Their stories highlighted concerns regarding the promises made during their recruitment process, their experiences once they had arrived on campus, and concern over what their future opportunities would hold. Athletic, academic and social concerns were shared with me. Student-athletes also expressed their concern over a lack of support for men of color on campus and they were hopeful that this might change for future student-athletes. Students also shared that, “Athletes always get in the news for *whatever* they do wrong. Second of all, being black just shines more of a spotlight on it.”

One experienced male student expressed strong feelings about his intercollegiate athletic experience. He told me of his disappointment regarding what he felt had been communicated to him during his recruitment and the reality of his situation once he arrived on campus:

You know it's funny. I'll just put it this way. Most people probably can't see it unless you are a black athlete on [a certain] team. And they might sit and think that we cry the most about this and that, but they're not seeing it the way we see it. And, uh, that's why it's hard to explain anything to anyone about being black because you really can't understand it unless you have stood in my shoes and dealt with it. Although, we didn't have it nearly as bad as maybe my parents had it or my grandparents when they were younger. But, I mean, we've all experienced it and it will keep on going. Half of us who have been here don't understand for the world how you know, they can get us here and you know give us assurances, yeah you know, 'You're gonna be a player here', da, da, da and you know, 'We expect things from you'. But then [they] never give you a chance and I don't understand you know. I know I'm better than what you ever perceive me as, but you won't give me a chance.

Students also addressed a number of academic concerns. These included athletic academic advising and the low graduation rates of black male student-athletes. Another experienced male student spoke about his feelings in regard to his academic advising experience as a student-athlete:

My, we have an academic advisor with [Athletics], but their main objective is to make sure you're eligible you know. Not actually as far as are you taking all the classes to graduate, but maybe do you have your 24 credits and is your g.p.a. above 2.0? Other than that, I have my Business advisor but she's, she's like here for two semesters and then takes a semester off (this student's voice communicates great frustration) and then I had to switch to another advisor and stuff like that. But, other than that, I usually go and ask some of the seniors on the team.

The social issues surrounding mixed dating on campus were also discussed. One student shared with me, that from his perspective, students dealt with conflicts between what they really felt and the reality of attending a university with a very limited number of black students in regard to dating opportunities:

With most of the black [male] athletes, there's a feeling that because you know somebody's white or of a different ethnicity from our own group, we can't be with them because it's wrong. And that's how most of them truly feel. But now they're here and they know they're not gonna be back home for a while. So they feel, I'll do my last resort, I'll be with somebody from Montana.

Another student addressed the reactions of Caucasian males' counterparts on campus to these mixed dating situations, "I think some of [the white male students] might get pissed because black athletes might date white girls you know. And they get pissed at the girls as well. They're like, we're taking something from them."

Male student-athletes also expressed how the pressure of a very tight schedule precluded them from having free time to hang out on campus, "as some other, *just regular* students." One inexperienced male student talked about the lack of support for students of color in a particular way:

Just actually having somebody there that students like myself can talk to other than the coaches. You can't always go to the coaches because they're not, as you know, what can I say, not as, um, sensitive to some topics as someone else might be. You don't want to go to counselors 'cause then you know they just seem too professional or something and they want to read you too much and try and get into your head. But you just need somebody to talk to. Just a regular person other than someone who's your age. We don't have the experience, that's the main thing. Like, when I got in trouble, I didn't have anyone to talk to. I couldn't talk to my friends, 'cause they were involved too and then they'd get to be mad and they'd get me mad and then we'd both just sit in the room mad. So that didn't help.

When I asked for his thoughts about who this person might be, the student elaborated:

I don't know, maybe, most likely a black person. We don't have any black professors here or anything like that so I mean as far as some of the young students coming in, they have no idea, you know as far as maybe a role model and someone to look up to. You know some professors here have *so* much knowledge, and if I were to see that in a black man, I might be able you know to be more like him.

Negative Experiences in Community Environments

The students I interviewed had many negative stories to tell regarding their experiences in the local community. These involved a variety of situations including situations in social settings such as bars, stores, hair salons, community service

experiences and situations involving interactions with off-campus police. One inexperienced female student described a couple of experiences she had had regarding hair care:

Hair care, I tried once, maybe twice and I'll never do it again 'cause it was just very awful. Like I went to the place in the mall where you walk in by the polar bear and the lady washed my hair and then afterwards tried to comb it and she was like combing it on the surface and we have thicker hair and you have to like comb down to the roots. And she was like well I can't do that and that would be hurting you. And I'm like no it wouldn't. And she's like yes it would...well here you do it. I just feel like it was a waste of time because I had to pay for something that I basically did myself you know and um and then another time I went to I think Regis in the mall and they're like surrounded by windows and a lot of people like stared at me the whole time I was in the chair. I was just like o.k. why don't you just charge admission or something?

Another female student shared her thoughts about the types of experiences she had dealt with in a number of the local bars:

A lot of times there are people that approach you and I think maybe because you're black they approach you a lot more than if you weren't. If I were who I was but white, you know [this wouldn't happen as often]. But guys come up to you and I think you know there's a certain kind of stigma that goes with interracial relationships and stuff. And I think sometimes when guys are drunk and in that kind of environment they might be feeling a little risqué and just like *oh wow*. They come up to you and they're totally belligerent, but you have to be nice because everyone around you is watching that interaction.

An inexperienced male student discussed a disturbing situation he and a buddy had with off campus police. He and a friend were returning to town from a campus-sponsored student event when the following occurred:

We were all at this leadership conference and we're there and after it's all over and this is like for leaders, you know you've probably heard about it, campus leaders, people from different organizations all coming together to talk about you know networking and things to help other people basically. Well, we're on our way home from it and we come to right at the end of the street where you make the right to go to Livingston and there's a policeman sitting right across from us. Well there's two black guys sitting in a car right here (describing what he thinks

the policeman is thinking). My friend is fiddling with his cd's or something. He was doing something, so there was no car behind us forcing us to turn so he's stopped and he's doing something. And you know I'm looking at this cop over here and he was there before us, but he never made no effort to put on a blinker to turn either way.

So maybe after about 7 seconds, we finally turn. He turns behind us, so we're driving and he's driving behind us for all the way to the highway, which is over 10 miles or so. He's driving all the way behind us and we're like o.k. I know the siren's going to come on any time. No siren comes on, so we get on the freeway and there's a highway patrolman sitting in the middle of the section and he's radaring cars coming in the opposite direction from what we're going. Next thing you know, he stops everything he's doing, jumps on the freeway, gets directly behind us and follows us for about 8 more minutes.

And I mean by this time, we're just frustrated because this made absolutely no sense. Then after a while he turns his siren on and pulls us over. Makes us stick our hands out of the car so he can see us; walks up to the car, asks my friend to show his drivers license, registration. Talks to my friend in the car and he [the driver] says "you know, what's the reason for you pulling us over?" [The policeman replies], "Well you looked like you were swerving a bit. Did you have something to drink?" "No we didn't have anything to drink. We just came from a leadership conference right now."

And mind you, all the people from the conference are driving by and they see our car pulled over by the cops. Which makes it even that much [more disturbing], because then they'll think, well these guys can't do nothing right anyway. You know, as soon as they leave the place, they go from something positive; they hop on the freeway and get themselves in trouble. I'm not saying that's what they're thinking. But if somebody's narrow-minded and don't know anything more, that's probably what they would think.

So, he tells us to get out of the car and come in his car with him. He's checking through his stuff and what not and he says [friend/driver], "What made you pull us over?" And [the policeman] says, "Well I got a radio from another cop in Livingston. He said you guys were swerving. He didn't have enough probable 'cause or whatever to pull you over so, I kept an eye on you and I saw that you guys were swerving." Well, it was windy. His power steering might be you know one where you barely twitch it and it moves, but it wasn't like jumping lane to lane, it was just you know just barely moving.

My roommate [the driver] told him, "You know I think this is racially motivated." And [the policeman] said, "I'm offended that you said that. Um, you know you really hurt my feelings. I'm a good fellow Christian and I don't believe that."

And he said [driver], “Well I don’t give a damn. There’s crooked Christians as well as anything else, but I think this was racially motivated and there was no reason to pull us over.” And he [the driver] was pissed off about it and the cop was upset about it and I’m sitting in the car like I really don’t believe this just happened to us. And so for reasons like that, that’s really why I try to stay at home where I don’t have to get out in the street and deal with that stuff all the time because maybe I’m afraid that I might react in the wrong way and then I’m in trouble.

A number of the students I interviewed had very limited experiences in the Bozeman community by choice. They were purposeful in deciding to evade the chance of any unpleasant situation in the community by avoiding those interactions as much as possible. This behavior also highlighted for me the need for ongoing community networking and education about the undergraduate population, especially as tied to understanding the diverse populations represented on campus.

Asian American Student Perspectives

State-wide, National, and International Ties to Diversity

Asian American students expressed varied experiences with diversity. Throughout student interviews, and regardless of the environment being explored, many prior experiences came to light. Students remembered early experiences, both negative and positive. It was clear that issues related to diversity had affected students in many ways, at times subtle and at times not. Some were raised in primarily white Montana communities such as Billings and Helena, “Um, I went to the high school in Helena and besides myself, there was very few people who weren’t white. Like close to none (laughs).” Students, at times, hailed from small, conservative towns, while others had large city beginnings. One student hailed from Anchorage, Alaska:

Well, I was born in Taiwan and I moved here when I was 9 years old. My parents, they owned a restaurant in Billings. So ever since third grade I pretty much, Billings has a very small Asian community, um next to nothing really. And I just learned to grow up with white kids. I never knew any different to tell you the truth. Basically, I've always been quite open about accepting others and stuff like that. Always pretty much been the only Taiwanese person in the class and it's all pretty much just all white. But all the kids at school, they accepted me pretty well so.

Others' roots involved countries such as South Korea and Taiwan:

Um, well growing up in Anchorage, Alaska is really diverse. Anchorage is really diverse, *period*. And it's a large city so having racial problems was not an issue actually for me. Um, I was born there, all of my friends, I guess assimilated is not a good word, but I think that's what you're really taught, especially if you're Asian. I don't know how it is, but um, when I was growing up most of my friends were white anyways. Um, I did have Filipino friends but they were like in the same situation, born in America and you know it was just so, I didn't really think about race back then. Um, before, I mean maybe in high school I did, but like I said my high school was really diverse, maybe like eighty percent [students of color], twenty percent [white] you know.

Students originally from Montana had little diversity experience other than with family members or small groups of people of similar decent from their hometowns. So for a number of students, the diversity they experienced on campus was brand new:

Damn little to tell you the truth, because I spent most of my time ranching so there wasn't much diversity, it was pretty much white, Caucasian. I had no experience with blacks at all. It was pretty interesting for me to come here [to campus] and see them for the first time. Wow. I guess I'm not the only weird one around (laughs).

This student went on to explain to me what he meant when he used the word weird to describe himself, "Where I'm from I'm pretty different. You have an Asian come around and people are pretty shocked by that." From other students' perspectives, the campus was not diverse at all, but mirrored their prior experiences, "The schools I went to were all predominantly white. It was pretty much the same as here, except for my family."

One Korean-American student who hailed from Montana spoke about how being on campus provided him with his first opportunity to know another Korean-American student and what a great experience that was, “So, we bitch about our parents a lot. It’s pretty cool, it’s like wow, there’s another guy just like me. It’s kind of cool to find somebody who’s just like you. It’s like wow, you’re Korean too, huh? Cool, we just kind of stuck together after that.”

Peer Group Pressure and Impact of Cultural Heritage

Students talked about a variety of challenges they faced on their respective home fronts, simply because they had chosen to be a university student and pursue a bachelor’s degree. A particular student’s thought illustrated one type of social pressure students of color may face about their higher education choices:

It’s weird like I said I get more discriminated against in Anchorage than I do here, within my own race, because I’m in college. I talk well, I’m not saying, I don’t want to be egotistical or anything. But you know, I just feel more assimilated and therefore [my peer group at home] just think, ‘Oh you’re just trying to be white’. I’m like *no*, but then I think about it and I think I don’t know, am I? You know, there’s this term that we use sometimes like you’re a banana, like you’re Yellow on the outside but you’re white on the inside. But I’m just kind of like no, ‘cause I’m still Filipino and I still, there are some cultural things that are out there. All of my friends know about that, you know, about different kinds of identities. When I’m back there I feel just like, oh I’m the college student that’s doing something for myself. Rather than working at Safeway or shooting other people, getting people pregnant. That’s why I feel different, because I’m at a different level than they are.

For at least one student with international roots, family traditions and language continued to enhance his experience; although he described the cultural combinations he had been exposed to as the best of both worlds:

I figure like I have this, um, we still follow Korean traditions at home with my parents, and when my Grandfather was alive he was really, really strict about that. I also still speak Korean at home with my parents and family because I do have Aunts and Uncles here too that live nearby. But at the same time we follow some American traditions like Christmas and Thanksgiving stuff like that. I feel that I've definitely benefited from both cultures and I personally like it because I get to pick and choose from both cultures rather than one, what fits me best.

Questioning the Legitimacy of Interracial Relationships. While many students' opinions regarding interracial dating and relationships were positive and supportive, an experienced student discussed the impact of her specific background with me, describing the negative lessons she learned during her childhood and the change over time in her personal views. This student's experience certainly illustrated the depth of the challenges faced by our society in terms of how we view mixed relationships, as well as the depth of issues our students bring with them to campuses of higher education:

I've never really come across someone who has problems against a Caucasian and an Oriental. There's never seemed to be a problem about that because the situation seemed to have existed from the very beginning. But being a Japanese and I kind of was raised to think badly of certain types of interracial relationships. But I've revised, ah, re-evaluated my stance. I've re-evaluated my stance on a lot of things here. The Japanese would absolutely hate another Japanese having a relationship with an African American. That is like taboo, slightly worse than a Japanese and Korean. Um, there's a, when it comes right down to it, the Japanese are extremely prejudiced and in my opinion wrongly so, and I don't really think badly of any interrelation.

Another experienced male student, who was actually involved in a mixed relationship struggled to find a way to share his honest opinion with me. He seemed to struggle, questioning whether certain types of relationships were genuine or not:

It shouldn't bother me I guess, but sometimes it does and I don't know why. I've grown up in a dominantly white society and no one's ever said anybody else is bad, so I don't know. Sometimes it just, I'm trying to find words. It doesn't annoy me and it doesn't truly bother me, and I'm not upset. But on the other

hand, I wonder what kind of relationship is existing there. Like if I see a black male with a white female, I just, it draws my eye is all I guess. I don't have any positive or negative feelings; it's just interesting to me to see. Because I think it's been so unaccepted for so long that I think for me, it pulls my eye and it makes me wonder if they're trying to draw attention to themselves or if there's truly a good relationship there. That's probably it.

A third student, who was also generally supportive of mixed relationships, described a similar idea regarding perceptions of genuineness or legitimacy in relationships:

Unless it's one of those situations where it seems that they get together because the person seems exotic. Then I have to start having a problem with those relationships. Mostly because you know one party is using the other party. It has seemed that there were a lot of Montana girls that have an extraordinary fascination with African American guys. And I think it's just because they're rare. You don't really see them up on campus.

Impact of Physical Traits on Student Experience. One's own physical appearance was mentioned a number of times by the students I interviewed. Appearance was recognized as having an impact on the comfort level others might have interacting with Asian American students. One student described how she felt her lack of what people consider typical ethnic physical traits might have impacted her experience:

I would say I was accepted mostly as white because I don't show traits typical of a Japanese person, other than darker hair and darker skin, and so I think the only time I had any difficult social behavior was really early in life when I was seven or eight years old where the kids didn't understand why I was darker. But, after that was cleared up my friends stayed my friends all the way through graduation of high school. When I worked part-time or full-time, that didn't bother anybody there either, or if it did, they never let on.

Another experienced male student talked with me about how from his perspective, his mixed heritage and consequent physical appearance impacted his interactions:

Probably better than most because even though I'm half Japanese, I still have the half Caucasian in me that's more approachable to most people. And so through high school and what not the, well even through elementary school it was [probably] easier to approach me. I was born in Casper; I remember that we and Casper was solely a white community. I remember when the first black student came to the elementary school and was just totally harassed and for no other reason than he was a different color. And these were 5 year olds. And I never had that problem. I looked mostly white still, so I think for anyone to approach me is a lot easier than to approach a full-blooded [student of a] different race.

Varied Support Regarding Diverse Representation On Campus

When Asian American students discussed the importance of diversity on campus with me, they made a direct connection to “real world” preparation, learning and the development of abilities to interact with a wide variety of people. Interestingly enough, students did not typically express the benefits for themselves, but the benefits for the majority Caucasian population on campus:

Oh yeah. Actually, it's good, just because when these kids get out into the real world, there's going to be a lot of different views and different people coming from different places. And, um, I think if they haven't experienced it yet and they don't experience it here, then when they get out into the work place, you know they may not stay here in Bozeman or wherever they are at [in Montana]. It's gonna be real different and their views might have been o.k. [in Montana] but when they get to somewhere else it might not be right. So, if they don't learn that there is lots of different views and different ideas, I think it might hurt them in the long run.

Students, at times, did not feel that the presence of diverse populations on campus was that important, preferring to hone in on the individual person versus group representation. The following students' thoughts seemed to illustrate the extreme opinions voiced about this topic. This first student seemed to weave learning into his entire statement, feeling that diversity greatly enhanced learning:

Well, without diversity or having all these various groups, you're not gonna get the full deal. Because every group is most definitely going to have a different view on every subject you come across. The fewer groups, then the fewer perspectives you have and the poorer decisions you're going to be making. The more diversified you get, then the more perspectives and the better options you'll have with everything you come across. That's the way I tend to look at things I guess.

The second seemed to have no thought of diversity as tied to learning, as he responded to me about whether he thought it was important to have diverse populations represented on campus, "Not really, 'cause high school was pretty much white. This is pretty much still all white people and it makes no difference to me to tell you the truth. I'm just basically here to learn."

In one case, a student described her lack of support for diversity on campus immediately to the recruitment of out-of-state students, and told with me the issues she thought they brought with them to campus:

I don't think [diversity] is necessary. It is to a degree that you might want to become associated with some different backgrounds but for the most part no. I don't feel there needs to be that representation. I don't mind so much like international students. I know that one [group] is a very good one. But what I tend to revert to would be the out-of-state students and the reason why I don't feel this campus needs it, it's all kind of mixed up in politics too. Um, this school doesn't charge the out-of-state student anywhere near other state schools and um, yes these students come here because it's a bargain. And I think in a lot of the cases they bring their little bad influences here. It's, some of these students would be bragging that they're from a rich family. If they're rich, then why aren't they going to some rich school where Mommy and Daddy [went]? Why are you coming to [this campus]? And um, near as I can tell, we're not really getting the cream of the crop, and so I figure we're getting a very bad influence. We're not promoting anything good so why bother?

Another student's comments led me to think about the pressure brought to bear on some students of color and the challenges faced by higher education environments to protect students' collective abilities to just be students. Any students' needs to

experience their undergraduate years according to their own individual choices and without pressure to represent any student population must be considered:

Um, I mean I wish that it were more diverse. And uh just along the lines of there are a lot of athletes here who are of ethnicity who don't seem to want to talk to anyone but other athletes (laughs). And then it makes it hard for those small town Montana people to see that you know there are some normal people out there. You know if the athletes don't want to talk to them, then how are they going to get to know them?

An experienced student spoke to me of a change he perceived over time in regard to the number of students of color on campus and his support of diversity:

Yeah, especially here in Montana, period. Especially here in Bozeman, period. Because, there's just so much out there, the world isn't just white, I guess. That's how America is pushing, that's how it's pushed, this is a white world, yada, yada, yada. But I know for a fact that it isn't and I think people here don't realize that. Maybe other students don't care, but you know I just wish that there was a lot more [diversity]. You know, when I first came here, there wasn't very much [diversity], as in ethnic. I was like, 'Oh that's the only African American student here that I've ever seen. And it's the same one that I've seen [over time], you know. I'm the only Filipino person, yada, yada, yada, and that's not true [anymore]. I mean now for some reason it just seems that this campus is a lot more diverse. Maybe I don't know, maybe [the administration has] done something. But still it's small numbers, yeah, but it's such an insular community within campus. You know, I think I can notice the change.

An experienced student who would be graduating at the end of the spring semester added this thought regarding his participation in my study. He noted that other than discussions he had had with friends, this was the first time during his undergraduate career that he had been asked about the topic of campus climate and diversity and was grateful for the opportunity to share his thoughts. His comment emphasized that students' felt the need for discussing this topic, and yet did not necessarily expect it to happen:

I think it's good that you're doing this. I was actually really surprised when you called and then I called you today and Valerie [my roommate] was like, "What was that all about"? And I was like well I'm going to be interviewed about diversity and she was like, '*Whoa*, what is going on here?'

Overall Comfort as the Lone Student of Color

It was not unusual for Asian American students to be the only students of color in many of the classes they took, "Mm, actually, I can't recall any minority students in any of my classes. Uh, besides myself." Some students shared that they felt a comfort level on campus based on their past experiences:

As far as my friends and the people I've met here, um, it's like the same as back home. I don't feel like I'm treated any differently. Um, at most, they'll ask me what nationality I am and I'll be proud to say I'm South Korean. And, like some people are interested and ask questions about it and like, how is that? And I'm happy to answer any questions, but I don't have the feeling like you're there and I'm here kind of feeling.

One student explained to me that from her perspective Montanans were more respectful of difference than others. However, this student spoke of Montanans as not expressing their feelings that often, which seemed to be a bit at odds with true respect:

If there was any bad blood between people, it was never evidenced in any of the classes that I've been in. And, for the most part, I figure that in the classes that I have, you have mostly Montanans. And what I've noticed in Montanans, unlike people from Las Vegas or California, [Montanans] have a tendency to be a little bit more respectful to another person's difference. They're not too; they don't let their own feelings known too often.

Many of the Asian American students I interviewed communicated a general comfort level interacting with those who were different from them in the classroom setting. Overall, students expressed being comfortable interacting with those of different ethnicities, races, ages and genders. They at times spoke of not really noticing

differences, while others shared an increased comfort level with certain student groups, based on prior experiences and/or ongoing high school connections. One student recognized what she perceived as differing limits regarding the interactions other student groups would permit:

I'm pretty fine with most of it. There's some [students] that are just more, I don't know, it just seems more uptight and it's harder to get to know them. That's why I just, well, I'll see that they kinda just want to stay by themselves. And I'm like fine, I'll just respect what you want to do and I'll just talk to somebody else or whatever.

Another spoke of a purposeful attempt on his part to interact with different students in the classroom setting, "I'm pretty comfortable. I try, well when we split up into groups, I always try to keep a different group for every class, so I won't be stuck with the same kind of genre. The rest of [the students] are all, well we're getting like this [staying within their comfort zones and with those they are most comfortable with]. I want to see what everybody is like. Kind of get to know people."

Upbringing and Social Capabilities Stressed. Students attributed any lack of comfort, on the part of others, interacting with them in a classroom setting to upbringing, and at times social capabilities and level of assertiveness, "I think it's just, it's not necessarily like them interacting differently just because of who I am. It's more of; I think it's their social ability. How well that they *can* interact. Some people just don't, I don't know, they just don't have that same type of get out there and just talk to somebody."

Avoidance Behaviors. Students had few specific experiences with either experiencing or observing discriminatory or unfair behavior in the classroom setting. A more relaxed attitude about differences was addressed by one student, who then immediately questioned her own level of awareness, “I think it’s more relaxed in that we understand we have to accept people for what they are, I guess. Or maybe I just don’t see it.” It seemed to me that students had the tendency to discount or dismiss their own thoughts on a regular basis. A second student addressed the issue this way, “I get some weird vibes from people sometimes and I just kind of ignore it”, while a third student added, “Subconsciously sometimes I think about, oh, she wasn’t nice to me because of [my ethnicity], but it’s so stupid.”

Throughout this discussion of campus environments and student experiences or observations of discriminatory or prejudicial situations, students also shared with me thoughts that seemed to hint at their own lack of awareness. They made comments including, “I’m trying to think because I’m sure it happens, I’m just not seeing it, you know”, or “No, I never really paid too much attention, but I do understand the problem” and “Maybe I’m walking around with my eyes closed.” I was left wondering whether these responses were directly tied to the way specific questions were asked, or if they were reflections of students’ coping mechanisms in the face of unpleasant situations.

One student told me that he felt minority students tended to separate themselves from others in the classroom setting, but in his experience, the white students involved in his program tried to ensure a mix of students involved with group work or other projects:

No, because all the, you know, minorities of [one] type tend to get together right away so. The Caucasians, they try to keep the groups kind of diversified. Not

purely Korean here and so on, it's kind of nice to see that. I haven't seen any really discriminatory actions going on.

Another student's thoughts supported this idea; he also felt that Caucasian students were more apt to initiate conversation with students of color than the other way around:

Mm, I think the white students are more prone to interact with us minorities than the minorities are. Minorities aren't attracted to whites. We tend to want to keep to ourselves. Then you want to get into groups, they tend to keep their minds open. In this case, I guess we're the closed up ones.

Assumptions Regarding Academic Strengths. Other students expressed that at times assumptions were made about their academic skills and motivations based primarily on their ethnicity, "Once in a while you'll hear about people complaining about how like Asian American students are like always trying to brown nose the teacher and stuff like that." Another student's comments also illustrated this, "You'll hear things just kind of like, 'Oh, he must be really smart' or 'He'll work really hard' or whatever. I've seen some things like that." One graduating senior spoke very eloquently of his transition issues to the university, hoping for changes with services for new students during their initial time on campus. His comments highlighted the fact that academically talented students need support as much as any other group on campus:

That's a good question. Um, I can't think of anything off hand that I would change other than I think I would probably just make sure that freshmen were aware that it's gonna be a tough first couple of years and if they survive that it will be a lot more fun. The structure of education I don't think was explained to me well as a high school graduate. I was top ten percent in my class and people just figured that myself as well as other top ten percent just knew what college was all about. And when I got here, I fell flat on my face, 'cause no one was there looking over me you know. Which I'm sure is a common thing a lot of people say. I mean it's true, there's nobody here to look over you. You're totally in charge of your own life; be it a minority or a majority type of person. I think that looking back, people told me it was going to be a different life but it wasn't

demonstrated to me. They tried to show that in the Residence Halls, but it wasn't very effective because again it wasn't enforced. There's no way you can enforce it. Most of the time I had A's, on occasion B's [in high school] and I think people just thought that I would know what to do when I got here and I just didn't. It was a tough ordeal. I was easily distracted by Bridger Bowl [ski resort] many days. It's so close. And when you're a freshman, it's still cheap for a season pass. So it was hard to discipline myself to do school. Now, I haven't skied in almost three years (laughs). I still had a hard time with some of my classes, to be dedicated to do the work and I look back on the classes that I know I should have done better and I think I could have done better. I'm disappointed in myself for not doing better but on the other hand, I've grown in maturity and social levels too. That leveled the playing field a little bit, so. I think that that transition in class or a lecture should mention that too...you know your grades may fall but you have the potential to be a really sociable person, which I wasn't in high school [but I am now].

Use of Offensive Terminology. The use of offensive slang terms and racial slurs as part of everyday, routine language on campus was explained by a student:

Um, I don't think that it really involved diversity or a different ethnic group, 'cause there are stereotypes about anyone; like the way you dress and anything like that. But one thing personally that I felt very uncomfortable with is that, um, people from around here, and it could be because they're not used to the diversity or what but, um, sometimes they throw slang terms around a lot easier than I'm used to. It's something that I had to get used to that. I don't find them throwing it around in a hostile way but I heard people use those terms just like you know they'll be talking like, 'oh darn' kind of phrase but they'll use ethnic slang terms that I consider not so nice but it's not like they're saying it in a hostile way. Like, I've heard people be like, 'oh, nigger' and like that would be [used as] like, 'oh, darn'. I heard that and I was just like, *whoa*. But it wasn't like in a hostile [way] to someone or to anything. It was just like a phrase to them or something, you know.

Experiences in Student Life Environments

I also asked Asian American students to share descriptions of their living environments, as well as their thoughts and perceptions about the type of interactions that occurred within these environments. Students discussed important connections they had

made with individuals across campus and also spoke about the places they felt most at home on campus. One inexperienced male student spoke of the impact his religious beliefs had on his residence hall living experiences, often making him feel disconnected from peers who might not have similar perspectives:

It's very nice really; I've only made friends with a few more people in my hall. But we kind of close ourselves from all the other kids too in some ways. Uh, I don't know, we can really look down on people sometimes, which isn't right but a lot of kids, well I don't know how to explain it. That I guess are not up to our standards or something like that. Well we're both Christians [my roommate and I], and we try to live a more humble life, than that judgmental stuff which is wrong, but a lot of people are just really more arrogant than what I'm used to. Just a lot of stuff that does not fit in with the Christian life, that we try to stay away from. You know a lot of times, we're just sitting in our rooms and all of a sudden somebody just runs down the hall just cussing their heads off and we just laugh. And a lot of other kids are just bragging about all the parties they go to. You know we don't really, I think sometimes those kids think that people are listening to them and thinking that they're cool. When we hear things like that we just kind of laugh and think about kind of how lost they are.

Students' observations of, or direct experiences with, any discriminatory or prejudicial situation in their living environment and around campus varied greatly. While students, at times, had nothing that came to their minds, others had either witnessed or been directly affected by a specific situation. A number of observations of racial tension were described. One student shared her perception of something that she had witnessed in her former residence hall environment, "Um, not in these buildings, but last year in South Hedges I did witness some very, um, racial tension among black and white students. I just know that like a Confederate flag was being hung in a window to aggravate others."

An experienced female student described a situation that illustrated, not only a lack of sensitivity and awareness in terms of how students might speak to each other, but

was also one specific illustration of the impact of having small numbers of diverse students represented on campus:

I suppose there was one instance of a ching chong chinaman behind my back, but I've had that happen to me all throughout life so it's just like, I just block it out. And one that wasn't, that was focused at me but not to my face, was in the men's restroom. My brother was there and the person, now this is how my brother told it. He was by the urinal, there's another guy there and he says, 'oh, do you know that oriental bitch that works at the library?' Now there's only two oriental females that work at the library and when he made reference to the reserves desk with my brother, he said, 'oh yes, that's my sister you're talking about' and I figure I must have that reputation because I try to maintain policy.

Regions of Discomfort On Campus

Most of the Asian American students I interviewed as part of this group expressed that they felt welcomed and safe on campus. A smaller number described specific times when they had felt not welcomed on campus. A number of specific spaces or program-related areas across campus were mentioned as being uncomfortable for students. One student described to me how he sometimes felt in his travels around campus, "Yeah, sometimes, yeah, looks from people, or how they don't talk to me. I already have enough friends. But, yeah looks. I don't really get it a lot from students. Maybe it's well, like I said, I don't think I get it as much as I thought I would."

The Student Union Building as a Concern. Another student also described a situation she had observed while studying in the Student Union Building. Her perception of the group of students involved was that they were mostly out-of-state students:

And this group was one that I've always labeled, which was wrong of me to label them, but as being very loud mouth, very disrespectful, very impolite, just this rowdy group of, I don't know why they're here. And they have a tendency to be very vocal in their dislike of homosexuals, people of different ethnicity and not so

much people of different ages because there's older students that are involved in that group. So this is just like they found a common ground. And they don't do anything beyond being very vocal. Well there was another friend of mine from high school who was sitting in this one area of the SUB and she asked me to come sit with her. And that's where I came across this particular group. And that's the reason that I avoid that particular area of the SUB at all costs. I don't care if there's an empty seat there or not. I never notice any [comments] directed at me, but there's a lot more directed at, um, no specific case [or group of individuals], I just think they're being mean most of the time. They see someone and they just say; 'I bet that person's a fag, right there'. I guess they would be mostly considered redneck types.

This thought was also supported by another student, who also spoke about certain regions on campus as being more liberal and comfortable from his perspective:

Maybe, uh, maybe not to an extreme extent. But like when I'm walking through the [Student Union Building], I feel like everyone is looking at me or you know it's like *ugh*. It's pretty overwhelming for me. Yeah, people at the SUB on *that* side of campus are different than the people on this side of campus. The really liberal side of campus is the west side of campus, you know Arts and Architecture. There's South Hedges [Residence Hall]. I mean they're just more liberal type people that live on this side and on the other side? Like my friend lives in the [specific fraternity] house and I'll visit him. He's Filipino as well, and I do not, maybe it's just, I don't like the Greek System, but I just do not feel welcome there at all. I hate walking on that side of campus, the Engineering side. The SUB is o.k. sometimes. I mean like I only go to the Bookstore, or Financial Aid. Only there's just a general feeling when I go to that side of campus. It's only if I *have* to, if my friend is there, then I'll go but [I'd rather not].

Greek Life an Issue. One inexperienced Asian American student described her participation in pledging for a sorority on campus, the result of which was that she decided not to be involved:

I pledged to a sorority in the beginning of the year and, um, I knew quite a few girls in there. But when I would go out with them to say a party or something, um, I never really felt part of them even though there was all this hype about how you were a sister. And, um, I didn't really feel like I was accepted I guess, so I ended up dropping the sorority actually. Actually, there were quite a few expectations of people. Um, I'm not one to wear a lot of makeup and I don't like to put my hair up really big or anything. I would probably never ever dye my hair

a different color, or um, I am not really one that likes to be pressured to do things like drinking, smoking, anything like that. So, I think part of that was the reason that I just wouldn't. I refused to be pressured to do things like that. And there is quite a lot of pressure, especially, one of the biggies was to go to a fraternity party and I mean the second you're in the door, to get a fraternity boyfriend. I thought that that was pretty outrageous. Everyone was really nice, but they expected you to do the same things they did and I felt like they just wanted a carbon copy of themselves, so I didn't do it.

Close-minded Attitudes Addressed

Race Issues. An inexperienced male student shared with me his concern over the close-minded attitudes among students, including those in his peer group. Fortunately, this student had the confidence and assertiveness to question his peers regarding their offensive remarks and attitudes:

I mean people get in such a huff. I remember when it was African American month in February a couple of years ago. People were like, 'Well why can't we have Hispanic day or why can't we have...' (heavy sigh), so close-minded. It just makes me mad you know 'cause a lot of my friends had said that. I don't know, it's just so weird, but it's more black and white here, than it is white and Asian or white and Hispanic. It's very odd and it's always against black people and I don't know why. I can't explain that. All my friends were holding not very good vibes about that. I always, you know I get offended, because, granted I'm not African American [but] I'm still a minority, you know. And I get offended sometimes with what my friends say. And, I just like, question them. I guess I would change people's attitudes [if I could]. You can't live in a utopia, but I'd change that.

Another student noted that not all harmful treatment happens across groups of students but that he had also heard of situations of very unfair white on white treatment.

He described a situation that occurred on his residence hall floor:

Not much of that has gone on that I've seen to minorities. It happens to Caucasians a lot. This one guy on my floor especially. I guess he had it coming. He managed to get himself stuffed into a closet. But that was by his own, Caucasian-to-Caucasian so. I haven't noticed much with the minorities that

much. Maybe because we're so uh, try to separate ourselves from everyone so much. Maybe being shy and all that, we don't interact as much.

Gender Issues. Asian American students also described a number of gender-based situations to me. One inexperienced male student spoke of a situation grounded in an explanation about students being provided escorts as they entered certain residence hall environments on campus and feeling that males were at times treated unfairly, "The escorting though, it's like huh, we don't have to, nobody escorts the girls when they come around us, but we always manage to get escorted. But, what is this? Just guys versus girls in general. The guys are always the ones getting escorted. So, I'm like, hm, o.k." Another inexperienced female described her observations of disturbing gender-based comments that may well help to partially explain the aforementioned situation:

Some of the guys [make comments], mostly guys, girls don't [in general]. I don't know if [women] just aren't, if they think that and they don't say it. But guys, they're the ones who voice it. You hear 'em saying stuff; you just hear them *all* the time. Like towards girls, oh gosh I don't know, everything. They're always making comments, but it seems more, if a girl says something about an egotistical guy or something, it wouldn't be as accepted, but guys, it just seems they can ramble on forever. It's just kind of accepted by society. Like, 'I want a piece of that' or something, you know. Like, 'I'd screw her' or whatever but. Sometimes you'll hear girls but not as much as guys. [Guys will] talk about it right on the elevator and just whatever.

Another offered her perception of assumptions made based on individual choices female students made regarding their style of dress, hair, or other outward appearance details:

The only thing I really noticed is people just judging other people by just what they look like. You know the typical, 'oh she looks like a slut' or 'she must be a bad person 'cause she dresses like a punk' or something like that. Other than that, I mean that's unfair. And that's being stereotypical, but other than that I haven't really noticed anything.

One of the inexperienced female students I interviewed spoke about the treatment she and a group of her girlfriends had been on the receiving end of as they walked downtown to eat a special dinner out:

Oh, well I noticed when I first came here, especially if you are walking down a street, guys will just stare at you. Whether you look grungy or you're in your best outfit. I mean, all of my friends even talked about it. How um gawking is so accepted here. Um, what night was that? It was a couple of weeks ago. Uh, the six friends that I've got here. We decided that we wanted to have a formal dinner party thing. So we walked downtown and we were all wearing dresses and just the fact that people would whistle, they'd stop their cars, they'd honk, they'd turn around. I mean I never [experienced this before]. I mean people in Helena if you were dressed up on the street just walking, wouldn't even pay attention to you. Whether you were like a Barbie doll, you know like the perfect female or not. So, um, gawking is so accepted here. That kind of struck me as sort of strange.

Another student described her transition to a military tied student program and the fact that she felt more welcomed in that environment when she was no longer the only female involved, "I think at first in the Air Force I didn't [feel welcomed] because I was the only girl there."

Sexual Orientation Issues. Sexual Orientation was mentioned by a number of the Asian American students I interviewed as an area of concern on campus. One student initially described a situation he observed earlier in his undergraduate career that involved the destruction of property and anti-gay graffiti across campus. He went on to describe an out-of-state field trip, related to his academic major, and students' reactions to the variety of people they observed:

Well here [at this institution] it's mostly like if you're a homosexual [that students are opposed to you]. I remember that whole big thing that happened a couple of years ago, or maybe just a year ago, with like the Lambda Alliance. You know that's Montana too, very conservative. And up in Anchorage it's very welcomed, the homosexual community. Here, I was like, man these people can get out of

hand if, well not just the Lambda Alliance [incident], but just regular students. We don't know who's writing all this graffiti, we don't know who's writing hate letters [to the student newspaper] and stuff like that. I guess that a lot of people here, a lot of my Montana friends don't like [differences in sexual orientation]. They're not very open, I guess to put it that way. I don't mean to categorize all Montanans but they're not [always supportive of] different cultures, individual differences. We went to Seattle [on a school-sponsored academic trip]. The group was like freaking out because we were in the gay part of town and I'm like well yeah my best friend lives up here you know. 'That guys wearing'...you know they were gay and [my classmates] were so uncomfortable with that and I was like well don't be because what are you gonna do? Not everywhere is like [Montana]. And with cultures, they sort of didn't like [the variety]. I kinda said well there's a lot of Asians, there's a lot of African Americans, this isn't Montana. This is fifty-fifty now. You guys have got to get used to it, you know jokingly but [not really].

Money Issues. An Asian American student who would be graduating at the end of the academic year noted his overall perception that money or financial standing was the ultimate divider among students on campus:

I think the biggest division of people was who had money. Because if you had money then you had pizza and you had dine in, carry out, whatever. If you didn't you had to go to the dining hall and eat whatever was being served. Even though they had good choices. I guess I enjoyed the food, but a lot of my friends didn't. If you had money you didn't have to have that choice. You had a totally different choice. If you had money you could afford to put gas in the car and tour around town or go someplace out of town, visit other people. If you didn't have money you were stuck to a bike or walking and this campus is cold for all but one or two months of the entire school year. And so I think that's probably the biggest divider, not who you are, but how much money do you have?

A second student's thought was connected with the International Food Bazaar that occurs every year on campus. This comment again highlighted for me the lack of financial means as a serious concern for certain students:

I can only, the only thing that comes to mind is that once or twice a year we have, I think just once a year we have the International Food Bazaar and that's fun. That I don't think is publicized enough to let people know. Well, everybody knows it's coming around, but then not enough people made enough of an effort

to come around and see it. Unfortunately, it can't be financed by the school, so the food can be free. 'Cause there's a lot of food I'd like to try but it costs.

Comfort in the Local Community

A number of Asian American students I spoke with had limited interactions in the Bozeman community, while others did much around town and had positive comments to make about their interactions. The most common activities included shopping, banking, renting movie videos, church activities and socializing. A number of students mentioned that the downtown area was very "pricey" and that they did much more looking than buying, but that they enjoyed the environment regardless of this issue. Those who hailed from larger towns and cities commented on the differences between their hometowns and Bozeman, emphasizing safety:

Um, I think it's a friendly environment. Personally, coming from the east coast. I mean I love the east coast and all, but it's more developed or something. Like I feel like everyone's in a rush to get something done. Um, I got to Montana and it was kind of weird at first. Like the first day we were here, my brother and I drove out and we went to downtown to Main St. to find a little place to eat. We're walking up and down and I just kind of had this feeling that everyone had made an effort to make eye contact and say hello. And it was just kind of weird at first for us. You don't really, you might walk down the street and you might smile or something [at home] but you never really made the effort to be like, "Oh, hi, how are you?" until it was someone you knew. So it was just kind of weird and like people talk slower here than people do at home. So, like all around I find the environment on campus and in classes friendly. Where like back home I wouldn't feel really comfortable going out by myself in the middle of the night where as here I think like midnight or something; if I felt like going for a run, I could go by myself. It's a very friendly, secure environment I think.

It's a really nice atmosphere. I really like it. It's calm, safe. For me I feel safe. Back home crime is a real problem. It's one of the highest in the nation and I'm scared a lot. It's a lot worse now than it was a couple of years ago. Coming here it's almost like a sanctuary with my friends. I can just concentrate on school, good places to eat you know and what not. And I don't know, I have to get used to the weather *still*.

An experienced female student who had lived on campus, but also had children and thus was a bit more experienced on the community level than other students typically had been, spoke of the growth of the environment in recent years and had concerns about the changes taking place:

Well, when we first moved here, I found the Bozeman community to be very friendly. You just wanted to be here and over the years I've had the desire to leave because Bozeman's no longer the way it used to be. We had this influx of too many people, outside people. You know, maybe [the University] can be partly blamed for it, I don't know. And so many of the policies that are going on here, they are, like the city councils and everything are stifling business development, so there's no purpose for us to stay here either. And then [Montanans] get upset that the students want to leave. Well, they're not providing us with any opportunity to stay. And it's come to that point where I think, I don't know; I think Bozeman has come to that crossroad. I'm not as comfortable in Bozeman as I used to be. I used to be able to walk around at nighttime all by myself, not a care in the world, but now I'm not so comfortable about doing that. I suppose I should never have let my guard down from being in Las Vegas and those other places, but I did. I never thought Bozeman would change that much. Kind of disappointing, realizing it did.

At times, students had experienced or observed situations that made them less comfortable in the community than they might otherwise have been. One student shared with me what he described as pretty typical first impression assumptions made about him based on his appearance, "There's always that first, I think that Bozeman always has that; the school is here and all the international students are here, so that's their first impression when I walk by. Oh you must be from China or whatever. And then when I start talking, it's like, "You don't have an accent." Another student spoke of an observation he had experienced as he traveled around town one day:

There was this one time when I saw these old guys making fun of this kid. He was different. He had blue hair and you know whatever, but they were yelling at him from their truck and I was just kind of like wow. I don't know, they probably hadn't seen much [in the way of difference].

A third student told me of her personal lack of comfort with a number of the interactions she had experienced in the community environment. She speculated that maybe the lack of friendliness might be due to the fact that she was a student with no money to spend versus having anything to do with her ethnicity:

I don't go off campus too much. That's where I have felt maybe a little bit like others may be looking down on me in some ways. Not all that much though. I guess when I get off campus I get a little paranoid myself sometimes. Um, just looking around at the shops and stuff like that. They just perceive that I probably won't buy anything so. I mean they just don't say hello when you close the door and stuff like that which is kind of not a wise business practice. [But then again], sometimes with overly friendly people, I start to wonder how much of it is an act or are they really that friendly.

Another student also expressed a lack of comfort in a community-based banking environment:

I just thought about this, the bank. Every time I go to the bank it's like, I just get very uncomfortable at the bank. I don't know, for some odd reason, I just do. I feel like they're all thinking I'm just like a weirdo, just I'm up to something. It's very odd. I shouldn't think like that but banks I don't, here I have, they're like always looking at me or something. I don't know. [My friend and I] had this conversation about well maybe you should get a loan. No, I don't think the banks here would give it to me. Well, why wouldn't they? Hello? Yo? You know banks tend to be really, you know they don't like to give money out to minorities.

Caucasian American Student Perspectives

Limited Experiences with Diversity

My interviews with Caucasian students targeted students who were originally from Montana or a neighboring state. This decision was made in the hopes that the ideas and decisions expressed by this student group would represent as much as possible the white student population on campus, as the majority of the white students hail from these

areas. Many of the students I spoke with described limited or no experiences with diverse populations prior to coming to campus. A limited number of students noted relationships with students of color, usually tied to high school activities they had participated in together.

Challenge and Impact of Rural Upbringing. Students' experiences with diversity were quite limited prior to coming to campus. Many came from rural areas with very few, if any people of color. One student noted that he had one African American student, who had been adopted, in his entire high school class. A number of students generalized that Montana was very limited in terms of diversity, "Um, I've pretty much only seen Bozeman. A little bit of other states but [it's] not very diverse, Montana's pretty limited in that area." Another student's comments also ignored any people of color around the state, "Um, being in Montana, I don't think I mean I guess women are the only, basically are the only minorities that I can think about in Montana. We don't really have that; a minority group in Montana." Only a limited number of students discussed experiences interacting with Native American populations around the state with me. They had the opportunity of living near one of the reservations around the state and going to school with Native American students:

Well, Hardin is about 2 miles from an Indian reservation, so more than half our high school was Indian, so actually, I had quite a bit [of experience with diversity]. Our school was better than the public school they had at Crow Agency and there was a bus, one or two busses that came in from there into Hardin. So I've grown up, I was born and raised in Hardin, lived there all my life so, I've been around diversity and Native Americans all my life.

Diversity Definitions. Students' definitions of diversity were quite similar to what I previously noted in chapter four, however, one experienced male student used two key words that begged inclusion here. They were, "Education and Understanding" which he felt were the keys to true respect. He went on to more fully explain his ideas to me:

I have a tough time when people discriminate [simply] because they're Native Americans or African Americans. I just kind of figure we're all Americans. I think we should all have equal opportunities granted to us and that's just; I think people should put away [the labels]. They don't call us white Americans. Treat us all as one.

International Experience and Focus. A number of the students I spoke with seemed to jump directly to diversity meaning international exposure and experience. I found myself having to bring them back to the idea of diversity among the population of the United States, especially the diverse Native American populations in the region. A number of students I spoke with had international experience. Some had participated in student exchange programs. One student had visited Japan twice and had a group of Japanese students visit him in Montana as well. Another described her experiences in France:

Last year, I was an exchange student in France, so I would say [I] actually [have a] large background with other ethnic groups. French, Arabic, a little of everything I suppose, and also in France I was with other exchange students, so people from all over.

Others had spent time in the military that included experiences with other cultures. An inexperienced female student told me of the depth of her experience prior to beginning her undergraduate career:

I spent twenty years in the United States Navy. I worked with every, probably every race and culture there is and I've been at several duty stations all over the world, so yes I've interacted with a lot of different cultures.

Importance of Diversity On Campus. Students were, for the most part, supportive of diversity on campus and most spoke of the need for increases in the number of diverse students, "If you're not exposed to something, you'll never learn about it and understand it." This same student went on to tell me that respect can only come from understanding. Another male student tied the need for diversity to power on campus, noting his concern that if diverse groups were not represented that one group would hold "all the cards" when it came to control of important issues and decisions. Many students connected diversity to learning very easily, considering it a natural fit, "I think that the more diversity, the more learning we can get out of M.S.U. I don't know, I think it is important to have a diverse campus, instead, because you tend to become narrow-minded when you only see one thing all the time." Others, however, didn't make that connection, "I don't care. I'm coming here for my education and that's all I need. That's all I'm concerned about."

Reactions to Diverse Relationships. Many students felt that whom one chose to become involved with was up to the individual and were supportive of individual choices. Students had, at times, experienced dating a person of color. It was interesting to me that students made a point to distinguish between dating and making a commitment to marriage and children. Some of them seemed comfortable with the dating situation, but urged caution regarding marriage and long-term commitments specifically in regard to

the experiences of children. The following thoughts were shared with me by two students; the first by a female student who had dated an African American man:

Since I was involved in one, I don't think it's anything too, I mean, I think it's up to the person, you know? It's their choice. Um, I just, if you're happy with that person then that's the way it should be, no matter what people say. And my parents, when I brought my boyfriend home, they were kind of just shocked because of the minority they are in Great Falls. But after they kind of got to know him, they accepted him, you know, and I was really scared about that. So, I'm really for it. They should be treated as equal as everybody else. I can kind of see the fact of getting married and having children, just because of the discrimination the kids get because of how kids are to other kids if they're half black, half white. Some kids have it bad, because one of my friends is half black, half white and when he was growing up he got a lot of grief from his friends.

This experienced student encouraged caution, due primarily to his own familial experience and what he had seen a child of a mixed marriage go through:

Um, I'm kind of in the middle. I think if they can get along and, um, they need to consider the cultural differences that there are. Because there [are] differences in every single culture. And, um, they also need to think about, 'cause I have a, an uncle who's Arabian and my aunt is Caucasian and I think they need to think about their kids that they're gonna have because you can tell from their kids, that they're a mix and they get teased really bad about it. And one of 'em, one's a girl and for several years she came home from school every day crying because kids made fun of her. So, I think you need to take considerations into it before you get too involved.

Only one student I spoke with told me of his lack of comfort with even thinking about a mixed relationship, "Oh, I don't know. I guess my background is against it so. My family would probably be against it so. I hadn't even thought about it. It hasn't even crossed my mind." This student expressed that he would not have problems with others involved in a mixed relationship; he just did not see himself able to contemplate the issue based on his upbringing.

Affirmative Action. Most of the students I spoke with were unable to give me a specific reaction or opinion regarding affirmative action. One student asked for clarification and we discussed affirmative action policy and that it was meant to give equally qualified women and persons of color equity in a variety of situations. Her follow-up thoughts were interesting to me. Even though she was unsure of the details at first, she was very confident in the assumptions she made:

Well, um, I'm a little bit of both. You're saying they're totally equally qualified, same experience and everything? *Not that that ever happens but*, if that's the case, where it's totally equal, then I agree for affirmative action. I just don't think it's fair if they give it to a minority female or race-wise if the white male is more qualified.

General Positive Reactions to Academic and Campus Life Environments

Most of the Caucasian students I spoke with had very positive comments to share about their broad-based experiences on campus. Very few of the students I spoke to noted experiences with or observations of discriminatory or unfair treatment across campus. I could not help but think about the stark differences between the thoughts of this group as a whole and the experiences other students had shared with me. Students described feeling at home in many of their living environments:

I love living in the Quads. It's very friendly. It's kind of like a big family. If I need help with something, there's always somebody who can help me out. Proof read my stuff. And, I don't know; we go out on the weekends together, watch a movie or whatever. There's always somebody to have dinner with. It's really nice.

In direct contrast to many of the minority students I spoke with, Caucasian American students named the Student Union as one of their favorite places on campus to hang out:

Um, I love going to the SUB. I'm always there. It's, I just like going there, just hanging out or you know studying there. There's just so many people. You know there's always something going on there.

Derogatory Comments Abound. A number of Caucasian American students expressed thoughts regarding derogatory comments heard around campus about certain groups of students; examples included remarks made about race, sexual orientation and gender. An experienced female student noted, "I have heard comments that I'm shocked that someone going to college would say out loud in a class." Another student spoke with me about the behavior of one of her friends, which she believed was directly tied to parental influence:

Um, just like maybe friends being prejudiced or just, well, like I know people that are really against, you know, the gays and the lesbians here or, you know, against the Asians or Japanese. You just hear sometimes, you hear some comments once in a while about it. I found, like, I have one of my friends, their family is somewhat, they're like, her Dad is kind of racist. And so you kind of, I think they kind of pick up from that at home and bring it here so much and they don't know or anything but they just kind of bring that opinion.

Comments made in other campus environments were also noted. This student talked about her reaction to hearing about black students being verbally attacked during a volleyball match:

Um, just like [students will] be talking about, someone was talking about, um, the volleyball game last Thursday. And a bunch of black people came into the game and I heard, you know, they're like, "Oh there's the" and you know they used the "n-word." I *hate* the n-word. I just, you know, I just don't understand why people are like that really.

Verbal attacks on women as they walked through the Student Union were also addressed,

"Yeah, well I've just seen, you know, I don't know. I have seen [them] sit by themselves. There is always a group of guys who will sit and say derogatory things to girls walking by."

Students also spoke of seeing other students made fun of simply due to the way they were dressed:

Um, you sometimes see people dress differently, you know. I guess you couldn't really say that's gender or anything but I've noticed people like smirking and laughing; it kind of hurts my feelings when I see people doing that to other people just because of the way they dress.

Gender-tied comments in the classroom environment about academic and professional abilities were also discussed. This student told me of her experience in a number of business courses she had taken:

Not personally directed to me, but there's been, you know, in some of my business classes - yeah. As far as being a woman, [male students] don't think that you're; they don't think that you're capable of doing the same tasks that a man can do. I've had, just not personally, but, I mean, we have gotten into discussions about it. I mean, any of the guys that I've ever worked with that have been in my, um, in my business groups we've all gotten along really well. And we've all, like, nominated someone you know as a group to be like our head person and everything. I'm going to say that nine out of ten times it is a guy you know, but I don't have a problem with that and they don't have a problem with that.

One of the nontraditional inexperienced female students I spoke with told me about a friend who was dating a black male student and the fact that they had been victims of destructive behavior on campus, "I have a friend and her boyfriend, his tires have been slashed and he's black. And her antenna has been broken."

Differing Perceptions About the Comfort of Others. Students did not have a consistent opinion about how comfortable other students were interacting in the classroom setting. At times they expressed an overall comfort level for among all students. Others felt that their own attempts at connecting with others were sometimes brushed off and noted their own discomfort with interacting with certain students:

I mean, I've noticed a lot of people that don't even want to get to know you. Like I have, I have tried to talk to people and they just try to push me off but, I mean there's nothing I can really do about that. I guess if that's how they're gonna be then. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable trying to talk to, you know, I can't even, Chinese people, Asian people, because I don't know if they're gonna understand me or not.

This student spoke with me about the fact that she was the person responsible for most attempts to interact with students different than herself:

Well, I have always had to approach [others]. I am the type of person that I'll approach someone before they, you know, approach me just to make it; to ease the comfort you know, I do that. Um, I just feel that a lot of minority groups they just are really intimidated. You know, and, I don't know sometimes, they just sense you're unapproachable.

Connections with Students of Color

Very few white students could name an opportunity they had had to get to know a student of color well. They tended to describe more superficial connections, "Oh, just on a slight, you know, social level. Of course I say hi to 'em when I come into class or whatever." Students who had formed more in-depth relationships had typically done so as a result of having a class together or connecting through other common forms of participation. One student described getting to know Saudi Arabian students on campus:

See, a friend of mine's an R.A. and he was an R.A. over in Roskie and he had quite a few Saudi Arabians on his floor. And, I just have to say, that it's the first time that I've ever met them and it's definitely a different experience. They are very loud and some of them are very considerate and some of them are very loud and inconsiderate.

Another student told me of the connection he had made with an African American student during his freshman year, in a class they were taking together. As seniors, their friendship remained intact. Students were very up front about the limited opportunities

they had had or taken to connect with students of color. An inexperienced male student told me that he did not always feel comfortable because of his lack of experience with people of color. He felt he might “say the wrong thing.”

An experienced female student discussed her friendships with girlfriends who were also dating Student-Athletes on campus. She felt uncomfortable with the attitudes, mainly from cliques of students that they dealt with because of these dating connections:

Um, I’ve never had bad experiences you know. I grew up here and I have all my friends and I have always been able to make friends. But, I mean, it’s always like the sorority girls or the fraternity boys. I mean like the athletes are with like the uppity girls and it is always like the cliques [that cause her discomfort]. Some of my friends dated some of the athletes and they were called names and all sorts of things. They’ve called them like sluts. There is a lot of jealousy [about the dating situations].

Overall Comfort in the Community

Many students were comfortable in the community environment. They noted very few issues regarding their interactions in the community, “People go out of their way to be of service and friendly to you.” Students did communicate an issue with the way the locals drive, noting that, “People are very impatient drivers” and “Well the drivers leave something to be desired, you know.” One student noted that, from his perspective, people paid more attention to some things than they would in a larger city:

Some people pay attention to you [more than they would] in a bigger city. In a bigger town, more people don’t seem to pay attention to odd things, like people with spiked hair, stuff like that. But overall it’s been o.k. *Nobody has just come out and been downright mean to me or anything in any of my experiences.*

The most serious community-level situation was shared with me by a Caucasian American student who told me of a situation she had been involved with while having a

beer with a good friend, who happened to be black, at one of the local bars:

Oh, yeah, well I have a personal experience. It happened probably like a year and a half ago. But this guy that I had befriended, you know, him and I were really good friends and we were out one night at the bar. We were just sitting there talking, you know, right at the door and this group of cowboys just like came and threw a cheap shot at him and threw him out the door. And got into this big fight so that is my personal experience with it.

Concern over the influence the community might have on the campus was also addressed with me by a student. She was concerned that this external influence might not always be in the best interest of the campus, “Just Bozeman in general. Because I think diversity in Bozeman you know isn’t very [prominent]. So that [influence] is imposed on the school a little bit.”

Hispanic American Student Perspectives

Extreme Locales and Experiences Regarding Diversity

The Hispanic American students I interviewed described to me extreme experiences dealing with diverse populations. Many had experiences living and going to school in larger urban areas of the United States including cities such as Miami, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Houston to name a few. A number of students came to live in Montana during their high school years as a result of a family move. Each of these students experienced a larger, more diverse living experience and upon their moves to Montana, felt they were experiencing two extremes. As one student told me, “In Miami, of course almost everyone was Hispanic, so you just hang around with the same people. And then in [my Montana town], I was probably the only Hispanic I can think of in my high school.”

An inexperienced student explained that he had a difficult time seeing himself as Hispanic, due primarily, to the fact that he spent most of his youth living in a predominantly white area of Denver. Another student who also attended high school in a predominantly white district, described the connection she felt to her culture through belonging to a student group for young women, “I was part of this Young Hispanic Enrichment Group in high school, and so I got pretty involved in that and did a lot of the Hispanic stuff and learned about our culture.”

Combination of Academic Quality and Diversity Preferred. When I asked how important having a diverse student body at their institution was to them, students’ reactions varied. At times they felt that strength of character and positive attitudes in support of diversity were more important than actual diversity itself. One student’s comments to me illustrated this perspective:

Um, I wouldn’t say made up of them, no. It’s not important to me that they have diverse groups, as long as people that are [at the university] think diversity, you know, think in regards to *everybody* and *everything*. Um, that’s more important to me than actually if they are, if there is one ethnic group or another.

Some students shared with me that they felt academic quality was more important than diversity for the sake of diversity. Students also told me that they felt that if both were possible in combination that would be their preference. It seemed to me that an assumption that increases in diverse student populations on campus would also mean an automatic decrease in academic quality, hovered over these comments. One student expressed his thoughts on the issues this way:

I would say it depends on the people themselves. Maybe they’re not accepting students on their merits, they’re just accepting on their race and that’s kind of

what school is not for. It's not you know, we need 700 black students, 800 white students, 400 Chicanos or Mexicans, that's not how a school should act. They should say, ok we're going by this person had this kind of grades in high school, this person had horrible grades in high school. I would rather them take the people that had good grades. Not that it's gonna affect my life any way, but it's gonna affect the school. And it's the school that I'm devoting another 4 years of my life to. I would love it if there was a big mixture. I can't say there is here, there's not, but it doesn't bother me that it's not.

Another student described similar feelings to me, "Um, I think it's important to a degree.

It's always helpful for any environment to have different sides on different things, different backgrounds. I don't think it's all important though because I mean it is an academic setting. And I think the academics should always take priority. But I think it's always helpful to have a multicultural environment."

The Educational Value of Diversity Stressed. Other students stressed to me the educational value of diversity in terms of learning. Their comments illustrated the value of personal growth and preparation for the future. They also assumed that many work environments students would experience in the future, would be more diverse than what they had experienced prior to coming to the university as an undergraduate. The benefits to the entire student body, in terms of preparation for diverse work and living environments, were stressed to me by a number of students. One particular comment seemed to sum up student's collective reactions regarding the lessons of preparation:

I think that is good because that particular activity, that particular situation of having people from different backgrounds and different ethnic groups, provide the whole student body with a greater experience, knowledge and tolerance about other cultures. I think that is important because the students that are here right now, they will be taking important positions in the future. So this interaction with other groups of different backgrounds can be significant for positions that they will take in the future.

An experienced student shared with me a more specific, personal reaction to illustrate how his life had been enriched by diversity on campus:

I think that it's important simply because, like Sven, the German exchange student. His ideas about building scenery were completely different [than what I had been learning]. And his whole approach to things was completely different. Whether it be the beer he drinks, the language he speaks, or the fact that he thinks it's six degrees Celsius [outside]. It really kind of, it made the entire environment so much more about learning, so much more. I learned a lot more in addition to scenery.

Another student described his ties to a Native American student during a course that involved learning to read and appreciate Shakespeare:

Charlotte was Crow Indian and she was learning how to read Shakespeare and having read Shakespeare, being in the theatre and all that stuff, it was kind of interesting to teach her about the point of Shakespeare and the words and all that stuff and how you've got to get past the poetry and the prose to get to the real meaning, which amazingly is always common throughout. She was always able to reflect to me her experiences growing up on the reservation and I always thought that it was kind of, it was a really cool mix; that the interaction was there.

Noncommittal Responses to the Need for Diversity. Students voiced opinions to me that were, to some degree, noncommittal. They were not opposed to diversity on campus, but they did not see the possibility of building a more diverse culture on campus as having primary importance to them, "I think it'd definitely be nicer if there was some more like different cultures around here, but you know it's not that big of a deal, so I don't know, that's about it." Another student's comments illustrated similar opinions:

Hm, I don't think it's too important. People will just decide where they want to go to school, you know. And it's not like a school can recruit so many Hispanics and so many blacks, you know, so many whites. 'Cause I know Montana is like, basically a white state, you know. So, I don't know. It'd be important, I think it would be nice if there were more cultural groups and stuff, but you know. Just because they give people like something else to look at, you know. Like to experience somebody else's culture instead of just their own.

Overall Comfort in the Classroom

Hispanic American students described for me generally positive comfort levels interacting with students in the classroom setting. Students attributed this comfort to their past experiences, “I’m perfectly comfortable with it. Like I said I grew up with many types of backgrounds and I never really grew up with thinking there were many differences, until I moved to a smaller town. So, I have no problems with it at all. I can get along with just about anybody.” Students spoke of feeling more comfortable interacting with other students of color as compared to the population as a whole, “I’m, overall pretty comfortable, at least with the different ethnic groups. I mean they’re probably in the same situation as I am, so I mean I think we communicate well.”

A number of students had seen nothing that they would characterize as troubling or discriminatory in the classroom, but spoke about the fact that they had heard about problems that other students had encountered. Other students told me of joking that occurred during their classroom experiences, especially by male students:

I mean sure, once in a while they say jokes and stuff and making fun of different ethnic groups but I mean it doesn’t really offend me at all. I mean sometimes they accidentally slip, sometimes they think I’m Mexican or something and so they say jokes about them and then they realize that maybe I am. But I mean they always say they’re sorry or something, they don’t mean it at all. Mostly the males do the joking.

Self-Segregation Noted. Students also shared with me perceptions about a number of student groups, whose members seemed to separate themselves on campus, “The Native Americans kind of keep to themselves. In the classroom, I haven’t interacted with them, other than seeing them sit together and be more with themselves.

And I don't know how they really feel, you know, I haven't talked to them."

International students were also perceived as a student group whose members were marginalized, "Foreign students seem to be a little bit um, I don't know, tend to associate mainly with their own groups and I think they have a hard time associating with the other groups on campus. Sometimes just because they might perceive that they might not be liked, or that people might have stereotypes or something like that."

Thoughts Regarding the Effect of Physical Appearance. When students described interactions between white students and students of color in the classroom setting to me, the most prevalent response, was that there was very little diversity, and thus little basis for comment. As one student described to me:

You know it's hard to tell. There are so few minorities at Montana State. You know you have the Native American background here that is a little larger obviously than the Hispanic and Afro-American, but, um, each of those groups are so much smaller than the rest. I mean, usually I'm the only person of any type of color in my classes or if not there are only a few of us, so it's really hard to tell. You know, it's not like you've got a half and half deal, where you can actually see that interaction happening or not happening. From my own [individual] experience, it's been fine.

Many Hispanic American students described that they alone provided the diversity in their respective classes. A limited number of students discussed with me the fact that their physical appearance might make a difference in how they were perceived, "Within my classes there hasn't been a big variety of people. I would say that I was probably the most different person. And nobody knew it because I didn't look; you know everybody just assumes that I'm Caucasian." Another student also addressed a very different experience in regard to her physical appearance, "I've never really heard anyone

say anything bad about any minority group whatsoever. And I mean everybody knows or at least can tell that I'm Hispanic." A third student shared with me, "I have the light skin and green eyes. I don't have the accent or anything like that. I'm first generation out of Mexico on my Father's side and it doesn't show and so I sometimes wonder if I had the stereotypical darker skin, darker hair, darker eyes, how things would change sometimes."

Gender Issues Observed. Students also expressed to me their perceptions regarding gender issues as an area of concern as well:

I just think caution, maybe being reserved at first. You know, I think people do open up once you get thrown into a group thing. I see more of a gender difference here, that I wasn't, I thought was already solved in the world (laughs), you know, coming from California. I haven't felt this way for a long time. When I first started working in electronics, I was the first woman installation tech working at this lab and, um, I was probably around eighteen and there was a lot of men that were getting ready to retire from the Navy that were saying to me things like, "Well you took away a man's job, you know, you shouldn't be working in this environment." But, um, here [on campus] I have the same feelings that come up for me in class sometimes with the way that the males all stay together in lab and the females stay together in lab; there is a definite line in the middle. And then there are some males that mix and there are some females that mix, but on the whole there is a dividing line there that I haven't seen in years. But I also feel since I've moved here and met other women, that women are, behind the times [and into more traditional roles].

The value of listening to women in the classroom setting was also addressed as a concern, "I think [students] maybe tend to make fun of females more. And like in classrooms, they don't tend to listen as much as, like if a male was talking."

Hesitancy on the Part of Others Sometimes Noticed. Students at times described to me a hesitancy in regard to the comfort level of other students interacting with them in the classroom, "I kind of sensed once that you know an older person wanted to ask me a

question, but they kind of held back.” Others described this dynamic as a greater extreme, perceiving that others were intimidated by them, “I feel intimidation from a couple of people here which bothers me a little bit, because I don’t like people to feel intimidated by me and I just, I don’t know what it is.” Students who had positive experiences interacting in the classroom, stressed to me the importance of their own reactions to difference, “I would say they’re pretty comfortable because it’s not a big deal to me. And I notice some of my friends when they notice different people; it’s a big deal to them. And so they build that barrier and I’m really open and easy.”

The Possible Impact of Teaching and Learning Strategies. One student shared a situation that involved a more subtle form of treatment. This student’s comments brought to my mind the importance of utilizing appropriate teaching and learning strategies in the classroom setting:

I don’t seem to have a problem with [direct discrimination]. Um, there’s one fella that’s in my class, my speech class, that’s gay and people are kind of standoffish, but I really like his humor (laughs). So, I respect him for his humor and [his] being gay doesn’t bother me. I was sick last week you know with the flu, so we had to get into small groups and, uh, so I was put into the group where everybody was left over. Well, he was one of them, and a Malaysian guy was one and this other kind of heavyset guy who is very quiet and I felt like, well we’re the odd group of the class. We’re the leftovers, you know? Kind of like baseball teams, you know the poor kid who gets left out, but I think we’ll do fine in our presentation. I think we’ll have a very creative one because we have so much diversity and we’re just so, the teacher put it, “Well you were adopted into this group.”

Other students also described experiences they had had in connection with group work in the classroom setting. One student told me of an incident that involved direct communication among students:

You know, I haven't really noticed any major tendencies in any [one] direction. But not so much about my race technically, I've heard a lot of jokes, um things you know just immoral I would say. You know derogatory types of comments and even to some; you know I've got a good friend of mine who's from a reservation down here and, uh, you know there was a guy in our group one time who made quite a few remarks about his background, and you know, I think that happens.

Questionable Experiences with Faculty Noted. Few of the students I interviewed had experienced or observed incidents that they would describe as discriminatory or unfair involving their professors. Students again described having heard about other students who had had problems. One student described an experience that she felt was initially an attempt by a professor to be helpful, but that from her perspective was overdone and as a result a source of frustration rather than help to a student:

I think she's just trying to be helpful you know. We, [students in the class], were talking about who didn't, whose language wasn't English, their first language, you know. And we just talked about that, and then this one kid raised his hand. So, now she's like in the middle of class, "Well if you need help, if you ever need this, if you need me to explain this to you," and she always seems to do that, you know. Seems to kind of separate him from the group because English wasn't his first language. So, I mean, but I think she's just trying to help more because he's not like really up on English and that's an English class, so. I think he's [the student] probably thinking, shut up, o.k. I just wouldn't want everybody to know *all the time*.

Students described for me a number of situations that involved a lack of fair or ethical behavior by professors when dealing with students in the classroom setting. One situation involved a professor's apparent dislike of a student, "I know of one professor that really does not like one of my classmates. And you can definitely tell. It's, he just, when she says something, he doesn't really care, he just says, "Oh", and he goes on. Another student described observing what she called, "rudeness" and, "cutting someone

short” by professors. Two more disturbing situations were expressed regarding professors’ behaviors in the classroom. One involved a faculty member joking about women’s sports at the university:

I’ve had a professor who was pretty derogatory towards women’s sports. You know everybody knows he joking and what not but I’m sure it hits home with some people. To give you an example, he was talking about women’s basketball in particular and he tried to make the class laugh, but he said, “I just don’t want to pay for something that I can do. I want to pay for something that I can’t do.” So half the room was quiet, so even though he tried to get it across as funny, I’m sure most of the people weren’t too happy.

Another student described an experience involving unethical behavior of a professor during the completion of class evaluations by students:

It wasn’t pointed out to me until I took an English class and my English teacher told us, that teachers were supposed to leave the room during evaluations. And other people are supposed to take them to the department. Well, this professor that I was having a hard time with walked up and down the isles while we were filling out the forms. Yeah, and then he just kind of hung out when people were passing them in and putting them in a pile and then he finally left. And, it shocked the heck out of me. So, that to me was a discrimination thing.

Lack of Civility, Respect, and Concern on Behalf of Others

Students described to me a number of situations that illustrated a lack of civility and respect among students in a variety of situations. One student described others living on her floor as, “very caught up in image.” Another described an issue that a friend of hers had experienced with a roommate:

One of my friends was in a fight with her roommate, ‘cause her roommate can’t remember her key. But my friend has a snowboard and all her stuff in her room. She wants to lock it you know? [Her roommate] doesn’t, so one of her roommates’ friends wrote on the door, “You stupid bitch. Leave the door open or I’ll smash that snowboard over your head.” It was really vicious. I can’t imagine how you’d live like that.

Students who were themselves having good experiences on campus, expressed concern that they knew of students who were not, and wished they could make a difference for that student population:

I think I generally have had good experiences, but I know that a lot of people haven't. And so if I could change that somehow in helping others have better experiences whether it be with the faculty or with student relationships or with services or anything. Just somehow if that could be changed, so that everyone could have a good experience. But that's hard because that depends on the person. I think a lot of it is because of their attitudes.

Acts of vandalism that seemed to be grounded in a lack of respect for the possessions of others was described as well, "Last year I brought up my car and it's a Porsche, and it got keyed six times in nine months. So, I guess people, some students are not tolerant of me having a nice car and I don't know. Now, I sort of look at everyone on campus with this sort of, you know, I don't really want to get to know anybody, you know 'cause they might be an asshole."

Student Life Observations of Verbal and Written Discrimination. Students I spoke with reported more instances of verbal or written discrimination that they had observed than any other type of discrimination. None of the students I interviewed felt that they had been targets of discrimination, except as tied to their gender, or military involvement. However, students did report observing what they felt were acts of discrimination against other students, particularly African-American students and international students on campus. They also told me of general behaviors that they felt were at times rude, but would not necessarily attribute to discrimination or unfair

treatment. Instances of friends' and acquaintances' use of discriminatory comments were described to me by a number of students:

A couple of my friends you know, if we see like some black people eating in the SUB or something like that, I mean they're pretty racist. It's like, "Look at that nigger" and I don't like that personally. I'm just like, "O.k. guys, shut up, o.k." (uncomfortable laugh), you know, and they say it loud enough to where [the other students] can hear 'em. I mean, that's the only thing I've ever encountered here at MSU, but it happened back home all the time with the same girls.

There are some instances, like, um, I don't know, one of my friends, she's kind of racist or biased, whatever you want to call it. And when you see the groups of the foreign exchange students walking around speaking their language, their native language, she's like, "you're in America now, speak American", you know stuff like that. She doesn't say it to them but she makes the comments about it.

A situation which involved comments written in a residence hall rest room was also described to me, "The only situation that I have seen that has been discriminatory was in the bathroom where somebody on one occasion wrote things like, *I don't know what all these foreigners are doing in my state* [on the walls], but I've never seen or heard a person saying that in public." Students expressed concern for others in regard to a number of personal and societal issues including the increase in militias and discrimination over sexual orientation, race, gender, physical challenges and religious beliefs. One student told me of what he felt was unfair treatment of the African-American men living in his residence hall environment:

I don't know, our, what is it, I think it's the Resident Director, she's like an older lady and she tends to come down a little bit harder on the guys in the dorms for doing the same kinds of things that the girls do. And I don't know, there's, she tends to write up African Americans a lot more than anybody else, at least from what I've seen anyway. And it seems like most times when she writes them up, it's something that, you know with most of the other people she just asks them, like, "Could you just turn your music down a little?"

Students also addressed societal challenges involving the growth and perceived support of militias and other extremist groups such as the Aryan Nation, by young adults, as a base of concern on behalf of African American students on campus:

Well, the first thing that comes to mind is I wouldn't want to be a black person here on campus. Just because there are hardly any and it seems like they stand out so. And there's that Aryan-type mentality. And for me, I guess maybe I have this fear because I don't have the tools. I wasn't raised being black. I don't know what it would be like for them, but to me it would be strange being here. I would have fears.

When I asked this student to expand on her comment, she explained a situation that arose during one of her large lecture course meetings:

Well there was a question asked in my speech class about militias, and [the professor] goes, "Raise your hand if you believe in militias," and there were quite a few people who raised their hands. I was like *whoa* (with feeling), and these are young kids who are in their twenties who I feel would be easily programmed, you know. And it just blew me away.

Gender-based acts of discrimination were also described to me by students. One student described her experiences walking through a food service area in the Student Union Building (SUB):

I go in [to the SUB], and there's like this table of like fifteen jock guys, all of them are black, there are a couple of white guys, o.k. I walk by, every time I walk by one of 'em's waving at me, one of 'em's looking at me. I don't think it's just 'cause they're like black or whatever. I don't know, it's just one of those things. I think they may feel a little isolated, you know in and of themselves and their whole jock group, so they front (try to impress), you know. Which is just something that a lot of men do. But you know it's definitely like a gang type of consciousness. You know I get a lot of it, 'cause a lot of white guys [on campus] do it too. I just pick up on a lot of things and I just let them go. I just walk around in a bubble you know.

A female student involved with a military program described her experience as well, "Most of it's been about women in combat and um [the guys involved in the

program] make the usual comments, like, 'You throw like a girl', things like that. But they do it in joking, they don't ever do it seriously." Another experienced student explained to me that he felt the treatment he had perceived was more tied to his involvement with a military program rather than with his racial or ethnic background:

O.k., well not with my Ethnic background at least, not being Hispanic. I think in the Air Force actually. I know there's people that are totally against the military and stuff. And so, I think when I'm in my uniform, I think I get a lot of respect in some ways and like some people even salute us you know. But, in other ways, I know that there's people that don't approve of it and I know that they're talking and just whispering about what they think.

One student made a special plea on behalf of physically challenged students in regard to the need for increased access and ease in maneuvering around campus:

And, um, the third [idea] would be maybe to improve the facilities for handicapped. Yeah, I have been involved in an experiment for NASA and I have to be walking for forty days on crutches. And uh, I have the opportunity to experience the limitations of a handicapped person, a person with impairments. And I think that that particular aspect could be improved in order to give those people an opportunity to have a better life here on campus. There were situations in which I had to wait for somebody that was in an office or was on the third floor, because I couldn't go up there or if I had to go I guess I would have to go up the stairs and that type of thing. The campus can improve in that aspect. It can make the situation for people with impairments easier, I think.

Concern for students whose sexual orientations and religions differed from what might be deemed mainstream was also expressed to me. One student remembered an issue that had been debated in the university newspaper:

Last year there was a big debate going on in the Exponent about homosexual and lesbian issues and Christianity and there was a big debate going on back and forth in the Exponent. And it seemed like a lot of people just weren't very tolerant of each other. I mean in my view, you know, those two things are wrong, but it doesn't mean that I'm going to go put somebody down or make 'em feel bad or anything, or not associate with them.

Religious freedom was also introduced as an area of concern on behalf of students and faculty who were affiliated with one specific religion, “Yeah, this is the group that perhaps you’ve seen in the newspaper, it’s called C.U.T., Church Universal and Triumphant. And I have friends that belong to this group and it’s very interesting to see how these people care for keeping that a secret because of the experiences that they have had, have been very, very negative.”

Thoughts Regarding Student Organizations and Programs. When I asked students about changes they might make on campus, suggestions made for changes in the Campus Life or Student Affairs environment included: more purposeful mixing of students, and a call for increased programming on a number of levels. One student talked about her thoughts in favor of avoiding the separation of students by group as much as possible on campus:

Um, I wouldn’t have so many separate groups of different like sexes, ethnic backgrounds and things like that. I wouldn’t have so many different groups limited to them. I wouldn’t have set, like Quads is set-aside for the Exchange Students. I would rather have [international students] you know intertwined with everybody else.

Another student voiced the opposite opinion with me, based on his prior experiences at another institution, but also had concerns about students being *too* separate on campus:

You know I’ve been in a Latino Fraternity that they don’t have here. I’ve been in a couple of organizations for Hispanic students. I’m not saying to initiate any type of those groups or what not, but I don’t think it can hurt either. It’s a fine line there [not to have student groups become too separated from each other]. I think that type of diversity definitely needs to be introduced to this campus.

An experienced student shared with me that he had had the opportunity to be involved with a Hispanic Student Group at another institution, and that he sometimes

missed that. He was also quick to add he felt it important to get to know a variety of students on campus, “I’m not saying those groups are always good, I don’t want to get just that across. I think it’s nice to be around [students of similar backgrounds], but at the same time if you’ve isolated yourself [as a group], you’re probably bringing [discrimination] on yourself.”

One specific programming suggestion included an idea for Family Housing programming regarding connecting across cultures, and ongoing alternatives to help in the development of a sense of community, “I don’t know if Family Housing has had meetings where they talk over racism or just living in Family Housing, you know where people can come and talk.”

Transition Issues Shared

First Year Transitions. This group of students expressed that they had experienced very few situations that made them feel not welcomed on campus. Most reported feeling welcomed. One student shared a very positive reaction he had to his first visit on campus as compared to situations at other universities, and how it really made the difference in his decision to attend the university:

Not really (after a pause and a big exhalation). When I first showed up on campus and visited about the department, [with the department head], um it was a large portion of why I decided to come up here. It was because uh he and the department had taken the time to show me around and show me the program. In fact I got a largely in depth look at the program, so much so that when I actually got here, I immediately slid right in and got under way.

Other less positive student reactions that were described to me, involved descriptions of transition challenges to the university, an overall feeling of isolation, and experiences tied to involvement with certain student and/or academic programs. One student who obviously was having a hard time adjusting to her new environment tried to express a difference she felt between not liking the school and campus, versus not feeling welcomed, “Oh, I just don’t like it. It doesn’t mean I’m not welcome. I come to my room, I close the door, I put down my curtain, towel [the door], burn incense, just sit, listen to my music. It’s my place.”

Attitude During Transition to Community Matters. Another experienced student spoke to me about his need to adapt to the community and his appreciation of his ability to do so. He stressed the importance of his own attitude in being open to change. His initial reaction to the local community was not one of comfort or acceptance:

Well, I would say that when I first moved here, I did not like it at all! I wanted to go home. I didn’t feel very welcomed in the community. I think it’s, it’s really cliquish. Now that I’ve been here for a while I feel really comfortable and I don’t know if it’s because you could say I’ve become part of the clique or what. But I feel that I know a lot of the people from the different areas. Um, I don’t know. It’s a really nice place. I really like living here and you have your wide range of people. You know, we live in a trailer park now and we know people that live in expensive houses, so in that sense you have your wide range. Um, as a community as a whole I don’t think we’re very diverse in the cultural sense. I had major culture shock when I first got here. I think in general the communities a pretty nice place. I don’t know if (pause); I think it depends on your attitude though too. I mean, I can see if I would have kept my attitude when I first came here about not wanting to be here, where it would be really terrible.

Community Peaceful Change of Pace

The students I interviewed found the Bozeman community in general, to be just fine, and did not report any major issues with living in the environment or their dealings in town. For a number of MSU students, Bozeman was a real change from their home communities and thus seemed very warm, small town and homey, “Hm, I guess it’s a peaceful community. Kind of small, not a whole lot to offer.” An inexperienced student’s comments stressed the differences for him when comparing the Bozeman community to his hometown:

Everybody is friendly. That is one of the things that I am happy about being here. This is so different. I mean it’s calm. You walk in the streets and you don’t have to have a fight with a person. I feel that it’s wonderful, uh, people are very polite, they have good manners, they know how to drive. You don’t have to drive in a defensive way. There is a great deal of interest about knowing where you come from, how the place where you come from is.

Students, at times, discussed a sense of positive community interactions through hobbies, jobs or community service endeavors that at times were course-related. One experienced student shared with me her love of the outdoors and her experiences interacting with community members in outdoor environments:

I’m, you know, I’m outdoorsy and I don’t want to get that confused with skiing and snowboarding and hiking. I like the hunting. I mean, I guess I could say that I like hiking but uh, fly fishing, that type of thing. And I have to say everybody that I’ve met while doing those things has been extremely wonderful. And most people are that are interested in those types of things. They’re real helpful, if you’ve got a question and I get along with everybody basically.

University-Community Relations Addressed. Older, more experienced students had a different type of understanding and more to share with me about the community dynamics from their perspectives. One student who was living in Family Housing at

MSU, but also had local ties, described family connections on her husband's side of the family and a sense of community anger that she was aware of:

People that have lived here all their lives, kind of feel that this towns turned into a yuppie type of place. That people don't really have to work for a living here; that they're all [living on] trust funds. You know, so there's that type of thing going on. And so with the kids, their friends' families are pretty wealthy and so when they go to stay over at their houses, it's totally different from living in Family Housing. But their friends always enjoy coming to stay with us because it's so different from their home too. Their is kind of an anger, I don't know if it's anger but, people during our recent family reunion thing, they live in Anaconda, Butte, Belgrade and Bozeman here, feel that they've been kind of, that people with money have come and they're all yuppie type people that would buy stuff out of the shops I guess on Main St. or something. Oh, I don't know how to put it into words but they feel, like this one gal, I thought for sure that I'd seen her on campus, so I asked her, I said, "Well do you go to the university?" Her reply was, "Are you kidding? No, I don't go to the university, I live in Anaconda (angry tone of voice). You know I'm just up here for the reunion." But she was very; people are very adamant about university people and very adamant about yuppies coming to town raising the property taxes, raising their property, their prices.

A limited number of students described negative experiences they had had in the community to me. Students questioned whether their experiences were based on the fact that they were college students in general or whether some things might have been attributed to their racial/cultural background. One student described her general feelings about her varied experiences in the community:

I'd have to say that people are a little less friendly here than I expected which isn't necessarily bad. I know it's a college town and it would be hard to deal with students every year and I'm sure some of the older people kind of feel like they're getting overrun sometimes. But as far, you know like you can't really tell whether it had to do with racism or not that people wouldn't talk to you or wouldn't help you out, it's always hard to say. So, it's been both ways. I've had some friendly, friendly people and others that wouldn't say a word to me.

Other students recalled more specific experiences that they described to me:

Once I pulled into the parking lot and somebody had pulled in right next to me. I pulled in and parked next to them and they looked over at me and backed their car

out and moved their car to the other side so. That's the only thing I could think of, but I would suppose or assume anyway that that was prejudice, but who knows. Maybe I parked too close.

Californians Not Welcome. A student hailing from the state of California expressed her concern regarding driving in Bozeman with a California license plate and license, "People can despise you for that in Montana. At work, the guys at work tell me, you got to change your license plate." She also explained to me an experience she had in a bar in town:

We were shooting pool one day and I showed my California I.D. to the bouncer and the balls got jammed inside the pool table, so I went to go ask for a key and he's says, "Well, if it doesn't work, it's just stuck." I'm like, "No, it's not stuck." I told him, "You bring that key over here and we'll open it up and I'll get my change out and I'll go to another pool table." And he just walks over and then [unlocked the table]. But you know things like that, just because I showed a California I.D. when I opened up my wallet. So, I'm not saying it's race, 'cause if I was white, I'm sure it had nothing to do with who or what my race was, I think it had much to do with where I'm from.

Native American Student Perspectives

Blended Families, Reservation Ties, and Native Languages

Native American students described a variety of experiences with diversity prior to attending the university. A number of the students I interviewed came from blended relationships. For example, one parent might have been Native American and the other Caucasian. One male student described his family unit, "Growing up in a multicultural family which, my mother is uh she's got some like I said a little bit of German and like my dad, he's not full Native American. He's like 15/16 Blackfeet, a dash a Sioux, he's got a little bit of French and what not, so it's kind of like a Hines 57 (laughs)."

Many students had experience growing up entirely on or very near an Indian Reservation. Native American students spoke about educational issues and challenges more than any other group I interviewed. Some students went to school on their reservation while others attended predominantly white schools fifteen or twenty miles away. One student had experienced a boarding school environment. At times, students talked about beginning school much later than what might have been considered normal by society as a whole, and how this impacted them as they began to forge their way through an educational system that remains to this day somewhat foreign. One student spoke with me about her native language and the challenge of learning to speak English along with the ongoing educational issues this caused for her:

When I was younger I was most confined to my family. My first language was the Blackfeet language. I think I started school maybe about [age] nine. I think normally you start about six or something. Well I didn't go, and then when I did go to school, I felt really dumb because I couldn't comprehend what was going on. I still have that difficulty and I think it has to do with translation. 'Cause I'm thinking in the Blackfeet language and trying to translate, and sometimes the wording of something doesn't click. If they reword it [in writing] or tell me maybe orally, it clicks better. So, um I was very shy and I was that way until I was about the eleventh grade and I went to a boarding school then. And uh, I had a presentation to do. It was an English class and the one thing [the teacher] told me, "You're gonna fail if you don't do this." And he gave me so many chances, and when I went up there and did it I felt like just (fists clenched in a gesture of success), I made it through ok. And I think that was my first breakthrough talking. And that was um really good to know.

Nontraditional Students with Life Experience. By far, this group of students was made up of many more nontraditional students who brought with them to campus a variety of life and work experience. These experiences included attendance at other higher education institutions prior to attending their current university, military or other

work experience, and having children and raising families prior to beginning or continuing their university educations. One inexperienced male student's military service included two and a half years of active service in Germany.

Experience with Mixed Relationships, Dating, and Blended Families. This group of students had varied experiences dating others and was very supportive of individual freedoms in this regard. They at times had never dated a Native American. They were able to speak easily about this topic:

That's, I'm very comfortable with it. I gain a lot from it. I like that, in general I'm a people person, so I like to um, interact and learn all I can about, you know their backgrounds. In fact I have my first Jewish girlfriend, you know she's like, and you wouldn't know that she's Jewish, you know. But then once she started talking about it to me. She was like telling me all these different things and you know back to her Grandmother was a Holocaust survivor. You know, things like that and I was like whoa, you know. And she's like, "I'm just straight up Jewish", you know.

An interesting topic broached by students was the factor of blood quantum and the impact it might play for students in their dating and relationship decision-making:

I would, for myself, I would never, I never find myself attracted to anybody that's um not a tall, typical Blackfeet man; dark hair, dark eyes, tall and lanky, you know. And again I think, maybe it was my Mom because we have the, which is, something that's my pet peeve is a blood quantum. In order for children to be recognized as Indians they have to be a quarter Blackfeet, and I've always kept that in mind, you know, so I've never faulted from that. And then there's people that say, "To each his own" you know and love is something that, you know, I have like a cousin married to a black guy and you know, he's cool. But I would never marry him, you know, because of the fact of the quantum thing, I think maybe. It's not that I don't like him or anything like that.

One particular student laughed when I asked him how he felt about mixed relationships and said, "Uh, I agree with it. If it wasn't for interracial relationships, I wouldn't be here." He and I both agreed that life experience impacts your perspective in

many interesting ways. He was very thankful for the perspective he had developed growing up as a child of a mixed couple.

Need for Diversity On Campus Embraced – Students, Faculty, and Staff.

Students supported the importance of diversity on campus very strongly. They discussed the necessity for developing an inclusive world-view, “The fact that the world is made up of diverse people is the biggest [reason for support]. And everybody should be given the same chance at education and you know, better their lives.” Students felt that diversity added to the value of their overall educational experience. One student expressed an interesting thought with me that seemed to counter many middle-of-the-road opinions about the need for diversity on campus:

I would say yes on the fact that if [diverse students are] there, the chance of the cultural backgrounds to intermingle and learn about each other is greater than if they’re not. It’s like that old saying you know, what the heck is that? *Out of sight, out of mind*. You know if there’s a cultural background that’s out of sight, [it’s] out of mind. If that culture [is] there and present and you’re bumping into the student that’s from that culture and what not, um the odds I think are increased on the chances of maybe learning about that culture or just even to get to know [someone] from a personal standpoint.

This group of students also discussed the need for diverse leaders among students, faculty and staff, more than any other group I interviewed. They stressed the need for inclusive points of view and opinion sharing among these groups in order to enhance the total experience for all students:

I think it’s important because not everyone has the same point of view, you know what I mean? And it’s always good to get you know like say there was a black student and a Native American student. You know, it’s that minority point of view you know. Like maybe they see something or they know something that most [other] people don’t see or feel or whatever. I think it’s really important. I mean I haven’t seen anyone black or Native American or Chinese or Indian, like as in India, or anyone besides Caucasian people on things like Student Council or

Mortar Board or anything. Um, you know on-campus senator, off-campus senator, in anything like that so; you know it's something to look at for the future I guess.

Challenging Classroom Experiences: Comfort Levels Vary

While some students described their classroom experiences as positive in nature, others had more to say about situations that were challenging for them. One experienced female student noted her tendency to isolate herself in the classroom setting:

I think the, a lot of the [other students] are kind of like buddies in the classroom and I think they like study together a lot of times. And if there are projects, they work together in those projects. And um, I know they're always interacting in the classroom all the time. I see them. Um, I kind of isolate myself from them a lot. But when it comes time for me to go to work with them I will. And um there are some people who are kind of you know different and there are some who are really friendly. It all depends I guess where you come from and um and that's the way I kind of feel about it.

I asked this student why she felt she isolated herself and she explained her predicament as tied to thought process and how she learned:

Well, I guess I try to learn on my own. I want to learn it, but sometimes I don't. And then I hate to ask somebody because I feel like, I've always had this feeling, *geez*, I'm really stupid or something, to ask somebody. And it might be very simple for them, because of the way they think. See, a lot of times they don't think like I do.

Another student described his lack of comfort in classes by illustrating his experience in one specific situation. I noted with interest his use of the term *dropped*, as if this classroom was an extremely foreign environment to him:

I was dropped into a room full of, what, thirty eighteen to nineteen year olds for Communication 110 and it, you know they were um, not so receptive of me. I was the only minority in there as well and they weren't really receptive. I guess a couple of my topics maybe um, one was the persuasive topic and I was persuading them why they should take Native American Studies courses. And I could see you know, eyes rolling, and shoulders slumping and a little bit of

apprehension. I think that was mainly due to the fact that a lot of people here, especially in Bozeman, haven't had to interact with um Native American peoples because they're so distant from any of the reservations. And I bet there's, like especially in Bozeman, the Native American population is so small that they don't quite interact.

An experienced male student described his discomfort in the classroom environment, noting that most of the time he felt a lack of openness from the students around him. He generally felt he had to compete against the other students in his classes, based on their reactions to him:

Um, well being in class I found that each class, students have their own kind of cliques where their little groups and that oh (hesitating for a moment), I found that it was hard for me to get into a group. Uh, it felt like I always had, I mean, it felt like when I asked people questions and stuff they looked at me like I was dumb or something or I was trying to cheat off of 'em. And that uh I found myself sitting in back of the class most of the time and actually I still do. And I pretty much had to prove myself to each of the students before they even started talking to me and stuff. I pretty much had to show I was a little smarter than them I guess, [with] some groups.

A forth student tied the quality of interaction among students in the classroom setting directly to the teaching style of his instructors. He had experienced both positive and negative classroom settings:

I believe that the interaction and so forth and between students, I believe that um, they are dependent on the professors that teach those classes. Um, for example, I've taken a number of classes where like open- minded liberal type professors have taught. So then, as a Native American giving my views in the class, sharing my opinion or whatever you want to say, in these classes they were respected, they were valued. It made me feel good to be in those classes. On the other hand when there were like these professors from the old school, more, I guess more narrow-minded, my way or the high way type professors, I didn't feel good about being in those type of classes. And also the interaction in that type off classes tended to uh move to the area where diversity was nonexistent. Uh, it was, white is right, those types of classes. If I said anything is was like yeah, but you're just an Indian. And that was the feeling among the students and so that's kind of been my experience. It's been an up and down thing, you know, throughout.

The attention paid to Native American students when they spoke in classes was also addressed. One of the students I interviewed told me that he felt the focus was more on the person and not on paying attention to the substance of what they were saying:

When like Native Americans that are obviously Native Americans, like uh (pausing) say anything in class, it seems like everyone pays attention more. And like uh I don't know if it's because they're just, you know they just, they just want, it's curiosity or they're just like looking at something you know just to like I don't know kind of relate with it or whatever. Towards those people or what, and then it seems like when someone has, when a Native American has like a distinct accent, it's obvious, you can tell. And there always like uh, I don't know, you know they look around to see if anyone else is wondering about if the accent seems strange or whatever you know. And I think people think like people with accents are like not as smart as everyone else.

When students discussed their comfort levels interacting with diverse students in the classroom setting, many expressed feeling comfortable and talked about the gains they experienced as a result of the interaction. Students expressing comfort with classroom interactions stressed their learning experiences, "I'm very comfortable with it. I gain a lot from it. I like that, in general I'm a people person, so I like to um, interact and learn all I can about, you know their backgrounds." One experienced student expressed how her life experience affected her attitude regarding classroom interactions:

It might have bothered me twenty years ago, but I have so much experience in life, that life is too short to worry about [difference]. You know, everybody's, I think everybody's the same and uh they're interesting. A lot of them are interesting people. They have a lot to share too. And so, I can put myself back in (as if putting herself back in a box of a sort), being a minority by myself [or not].

Another student stressed to me his traditional teachings and how his spiritual beliefs affected how he felt about interacting with others in the classroom. He expressed his own on-going growth and development and how classroom interactions had helped him to understand others that were different, on a level that he found surprising:

Um, I'm comfortable interacting with students no matter what. But the thing is that I tend to follow my traditional teaching. And also it's something that, you know, in a biblical sense it's pretty much the same. And that's treat others you know how you want to be treated. And I find that you know I can be open and honest and interact well with others in a group in my class. But if they're not gonna treat me, you know if they're not gonna reciprocate, then I usually, I just don't do it no more. I keep to myself. But if it's a give and take you know, if it's there, I have no problem, no matter what. One thing I want to say about this is that I've learned a lot about the human race as a whole, because of this interaction. Uh, I guess given a personal experience, I no longer am homophobic. You know what I mean? You know gay people no longer scare me. Um, lesbians are not weird. And also that saying, the traditional teaching that we are all equal.

Students who were less comfortable with interaction explained it as a general lack of comfort due to their own level of self-confidence, and not necessarily based on the differences between or among students.

Comfort in Common Experiences. During my discussion with students about the quality of interactions among Caucasian students and students of color, three primary themes emerged. The first was a comfort level that was typically rooted in common experiences. In addition, students perceived a lack of comfort between these two student groups, while others noticed a separation in the classroom setting, which was described as, "segregation by choice". Common ground experiences that were described by students included the freshman year experience and those from similar financial backgrounds. An inexperienced male student shared his thoughts related to being a first-year student and the overriding effect this had on what he perceived to be positive interactions among the first-year students in his classes, "Especially in Freshmen [year], everybody's coming here and they're all scared. They're not really prone to look at their race. It's like they're in the same boat you are; you rarely have to worry." An

experienced male student spoke of the extreme impact that he perceived socio-economic background had on student experience:

I have found like the lower middle class, what we'd, well I guess you'd say my white friends have dubbed us commoners, common folk I guess. I find that we interact very well in the classes. Um, I do have some of these types of individuals, both male and female, who I would consider good friends because of this interaction, common folk. However, on the other hand, it's not that I want to disrespect these people, but the upper class, those people who feel the world revolves around money, are controlled by dollars. Those people I notice that they stick their noses up in the air, they have an attitude about being in close quarters with non-white or especially I feel with me being a Native American. Um, so I don't have time for them and I find that a lot in sorority and fraternity type students.

Segregation by Choice. Students also described to me that they at times they felt student groups segregated themselves from each other by choice. One student described this as a common experience in the classroom, even though it was not his personal preference:

I've seen where some Native American students, they choose to be segregated. And the same with Caucasians or other cultural backgrounds. Um then, like I said, I think it all depends on the individual himself or herself. I'm kind of the opposite. You know I love to talk to anybody and everybody.

The group of Native American students I interviewed included a number of non-traditional students. Thus, their perspective as a group regarding the interactions that occur in the classroom setting among traditional and non-traditional students was telling. Interaction between these two groups of students seemed to happen "as necessary", in terms of meeting class requirements. Differences were noted based on maturity and experience; older students were seen as more focused on goals and plans for the future. Younger, traditionally aged students were characterized as being much more susceptible

to peer pressure to go along with their peer group on any number of levels. Some felt a respect and credit given older than traditional students, while others had direct experience that made them feel otherwise. Students discussed the differences in classroom behavior among older undergraduate students. Non-traditional students, at times, felt different in the classroom setting based on their ages. One experienced male described it to me this way:

I get a feeling a lot of times that the younger ones you know will; they will look at you and think you know, you get that little attitude. I don't know how to explain it but it's, it's unsettling sometimes. Because you know I'll look at people around me when I'm trying to express a view, an opinion or something and they're not so openly ready to listen. I think that's just typical at their age though, you have to get a look at their age.

The Sting of Non-Verbal Communication. Some students felt that comfort level among these two student groups in the classroom setting grew over the course of the semester, but others noted negative experiences. One student whose initial reaction was to describe these interactions by strongly stating, “not very good”, clarified that he perceived a real lack of interest on the part of white students regarding making any connections with students of color, “Just the, how they look at each other and that right there says I don't want to talk to you. That's how some of them are; it's just like they don't really care whether they acknowledge that you're there.” Another student described a disconnect between Native American and Caucasian American student groups in the classroom setting regarding the lack of knowledge and understanding of Native American cultures, “I think that you find a lot of ignorance, not so much stupidity, but you know the fact that they don't know a lot. And they go on stereotypes; you find a

lot of that.” He went on to describe a specific situation in one of his classes:

In my methods course for instance, we had packets of educational materials for Social Studies and one was on Custer. And a couple guys grabbed that. I was sitting there and felt the minute they started explaining [their Custer unit], we had a question sheet and one [question] was, “Does this material show a bias of any sort?” No, they said, “No” and I was like, to me it was so straight forward (with feeling), there’s a bias, totally. It’s told from one perspective you know and so of course we were welcomed to interact. So I gave my view and the guy was like, “Well that’s just because there’s no Indians that have anything to say about it.” You know, that shows a real ignorance. There are so many perspectives on the Battle of Little Big Horn from the Native peoples. I was thinking oh my God, this guys gonna teach some kids U. S. History, so you know it’s scary sometimes.

Generally Positive Reactions to Faculty-Student Communications

Most of the Native American students I interviewed had no direct experience or observations of discriminatory treatment between faculty members and students. They shared that they listened to other students’ stories about situations of concern, or addressed hearing general concerns about certain faculty, but not in regard to discriminatory behavior. The way he felt women were at times treated by a professor in one particular classroom setting, was addressed by one male student:

He also seemed to have something, how you would say, a vendetta or something against them. He basically belittled them. Like if they gave an answer, he’d say *nope*, that’s not right, that’s not the correct answer. That’s not what I’m looking for. And then there was, and these women I would say would be the commoners or the women who you know, maybe they had respect for themselves. And they didn’t dress risqué or whatever. And someone [another female student] comes in with a hot little number, you know, her breasts barely covered up by her shirt and her well, I don’t want to say it to be rude, but her ass cheeks hanging out of her short shorts. And you know when they give an answer, he’d say, *yeah* that’s what I’m after. That’s how I felt he was discriminating. A couple of these ladies I felt real sorry for, were pregnant at the time and he tried like to rip ’em up and you know tear ’em apart in class.

Another student described a faculty reaction she had dealt with as a result of one exam that she had struggled with. She felt that a huge assumption had been made about her based on the fact that she was a Native American student:

Well one time um I felt really bad about this test 'cause [my result] was really low. And um they told me well why don't you go to the center where they test you to see if you're mentally, well what do you call it, to see if you have a learning disability. And that really insulted me and they said well you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing. You're not up to um; your work is not doing what you're supposed to be doing in your field. And that really hurt my feelings 'cause *they don't even know me*. They don't know who I am. Yeah, and that really hurt my feelings and I was down for quite a few days. And so I got up again and um I have to motivate myself lots of times. Well, I'll prove to them that I'm not [inferior] and I think a lot of our Native Americans have to do that, they really do. They have to really prove [their abilities]. That's true feelings now.

One other area of concern about faculty-student interactions involved inappropriate student behavior in the classroom setting and whether or not faculty were able to deal with it. One student expressed concern over the impact of students' behaviors in one of her classes and her instructor's apparent inability to respond to it:

In the class that I'm not too fond of, there's just a couple of students in there that are, I know they're young but they act like they're still in high school and it's kind of annoying and you're trying to pay attention to the professor but they're blurting out what the professor should write on the board or saying that the professor is wrong writing something on the board, they blurt it out. I don't know, [the professor] kind of just plays along with it.

One student I spoke with was faced with the challenge of how to deal with inappropriate behavior on the part of a faculty member during an office hour appointment. By far this was the most extreme and serious faculty-student situation described to me:

I had a professor one time, a female; ask me, you know, she basically propositioned me in her office. By telling me that if I made love to her I would get a better grade. And I'm like, no way, I'm married. You're an older woman. I

have respect for you as an elder not, you know she wasn't that old. You know like late 40's now probably. But it's like, um (uncomfortable laugh) yeah so it's like, maybe she often did whatever, fantasized or wanted this you know, wanted that. So I failed her class.

Discrimination Experienced Across Campus Environments

Students shared a variety of student-to-student classroom situations they had experienced, that they felt were predicated on discrimination. One student spoke of an experience he had had regarding a group paper assignment for one of his classes, leading me to lament the missed opportunity for connection and growth among these students:

Um, last year me and one of my friends, he was also Indian. And we had to do study partners in a Soils Class where we had to write a group paper. And um the very first paper didn't have to be all four students [working together], but the T.A. in the lab class told us that all four of you can work together. But the two white students told us, 'well we'll just work by ourselves and you guys can work by yourselves'. And uh, right after that first paper, we received an 'A' and they got like a 'C' or something, so they came around and asked us if we wanted to work with them on the next paper. And we told 'em, 'No, it's alright, it's fine'.

Another discussed, "Not real blatant discrimination, but snide remarks", as being somewhat common in the classroom setting and talked about a specific story regarding a discussion in a Political Science class about affirmative action:

We were talking in a Political Science course once about um; it's a big issue now, um affirmative action. And my viewpoint of course came from being thirty-four years old and having been in the workforce, whereas the majority of my classmates were eighteen and nineteen and hadn't been in the workforce. And um one lady was like um, I know it was a snide remark because I had to ignore it and the instructor got a little bit uncomfortable with it too. But to tell you the truth exactly what she said, I can't remember. But it was an ethnic issue as well. It was like, 'well, *you people*' or something like that '*you people* just take advantage of it' or something like that.

A third student discussed jokes told among students and described one particular conflict he had experienced in the classroom setting:

Um the students were discussing, I guess you could say ethnic jokes, you know. And normally that doesn't bother me because I mean heck every community in the worlds got a joke about the other ethnic backgrounds, you know. And so, as long as it's not directed personally, you know, I could care less you know. And ninety percent of the time I'll join in and throw a couple of 'em you know in the pile. But this little incident here was the guys that were sitting next to me, were more or less kind of seeing if they could aggravate me or not. And I got to the point where I just told them, I said, 'I know what you guys are trying to do and it doesn't bother me none'. I said, 'because they're only jokes' and one gave me a comment about, 'why you', and he didn't say Native American, he used a dirty word, and he said, 'I don't think you guys have a right to be here and to be educated by the U.S. government. And I'm like, whoa, 'where did you come from', you know? What rock did you crawl from under? And uh, so I think, I confronted him in as a controlled and professional way that I could. Like I said I don't try to target and so much try to defend a cultural background because a cultural background can defend itself. That was more on a personal level saying hey, don't classify me just because of the way I look. And you know the guy never did say another racial joke or anything like that.

I asked this student if there was any response from the student to what he had said and he expressed an interesting thought about the way individual students deal with discriminatory instances:

No, not really. I guess that in a way he was kind of more shocked that I even said anything back to him and the way I said it. Because I know, like every individual handles *it* differently. Um some people, I've seen it happen to. They'll respond to something like that by not responding at all and just taking it or I might see them act out in violence or just totally turn it around and make themselves look stupid [by responding in kind]. Like I said I kind of make it I guess a goal, anytime I run into conflict like that, to try to handle the situation, where I'm not demeaning myself and I guess in a way trying to defend my personal standpoint.

Assumptions and generalizations made about Native American students and their access to higher education were also noted by a number of the students I interviewed. Many students assumed that all Native American students were getting a "free ride". I could not help but wonder how other students would react to questions about their financial situations, sometimes posed by absolute strangers:

People always ask me if I'm going to school for free? And it's like [others think] my tribe's paying for it. And I say, 'Well no, I have grants and a couple of loans and whatever else I pay by what I make in the summer'. And they're like, well I thought all Indians were, you know, got to go to school for free.

Around campus, um, the biggest thing I guess people come and ask me about, after they find out that I am an Indian, the biggest thing that they ask is how much money do I get. And that makes me feel like I'm just there for the money, you know like I'm just given money all the time and that makes me feel kind of bad, because I don't get a lot of money and uh I work for everything I have.

Students also discussed with me their opinions regarding generalizations made about Native Americans and Montanans:

Well Native Americans you know, everyone just uh like assumes that they're you know dark skinned, they talk slow you know, with a distinct accent and uh they all you know [have] been raised on a reservation and they all you know they all think the same way. Like all Native Americans are the same. And about Montanans in general, they all think people from Montana are cowboys; people from Montana haven't seen the big city, you know. That they all, I don't know they all talk with a you know a distinct accent as well.

And also to understand that although there's Native American students here, they're also from different tribes and they have different beliefs. And I think the system needs to understand some of those beliefs, so they don't just throw them all into one lump sum and say ok these are all Native Americans, they all think alike, no. 'Cause I would probably think differently [than] a Crow. Although we're all Native Americans and I think this is something that all universities and school systems have to understand. [We have] different cultures, different values and everything, different teachings.

An inexperienced male student spoke with me about a situation he had observed in the Student Union that involved a very inappropriate verbal threat made by a white male student to a group of International Students who were studying together. The student making the remark seemed to take exception to the fact that the students were speaking their native language to each other:

Um I guess I did observe one that I recall now that I've been thinking about it. There was a group of I think they were oh Indonesian or um a cultural

background from that part of the world, you know and they were all in discussion on something in their native language. I'd like to say it was kind of a weird situation 'cause like, there was a black person and a Caucasian person sitting across from them and then there was a big group of Caucasians tied in with that group. Well one of the guys stood up, walked over [to the International Students] and told them to *shut the blank up*. Well [the other group] was sitting with their feet up and had their sodas and what not and I think they were, I heard football a couple of times and then I kind of looked at what these Indonesian students were talking about. I'm pretty sure that's their cultural background. And they all had their books out and stuff like that and I wasn't choosing sides but just being a third party observing it. I was just like well jeez, that was downright rude. You know, I mean these guys might have been in a heavy discussion in their own native language on say I'm not too sure what they were studying, but it might have been Calculus or something and trying to explain it to one another.

A student with much experience on campus spoke to me about times when being at the Student Union made him feel uncomfortable as well. His thoughts regarding his vulnerability, even though he was in the late stages of his undergraduate career were heartfelt and of great concern to me. The way he described his distance from home made me believe that campus, at times, remained a foreign entity for him:

When I'm at the SUB and it's majority Greek, and geek and the snobbish people frequenting Union Market and those kind of places. And that's like at times when there's a number of these like I was saying earlier, the geeks or the white is right type people are banded together you know at the SUB and so forth and they. I don't know there's an air that maybe I shouldn't be there and at that time I feel uncomfortable. It's not every time like few and far between and I think it's when I'm feeling vulnerable and home sick. That's it. I'm only like four hours away from my home; it seems like an eternity.

Greek environments were discussed more specifically with another student, as environments in which he did not feel welcomed. Even though his younger brother was very pleased with his Fraternity experience, this older brother had concerns about it:

Yeah, my younger brother, he's a sophomore here, and last year he joined a Frat. And uh when I go over to visit him I feel real unwelcome in the whole frat environment. I don't know what it is. It seems kind of superficial to me. Well you know they're all friendly you know to your face and all. But then, you know

that they don't really care or they're just keeping appearances up. That they're good guys, but really some of them are jack asses. But that's about the only place that I've ever felt uncomfortable or unwelcome.

Individual and Group Connections Stressed Across Campus

Native American students sometimes felt that other students were comfortable interacting with them in the classroom setting. Others had not really thought about this and were thoughtful about the question, but not sure how to tackle it. Student expressed the importance of trying to connect with others on an individual level, "Basically you've got to get to know *the* person". Other students described the comfort level of others as a bit of a toss up. The expression "fifty-fifty", was used by one student when he described his perception of the comfort levels of others:

Hm, I'd have to say it's kind of; it's almost down the middle. Kind of like fifty-fifty. Um, sometimes I'll attempt to talk to an individual or what not and uh you know, I might get maybe five or six sentences out of them and it's real bleak or uh real short. So I kind of, I might feel a little bit of negativity there. Um, I don't turn that around and throw some negativity at them, I just kind of tell 'em, hey have a nice day or whatever. It's nice talking to ya. And I you know of course I don't bug any individual to death about it. Um, and like I said on the other hand if the person is willing even to just talk about what's going on in class or talk about the weather or just you know a common conversation, um you know, if they answer back, I try to you know encourage a little bit more conversation and get to know the person and that's how I generally take it. And it's kind of down the middle. I ran into, you know fifty percent of the people that I attempt to talk to, either I'm bumping into their comfort zone or they're just that type of person, they'd like to stay within that comfort zone so.

Purposeful Choices Regarding Study Partners! This group of students spoke more about being purposeful about connecting with someone in their classes to support each other academically, than any other group of students I spoke with. These

connections at times turned into important friendships. One student discussed his strategy with me:

Through class and then I've always, I think every one of my classes; I've never had another Indian student in there. So I've always, um, I've found that it's more to my advantage that you have to have a study partner or somebody in each class, so I always made sure that, I always looked for the oldest person in the class, but that hasn't always happened. I have like you know young kids that are really my good friends you know and um it's just through my own incentive to make a friend for that purpose. And a lot of them have turned out to be real lasting relationships, you know. I have one friend that came to Browning this summer just you know for Indian Days and to see me and things like that. She had graduated and she's from, um, where is it, just up on the highline. And I've probably been passed there a million times but would never think to stop or [think] that I'm gonna have a friend from there one day (laughs).

Interactions among Student Organizations Encouraged. Students were at times involved with the Indian Club and AISES, but a number of them encouraged that more be done to encourage students to interact beyond group affiliations:

Hm, I'd try to have, I don't know it would be tough. Programs for I guess interaction. 'Cause you've got to feel bad with uh, like African American students and Asian Americans. Those are the ones I always feel bad for, 'cause they're always really together. I mean I'd like to find out about them.

I could not help but think that a developmental policy here might be important. That involvement in student organizations and clubs can do great things to help students feel ownership of their campus, but then that ownership must be embellished with programming that encourages interaction among groups/clubs. One student's thoughts on this matter included:

I do go to the Indian Club Room. Um, generally just 'cause there's not too many people in there, if any. So it's a pretty quiet area compared to the SUB. The other reason why I do go there is because I'm part of the AISES, American Indians in Science and Engineering Organization and they'll hold meetings there and stuff. From my standpoint it might be different [than] from another Native

American student, but I love to intermingle, so I kind of place myself all over and I don't try to stay stuck in a rut and like totally go to the Indian Club and kind of segregate myself.

Another student shared extended comments with me regarding the purposeful mixing of student groups and clubs. He had taken the initiative to become involved in a club that was at the time made up of primarily Caucasian members. He emphasized to me that he wished clubs would do a better job reaching out to new students and making the point that they would all be welcomed:

Um, I know they, the different clubs and stuff, I know they, they um, you know out on their flyers and stuff they say it's open to the general students and what not, but I think from looking at like say for example the Native American Club, the Indian Club. I think that they, the individual clubs need to put a little bit more effort in stressing and getting the word out that it's just not walk in to your cultural background. That if you want to be involved just for the fact of learning some of the cultural rituals that go on for like example the Indian Club usually does like an annual Pow-Wow. I don't know too many other cultural backgrounds that have a Pow-Wow, you know and I think it would be neat if the students on campus that don't have that cultural back ground, that are interested in learning about that and helping out, would participate and would like to check it out and everything.

But the thing is, I'm just using the Indian Club as an example, the club themselves don't get the word out enough and I guess *invite* other cultural backgrounds in to their association and I think that's kind of wrong. I totally disagree with that. And say to use an opposite example, oh say like the Farm and Ranch club or something. If you walk in there, ninety-nine percent of the students are either from a Caucasian background or there might be one or two minorities in there. And from that standpoint, the reason for that is there's not [as many] Native American or black or what not farmers as there are Caucasians. Especially up in this area. But you know like I said I've attended the meetings and everything like that and they're like cool. It's good to have you and all that stuff. And I talk to some of the other Native American students, they're like oh, well I didn't think we were welcome. Like I said you'll see these signs, everybody's welcome, but I don't think it's stressed enough between the individual clubs and stuff.

Treatment of Children a Concern

As I discussed campus life with students, a number of concerns arose regarding the treatment their children received in on-campus Family Housing environments. One student discussed a frustrating situation she had faced, during which her child had been mistreated by another adult:

Hm hm, oh definitely (very strongly stated). In fact I, being as small and I don't know if the woman didn't realize that I was the Mom coming along or [what]. We had just moved into an apartment and my baby got hurt. He had fallen down and wrecked on his bike and he was over a little ways, screaming his head off. And my T.J. was riding his bike back and forth and the neighbor over here had some little girls, and I could, you know if I had been there right then I would have [told him to stop]. He was pulling two of the little girls you know. And the Mother must have of course got protective thinking, [they would be hurt]. Well I was coming with [my] other guy, holding him. He was hurt [and I] carried him into the house and she must not have realized I was coming [back] and she had my son. I mean and you know, I always tell myself, now if I'm mad at a kid, you don't take it out on the kid. That's wrong, you go to the Mother and tell 'em your kid did this, your kid did that.

Well she had my son and you could see he was shaking in his shoes 'cause she had him and she was pointing him right in his face and she was saying, "You dirty little Indian". I was coming up and I was shocked at her actions. I mean not just the words, but the fact that she was intimidating my son. And I had the other guy and you know as soon as I got close enough, T.J. he was like, "Ma Ma!" And you should have seen her; she turned white as a ghost. She knew she had been caught. She knew she was totally in the wrong, you know and I was like you know, I tried everything. I was like really frustrated with it. I just told her, "I don't want to talk to you right now, I'm going inside." I said, "We're gonna need a mediator because what I seen you just doing to my kid doesn't sit well with me." But yeah, you will find a lot of instances where racial tensions run high over there.

Another student talked about the fact that his children seemed to be blamed for many things that happened in his living environment and that even when he and his wife attempted to deal with other parents in a civil way, the conversation and assumptions made were very one-sided. This particular student shared that he no longer tried to speak

out about problems, because he felt frustration with the lack of adequate resolutions after many attempts:

I feel that my children are sometimes blamed unjustly for incidents or things that happen in the neighborhood, just because they're Indian. Those are some of the things that, you know I'm not trying to cry over spilled milk or anything, but those are just examples. There's a, in certain instances there's a fundamental Christian family that live just a couple of doors down from us and their children can do no wrong. And whenever their children do wrong, you know, we see it openly with our eyes, my wife and I, and then our children will tell us, it's like, ok. But then when we confront what happened in the situation the fundamental parents are like, oh no, no, your sons instigated it. That's what I find a lot socially too on campus, away from the classroom. I find the, I guess it's that it's if you try to stand up for your rights, you're usually shot down. It's a one-sided, kind of like a no win. So I just, anymore, personally I just avert my eyes, avert my attention.

A student described his young son using language he did not approve of as a dad, and their follow-up discussion. The impact of parenting in Family Housing environments was brought to mind as I listened to him describe his exchange with his son, "I heard T. J. one day say something about, 'that white boy', you know. And I'm like honey you're just, you know, how many times have you been called a dirty Indian? You know and you don't like it. It hurts and it's not right. I said, so you think about when you're calling somebody a name because of their skin color."

Transition an Important Topic

Students expressed a number of thoughts regarding their transitions to the university. Most of these related to increased visible support for new students on campus. One student described her ideas with me, stressing the need for help, especially in navigating the campus. Helpful answers where and when students need them most made a lot of sense to me:

Maybe my first year, maybe and I think it has to do with not knowing anybody. Not knowing faculty, not knowing the system. One thing I would like to say is that I think the system needs to really orientate people to all of the available resources they have. 'Cause when I first came here I was just crying on the phone, just completely lost in registration, um standing in line and getting upset 'cause I didn't get any money. Gee I wish they could *direct you, help you, stand on the street and tell you where to go*. It just, it seems like they take [students'] money and forget about 'em. You know, I say ok, I want directions to this class. I was lost too, but I still felt compassion for [other new students].

Community Reactions Vary

Students' reactions to the community varied widely. Students with children were really happy with the schools and hated the thought of leaving the area when their undergraduate experience ended:

Bozeman of any place is so acceptable of everything, it's just, I just really like the community period. I hate to move my family from here. The schools are wonderful, things like that. There are certain instances and I think that's just what you have to expect anywhere. You know I think, I think if anything, there's less here than what you'd find in a bigger city. There isn't much racial tension.

They, at times, told me they really enjoyed the living and the people:

Well, I love Montana people. I always have. They're great people and they're always friendly. So, its a lot friendlier here than Vegas, that's for sure. People look at you (laughs). It's just real friendly. It's a nice town and uh, I was surprised because I thought, I thought this was the big city when I was younger and I still had that idea in my head, 'cause there's a double A [high] school here, so I figured, oh, it's huge. But it's not. But it's friendly and I like that.

Students discussed a number of issues regarding their reactions to the community beyond the campus environment. The downtown area was sometimes described as, "elitist" and something students avoided, preferring to hang out with the "common folks" who shopped at Wal-Mart or K-Mart. One experienced male student talked about how he sometimes felt downtown, "You know, I feel there's a racial tension there like God,

what's this Indian doing here, you know, what's he doing ruining our party. You know raining on our parade or something.”

Some found the town small as compared to their previous experience, noting their boredom regarding social options:

Well, I've been waiting for the snow and uh because I got spoiled the last 4 years, because Vegas you can do anything any time of the day. And I come here and it's so small and there's a quarter of the stuff to do here. So it was uh, it's kind of boring right now, 'cause I've only be out of Vegas for two months now. So it's not quite as exciting as Vegas, which may be good 'cause I'll get more studying done that way (laughs).

Others found the community bigger than what they would prefer, “I really like Belgrade probably because it's just a smaller, it's much smaller and the people there are really friendly. Bozeman is just too big, there's too many people and it's like in a rush. People don't have the time to like stop and smile and say hi.

Inequity in Job Hunting Experienced. One student spoke about the touch situations that her husband experienced while looking for a job, even though he had a variety of experiences prior to coming to the area:

I myself have never had real um big problems, but I know my husband was cheated [out] of a job. And there were issues that I would pretty much say pertain to ethnicity. You know, he's had an honorable discharge from the service; he's worked for the government. You know he's got an extensive background, but for menial jobs, he'd be turned down.

Social Environment Challenges Occur. Students at time experienced less than welcoming treatment in social or community environments. One student discussed typical comments she overheard at a club regarding the group of students she was with.

As other students have also noted, this student felt that her lighter skin made a definite difference in how she was treated at times:

I've had like, when we go out to a club or something, nobody comes out and just says anything, but I'm light skinned. A lot of times I'm not, if I'm not standing with a bunch of Indians. I don't quite like, you know I could pass for somebody else. I remember all of our crew was like having a good old time and I went up to the bar to get drinks and I remember turning around and these people commenting, "That lady's here with all those damn Indians". Things like that, but I think that's just typical anywhere, you know, outside of a reservation or off of a reservation.

An experienced male student told me about treatment he faced when shopping at the mall in the community environment. He chalked this up as a pretty common experience, something he had dealt with throughout his life:

Every once in a while walking in the mall or something, there's always someone following ya. And that's always happened since I was a kid. I was just taught, learned the hard way as a kid, not to put your hands in your pocket and stuff when you're walking in stores. The clerks or someone working in the store [will follow you]. Just the basic stuff that I grew up with. Just people watching over you I guess when you're in stores, like you're gonna steal or something, that's about it. You get used to it. I mean as a kid at first I used to always get in trouble, getting accused of stealing as a kid, but uh when you grew up you just kind of found out what to do and what not to do in stores.

CHAPTER 6

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

In addition to interviewing students one-on-one regarding campus climate and diversity issues, my study also included the examination of the university-level documents related to climate and diversity issues. Document analysis began during the 1997 fall and 1998 spring academic semesters, however it continued over time to include current University planning documents. Through this document analysis I strove to answer my second research question: to describe contemporary University endeavors with regard to climate and diversity, as well as to identify and clarify ideas and approaches that would inform campus decision-makers regarding institutional challenges that emerged throughout the course of my study.

A review of official university-level documents and policies that related to or addressed campus climate and diversity in any way allowed me to gain a more thorough understanding of University goals and objectives. The review of this information, in combination with individual student interviews, gave me greater insight into important connections between the issues that students raised and the endeavors of University personnel in relation to those issues. This review also aided me in identifying the diversity challenges that the University faces as an institution as it moves toward the future.

The collection of key information regarding documents important to my review began with contacting key sources of information. I contacted the Academic Assistant

Deans in each college, as well as key personnel in the Library and General Studies, via e-mail. It was important that I gather information from both the Divisions of Academic and Student Affairs, thus I also contacted the Deans and Directors of each of the Student Affairs areas. Each key resource person was sent a message that explained my study and asked to respond to me about any official document or policy they deemed important to the topics of campus climate and/or diversity.

As responses were received, I developed a master list of documents for review. The list of university-level documents that I examined included: (a) the University Vision and Mission Statements; (b) the University Non-Discrimination Policies; (c) the University Long-Range Plan, revised 1998; (d) the Campus Action Plan To Promote Multicultural Diversity and Increase Participation of American Indians and Ethnic Minorities; (e) the University New Student Services Viewbook and Application; (f) the university Student Academic and Conduct Guidelines and Grievance Procedures booklet; and (g) the University biannual Bulletin/Catalog.

Throughout the collection process of university-level documents, the importance of some historical overview and connection between University documents and to appropriate Montana University System (MUS) documents became apparent. In addition to the documents named above, I also reviewed the following MUS documents: (a) the MUS Mission Statement; (b) The MUS Strategic Plan which included an updated Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives; (c) the MUS Board of Regents Policy and Procedures Manual, section 1902, on Minority Achievement; and (d) MUS Campus Diversity Reports.

State-Level System-Wide Documents: Historical Perspective

In 1987, the Montana State Legislature voted to provide the state Board of Regents (BOR) with administrative supervision of institutions, both two- and four-year, of higher education. In March 1990, the Montana University System Mission Statement included five broadly stated ideas. These included:

1. Coordination for the maintenance of diversity and access.
2. Assurance of quality.
3. Accountability to the public.
4. Seek adequate and stable funding.
5. Enhancement of economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Montana.

More recently, the BOR has developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan that communicates the Montana University System (MUS) Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives (Montana Board of Regents, 2001). The current mission states, “The Mission of the Montana University System is to serve students through the delivery of high quality, accessible postsecondary educational opportunities, while actively participating in the preservation and advancement of Montana’s economy and society.” The MUS Vision states:

We will prepare students for success by creating an environment of ideas and excellence that nurtures intellectual, social, economic, and cultural development. We will hold academic quality to be the prime attribute of our institution, allocating human, physical, and financial resources appropriate to our educational mission. We will encourage scientific development and technology transfer, interactive information systems, economic development and lifelong learning. We will protect academic freedom, practice collegiality, encourage diversity, foster economic prosperity, and be accountable, responsive, and accessible to the people of Montana.

Five specific goals were developed and objectives related to each goal were also delineated. The five goals included:

- A. To provide a stimulating, responsive, and effective environment for student learning, student living, and academic achievement.
- B. To make a high quality, affordable higher education experience available to all qualified citizens who wish to further their education and training.
- C. To deliver higher education services in a manner that is efficient, coordinated, and highly accessible.
- D. To be responsive to market, employment, and economic development needs of the State and the nation.
- E. To improve the support for and understanding of the Montana University System as a leading contributor to the State's economic success and social and political well-being.

In September 1990, the BOR issued Policy 1902 on Minority Achievement to institutional personnel involved in the Montana University System. The policy noted, "...the desirability for campus environments to promote multicultural diversity and for the participation and achievement of American Indian and other minority students to be, at a minimum, equal to their representation in the state's population" (Montana Board of Regents, 1990). The policy outlined three specific goals and ten guidelines and the BOR charged personnel at each system institution to develop an action plan to achieve the stated goals. The goals, as stated in the Policy and Procedures Manual, included:

- 1. To enroll and graduate American Indians and other minorities in proportion to their representation in the state's population.
- 2. To increase the employment of American Indians and other underrepresented minorities in administrative, faculty and staff positions.
- 3. To enhance the overall curriculum by infusion of content which enhances multicultural awareness and understanding.

The ten guidelines I mentioned above communicated more specific details in regard to the development of an inclusive campus climate for diversity and included:

1. State priorities publicly.
2. Commit discretionary dollars.
3. Employ American Indian and other minority leaders.
4. Collect relevant data.
5. Meet student needs systematically.
6. Emphasize quality.
7. Collaborate with public schools, private and parochial colleges, community businesses, tribal agencies, tribal colleges and other agencies.
8. Provide a supportive learning environment.
9. Support the development of culturally sensitive and multicultural faculty.
10. Develop and maintain a comfortable social environment on campus and in the greater community.

The University's Response

In response to the charge by the Board of Regents to develop an action plan to meet the system-wide goals for multicultural diversity, Montana State University – Bozeman (MSU-Bozeman) formed the Diversity Task Force. The Task Force was a subgroup of the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, and, during 1990 – 1991, the group developed the MSU-Bozeman Campus Action Plan (Montana State University-Bozeman, March 1997). The Plan identified six main goals; specific objectives related to each goal to be met were also developed:

1. Articulate the institution's continuing commitment to cultural diversity and pluralism through public addresses, presentations, publications and news releases and ensure the University community is committed to eliminating discrimination and to establishing a learning and working environment that promotes individual achievement while it fosters tolerance.
2. Continue and strengthen programs and services which enhance minority participation in the University and institutionalize effective programs.
3. Involve all faculty and staff in multicultural/diversity training.

4. Meet student needs for multicultural understanding.
5. Achieve parity in enrollment by increasing enrollment to approximately 500 American Indian students by 2002 and increasing the enrollment of other ethnic minority students; increase American Indian and other ethnic minority faculty and staff by intensifying recruitment and hiring efforts, and continue and expand pipeline-related activities.
6. Achieve parity in graduation rates between other ethnic minority, Native American, and majority students.

In 1997, the Task Force wrote a Mid-Decade Report (Montana State University-Bozeman, March 1997) to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) and the Montana Board of Regents (BOR). A follow-up review of progress was later published in the Montana University System Campus Diversity Reports in July 2003. The purpose of the study was, "...to assess how well the campuses of the Montana University System are responding to the Regents' mandate on minority and American Indian education as embodied in Policy 1902" (Montana Board of Regents, 2003).

As a whole, the state university system was falling short of the target for increasing numbers of minority students enrolled at each campus to their proportion within the statewide population. Across all campuses, the population of Native American students had increased from 3% in 1992 to 3.6% in 2002. Only two categories of students were noted in the state report; the first category was American Indian students, and the second was the catch-all category of "other," which included African American, Asian American and Hispanic American students. An increase in the category of "other" was noted, from 1.8% of statewide students in 1992 to 2.9% in 2002.

Efforts on campus have, to date, resulted in no substantial increases and, in at least one very important case, a decrease in enrollment of minority undergraduates (see Table 2). The goal to reach state census proportions in terms of enrollment targets seems

Table 2. Comparison of MSU-Bozeman Undergraduate to State Populations

	Undergraduate Population Numbers		Percent of Population		
	MSU Fall 1996	MSU Fall 2003	MSU Fall 1996	MSU Fall 2003	Montana 2002 (est.)
Asian	93	110	1.0	1.1	0.6
Black	33	44	0.3	0.4	0.4
Hispanic	118	131	1.2	1.3	1.6
Native American	240	197	2.5	2.0	5.8
White	9,297	9,553	94.9	95.2	91.7
Total	9,781	10,035			

very challenging especially during what is currently a tough economic time. It was interesting to me that gender was not considered in either the Mid-Decade Report by the University in March of 1997 or in the MUS Campus Diversity Reports of July 2003.

A total of four training sessions on diversity for students was reported—one served an *estimated* 100-200 graduate students, while the other three served approximately 97 undergraduate students. The result is that 1% of all undergraduates had been involved in a cultural sensitivity or diversity training experience from July 2002 through July 2003. This result seems to indicate a great need for increased efforts in this area or points to issues in data collection and accurate reporting. One positive indicator about the training data was tied to duration of training; sessions that students were involved in were at a minimum 1 1/2 hours in length and at a maximum a day-long event. This is quite different than the training efforts noted on behalf of faculty and staff. These sessions averaged approximately 45 minutes in length. A session on Diversity Training

and Team Building for Athletics was the only session of length. It was facilitated by an NCAA trainer and was a two-day long effort that served approximately 60 attendees.

University faculty are involved in numerous efforts tied to diversity-related course offerings for students; Native American Studies, Art, English, Education, History, and Sociology courses enrolled approximately 1400 or approximately 12% of all students during the 2003 academic year. A wide variety of collaborative programs between and among tribal colleges and the University are also under way. The University reported grants and subcontracts awarded to tribal colleges totaling approximately \$350,000.

Additional University-Level Documents

University Vision and Mission Statements

The University has recently worked to develop updated statements of meaning to describe the roles and functions it deems most important to ongoing organizational growth and development (Montana State University-Bozeman, April 2002). Both statements touch on the meaning that environment and diversity play in the life of the institution. The Vision Statement is, “Montana State University will be the university of choice for those seeking a student-centered learning environment distinguished by innovation and discovery in a Rocky Mountain setting.” The Mission Statement reads:

- To provide a challenging and richly diverse learning environment in which the entire university community is fully engaged in supporting student success.
- To provide an environment that promotes the exploration, discovery, and dissemination of new knowledge.
- To provide a collegial environment for faculty and students in which discovery and learning are closely integrated and highly valued.

- To serve the people and communities of Montana by sharing our expertise and collaborating with others to improve the lives and prosperity of Montanans (MSU-Bozeman, 2002).

The University Nondiscrimination Policies

Five key policies are outlined with the purpose of ensuring equity in treatment for all campus constituents (Montana State University-Bozeman, 2000). These policies include:

- A) Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action
- B) Sexual Harassment and Sexual Intimidation
- C) Sexually-Explicit Materials in the Workplace
- D) Consensual Relationships
- E) Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities

Long-Range Planning at the University

The Long-Range Plan (Montana State University-Bozeman, 1998) was first developed by the Long-Range Planning Committee in 1991, later approved and expanded in 1992. It outlined three program goals that focused on teaching, research and creative activities, and outreach; all three are defined as the three main functions of the University. The Plan also outlined six process goals. The third process goal spoke directly to the importance of multicultural endeavors and diversity across campus, “Provide for a more multicultural and diverse faculty, staff, and student body.” Specific connections to the Campus Action Plan by the Minority Task Force were also made as a result of the planning details for this broad goal statement:

MSU is committed to creating an educational environment where individuals of every race, religion, and cultural background can be productive. The University also seeks to provide a productive learning and working environment to all individuals regardless of national origin, sex, age, or disability. The University’s

commitment to pluralism requires that efforts be made to hire faculty and staff and to recruit students to reflect the diversity of the state's population. Diversity adds a cultural and social dimension to the quality of the educational experience.

The narrative regarding the plan for attainment of this goal, went on to outline seven strategies that addressed hiring policies and procedures encouraging the recruitment of minorities and women at all levels of the University, increased awarding of diversity-based scholarships, the integration of multicultural perspectives across the curriculum, and an emphasis on increasing services for non-traditional and physically challenged students.

More recently, the University planning process has incorporated Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as benchmarks of success. This process was initiated in February 2001. The University Planning, Budget and Analysis Committee (UPBAC) has also written a Five Year Vision Document (Montana State University-Bozeman, 2004). It describes six key areas of concern for the University, the first of which refers to the student body. One of the key ideas for development is to increase the diverse populations among the student body. A specific example noted, is that the Native American student population, will increase from a total of 223 students to 335 over the five-year period. An increase in the number of international students, from 300 to 500, is also planned.

Strategic Concepts and Priorities have also been outlined and adopted by the UPBAC (Montana State University-Bozeman, 2003). The top three priorities going into the 2004-2005 academic year are recruitment, retention, and quality enhancements. Recruitment includes, "increasing access to university programs both on campus and throughout the state." The University has also adopted Core Values to assist in planning,

budget, and analysis decision-making. One of these core values is, “Building a community that embraces diversity and promotes global understanding” (Montana State University-Bozeman, 2002).

Student Academic and Conduct Guidelines and Grievance Procedures

This procedural booklet (Montana State University-Bozeman, 1997) was a sixteen-page guide for University constituents that outlined academic responsibilities of faculty and students, as well as policies regarding academic misconduct and student academic grievance procedures. A number of topics had ties to my study, especially as related to the overall campus climate.

Instructor Responsibilities. Instructors are encouraged to establish classroom behavior regulations and to communicate them clearly to students. It is also suggested that strong statements about civility in the classroom environment be included in course syllabi and be discussed with students at the beginning of every course each semester. A number of uncomfortable types of situations faced by the students I interviewed might be avoided if this detail was covered clearly and consequences noted for behavior deemed inappropriate. The writing of a more comprehensive guide of educational suggestions for faculty, to go along with this document, is also encouraged.

Instruction Responsibilities. A very common complaint of students, as they discussed one-on-one appointments with faculty and advisors, was the lack of appearance or the tardiness of faculty or advisors for a scheduled meeting. Another concern and source of frustration for students was that some faculty members were not in their offices

during posted office hours. This booklet stated that instructors are responsible for being available for appointments at designated times and that regular office hours are to be held. Some friendly attention to these details on departmental levels, where necessary, is well advised.

Student Responsibilities. The Student Responsibilities section of the guide notes that students are responsible for seeking out assistance when necessary from a variety of resources, including primarily, their instructors. The guide however, does not state a student's recourse when help is sought without success, especially from an instructor. Is this expectation of instructors to be the primary source of academic assistance realistic? Likewise, is it fair to the students to lead them to believe that this will be their best primary source of assistance?

Student Conduct Code. Conduct expectations for students are outlined clearly. I found myself thinking, throughout my reading of this document, that the real challenge for the institution is to make as many students aware of these expectations as possible. Some of the treatment students experienced at the hands of other students could be addressed if students were knowledgeable about procedures and comfortable with this resource. A variety of instances that students discussed with me could have been addressed through grievances, especially according to the Harassment and Disruptive Conduct section details.

University Viewbook and Application

These documents are published and distributed by New Student Services (Montana State University-Bozeman, August 1998). The Viewbook provides a picturesque overview of the University and outlines important information for students considering enrolling. Readers are provided with descriptions of academic majors and programs, services offered for students, residence life information, the local community, financial aid and application materials, and directions. A handy process and procedure checklist is also provided to guide a student through the admission and enrollment processes. Applications for admission and for scholarships are included as well. The Nondiscrimination/Affirmative Action Policy is also noted in this publication. One thought that occurred to me as I studied the Viewbook was that I would be inclined to keep it in my collection, since it would probably be one of the first things I received about the University. If I were coming to campus for a visit or exploring from home, I would be looking for the inclusion of locations, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and websites for each of the offices and services listed.

As I reviewed these campus climate and diversity-related documents, one main thought to which I kept returning was that University personnel must prioritize and move forward with initiatives that are deemed most critical for the future success of the institution. It seems apparent that increases in representation across all student groups is possible; however, resources might be best targeted at increasing the students of color from the largest state-represented groups first, that is, from Native American and Hispanic groups. The ability of the institution to serve the needs of students as they

enroll is critical, and thus resources must be allocated accordingly. Many efforts have been made to plan for diversity and increases in student numbers. Somehow, these results have not yet been attained. Working hard to identify programs that are already producing worthwhile results and implementing a small number of new efforts, all that are well funded, may serve the University and its students very well.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of my study was to explore and describe the experiences and perceptions of students at Montana State University-Bozeman (MSU-Bozeman) in order to assess the campus climate with specific regard to diversity issues. In addition to completing individual interviews with students, I also examined contemporary university-level documents related to diversity issues in order to describe University endeavors as well as to identify and clarify ideas and approaches that would further inform campus decision-makers regarding institutional challenges that emerged throughout the course of the study. Individual interviews were conducted during the fall 1997 and spring 1998 academic semesters. Document analysis began during this same timeframe and continued throughout the completion of my study.

I strove to investigate four questions throughout the course of the study: (1) What experiences and/or perceptions do undergraduate students at MSU-Bozeman have about campus climate with specific regard to diversity issues? (2) How do undergraduate students' experiences of the campus climate for diversity differ by race/ethnicity, gender or experience level? (3) How are undergraduate students' experiences of the campus climate for diversity similar? (4) What do existing university-level documents communicate regarding campus climate for diversity issues faced by MSU-Bozeman constituents?

MSU-Bozeman faces a particular diversity challenge in that, to achieve a truly pluralistic campus community, it must go beyond the stated University recruitment and retention goals of minority groups at existing statewide levels or percentages. While increasing the numbers of minority students on campus might be an expected first step toward diversity, it is just the beginning. As a campus strives to achieve a reasonable number of enrolled students of color, it must also pay close attention to the needs of the students as they arrive on campus, providing adequate support that should ultimately ensure their comfort and engagement in the entire learning process.

This chapter is organized into three main sections. The first includes a brief overview of findings for each of the student groups involved in my study. I then discuss the implications for practice tied to general campus climate that emerged through the writing of Chapter 4: Common Ground: Campus Climate Experiences and Opinions Shared by Students. These implications stem from the shared experiences across all groups of students interviewed and, thus, would improve not only the general campus climate for the entire student body, but at the same time also improve the campus climate for diversity. In the third section of the chapter, I outline specific recommendations for improving the campus climate for diversity. These recommendations are based on the experiences of each of the groups of students I interviewed, the document analysis I completed, and the review of the literature regarding the study of campus climate. The reporting of group results in no way assumes that each student I interviewed as part of any particular student group is any less than a unique individual.

Overview of Findings for Each Student Group

African American Students

As a result of my discussion with African American students, the following three implications are key: structural diversity is most important to student experience; making plans for social and academic support prior to students' arrival on-campus is a must; and perception of fair treatment on the part of students is critical to their experience.

Students reported feeling alienated when they first arrived on campus. Research has shown that for African American students at predominantly white institutions, connections to family and support systems are critical (Hurtado et al., 1999). For many of the students who arrive at this institution, staying closely connected to family will be a challenge, as many are out-of-state students. With this in mind, connections with faculty and staff are very important especially prior to the achievement of an appropriate standard of structural diversity on campus. These connections should be purposeful and planned in advance. These students can make important connections and feel engaged on campus as a result. Black students also shared a lack of connection with each other due to their small numbers on campus and not always fitting in with the rest of the group. Some university-driven opportunity for connection and engagement is very important for these students. Perhaps the Diversity Awareness Office could play a purposeful role? Again, pairs of students leading to small groups for service projects come to mind as a purposeful activity.

On-campus suite living might provide a good first option for these students, assuming some of the earlier described connections can be made for students. This living

option will accomplish a number of things. It will provide comfort in regard to the smaller number of difference friendly students who could be sharing the suite, but still provide avenues of engagement for the student to develop genuine relationships. This should also remove some of the “fishbowl” experiences that seemed so prevalent among the students’ experiences. This would provide a level of privacy, but keep the connection to campus intact, which is also critically important. These connections along with some of the other academic support strategies mentioned under General Campus Climate implications could make a wonderful difference for African American students.

Safety is a special topic in regard to this group of students. University personnel should err on the side of caution in regard to safety, especially when off-campus travel is involved. Student organization rules and regulations must include strict regulations that students travel together, or take appropriate steps to ensure that students of color are not traveling alone in rural Montana.

In addition to the above, a couple of other important notes regarding students’ experiences come to mind. Dating is a serious topic on campus and will probably continue to be. Continuing education of the majority population will be very important to increasing understanding across these two groups. Community awareness is another key issue; campus administrators need to make special efforts in helping the community know about our diverse student populations. Purposeful targets for diversity awareness training based on my interviews include military and Greek Life organizations.

Asian American Students

Students communicated some policy-tied issues regarding their out-of-state student status. Their main message was that university-wide policies were generalized across all student groups and that as students of color, many of them were living out-of-state. They emphasized that one size does not fit all. One example given was that the travel policy and procedures for end-of-semester travel might be viable for in-state students, but not for those having to travel home by plane from an unusually busy local airport.

Most of the Asian American students I interviewed emphasized career-related issues as important to them and their experience. They, at times, dealt with assumptions made about their academic skills and motivations. Family background stresses were communicated, both good and bad. Some students shared having learned lessons of discrimination that they then worked hard to overcome. Others spoke of first languages spoken at home and the quality of their cultural traditions.

The offensive language they heard spoken around campus bothered these students more than anything else tied to our topic of discussion. Some of the female students spoke about their experience of being “gawked” at. They also had some negative reactions to Greek Life experiences. Students discussed transition issues; the main message was that academically talented students needed help too! In addition, they communicated a concern about helping international students connect – thoughts of some type of buddy system come to mind. Students also perceived issues regarding the experience of students whose sexual orientation differed, from what might be perceived

as the norm, across campus. They hoped for some ongoing understanding regarding these issues, and also encouraged pulling faculty and staff into these efforts. An organization to celebrate difference was one idea they communicated.

Caucasian American Students

These students had limited experiences with diversity and after coming to campus limited connections with students of color. From their perspective, this lack of contact was due mostly to lack of opportunity. The impact of a rural upbringing was discussed as it related to the lack of diversity in their lives. Some described being challenged regarding their comfort-level interacting with diverse people, highlighting a need for programmatic efforts, both formal and informal. One exception to this rule was students who had the opportunity of growing up close to a reservation.

Students had the tendency to take an international focus when talking about diversity. They did not automatically think of U.S. minority groups when asked about diversity and, at times, needed to be prompted to do so. They also commented about the derogatory comments they heard around campus. It seems that lack of civility is a topic of concern for a variety of students. Students generally had positive reactions to their academic and campus life experiences.

Hispanic American Students

This group of students had a general awareness and concern about the discrimination they perceived against others on campus. They were aware of their small group size and, at times, were made to feel marginalized. These students also made the

point of taking ownership for their individual attitudes; they understood the need to think positively and to keep an open mind.

They spoke strongly about the value of diversity in connection to the quality of their educational experiences. Student Organizations were from their perspective important, but balance regarding the importance of interactions among groups of students was also noted. They addressed the importance of individual interactions and also encouraged Family and Graduate Housing programs to foster and improve relationships among diverse students and staff.

A number of gender issues emerged, at least one tied to the military; and military organizations were a source of less than stellar treatment for both men and women of color. One Student Life environment that was cause for concern, based on the lack of comfort of students, was the Student Union Building. Again, issues of transition to the university and issues for out-of-state students were deemed important.

Native American Students

Native American students addressed concerns regarding transition issues; one specific idea was to provide visible help for students trying to navigate campus on their first few days of each semester. This group was comprised of more nontraditional students, with broad-based life experience, than any other group in my study. In addition to issues surrounding race and ethnicity, the nontraditional members of this sub-population also had to contend with the negative attitudes of traditionally aged students toward them.

Native traditions were emphasized and, at times, English was a second language. This group of students, more than any other, addressed issues of learning; both learning styles and learning strategies were important. They were more purposeful about connecting with other students for mutual academic support – study partners were one very good idea shared. They were more focused and had different academic support needs. At times they felt isolation in the classroom setting and negative nonverbal communication was a concern they shared. An unfair focus in the classroom and broad-based assumptions about their financial aid were both typical concerns. Many majority students assumed all Native American students had tuition and fees covered by other sources.

This group embraced the need for diversity on campus and also encouraged individual and group interactions across all student groups – they saw the need for student groups, both formal and informal, to invite each other to participate collaboratively. They also encouraged participation in student organizations that were not race-based. They did not however support Greek Life organizations. Several community-based challenges were noted. Job search inequities and concern about the treatment of their children in their on-campus living environment were expressed.

General Campus Climate: Implications for Practice

During the completion of this study, two important ideas related to the Psychological Diversity context of campus climate emerged. These included students' perceptions of the institutional view of diversity, as well as their perceptions of academic

advising on campus. These two items play important roles in students' experiences. It is critical to remember that students' perceptions are their reality.

Behavioral Diversity context issues are those relating to actual interactions that play themselves out on campus, whether in formal classroom settings or in informal gatherings of students. It is key to remember that both formal and informal interactions on campus can be tied positively to student learning.

Teaching and Learning Connections for Students

As students shared their classroom experiences with me, it became apparent that a lack of academic engagement was an issue on campus. Large lecture halls left little to be desired, and left many students feeling bored. There seemed to be a perception of a lack of interest in the academic experience of first-year students that was paired with a lack of engagement in the classroom. However, students addressed creativity in teaching whenever they experienced it. A strong recommendation is thus to offer interested faculty the opportunity to teach first-year students, stressing the implementation of collaborative teaching and learning strategies. Incentives could certainly be offered; however, if smaller numbers of students were enrolled in these core courses, faculty might be more than happy to volunteer. A call for proposals or a targeted attempt to identify departmental faculty who would have a genuine interest might be two processes to consider.

These efforts could also include extended office hours or a small group conference time as an alternative, regular review sessions built into the course calendar, and the offering of mentor groups for classes, especially large lectures. A mentor group

is a small study group that meets on a weekly basis, typically for about one hour per week (Blinn, 2003). What makes it different than a typical study group is that a student who has previously had the class with successful results works with the group throughout the semester. The student mentor is trained to facilitate the group discussion utilizing a questioning learning strategy. Each student comes to the weekly meeting with five questions he or she wants to explore; the effort demands active participation of all students involved. This type of effort would build much needed academic support, as voiced by students, into their weekly routines. Another academic support effort that could be utilized is the formation of study partners at the beginning of any class. Either of these practices could be built into current practices very easily and with limited expense.

A third academic support alternative through which students might become more academically connected could be small research project collaborations for interested first-year students. Opportunities to work with either faculty or staff across campus could be offered. Research topic ideas could be “gathered” and approved over the course of the academic year for discussion during the following summer’s Orientation Program. Students who choose to participate could be matched with their research mentors prior to their arrivals on campus. They could be offered one-credit hour for this special learning collaboration which, in many cases, would become a very special bridge experience. A fourth academic support option, but one that would certainly be more costly, would be the ongoing development of official living/learning communities on campus. Finally, consideration of a mentor program for first-year students, utilizing volunteer faculty and

staff from across campus, and including as many new students as possible might be considered. Strong consideration of involving recently retired faculty and staff in this type of endeavor is also encouraged.

Technology and Information Sharing in the Lives of Students

Higher educators should make no assumptions regarding the comfort level of students in using technology. Based on feedback from students, there is a need to be concerned about first generation students, in particular, who lack basic skills. If technology is to be used in the classroom, it should come with patient training and ongoing support. Another regular concern voiced by students was what they perceived as a lack of consistent information sharing. It is also recommended that some vehicle for important information sharing, especially information regarding connections to be made on campus early during students' undergraduate careers, be implemented. Consistency in information sharing across colleges and departments is critical to students' understanding of and ongoing learning about their environment.

Faculty Development Series on Teaching, Learning, and Advising

Student feedback on teaching and their experiences in the classroom were sketchy at best. The greatest concerns were voiced about classes taken during the first year on campus. A number of efforts could be implemented on behalf of faculty, especially those new to the teaching field. A series on teaching and learning offered throughout the academic year might be considered. Important topics might include: teaching large

enrollment classes using interactive strategies; purposeful group formation; or encouraging collaboration beyond the classroom.

Peer teaching reviews of faculty from across colleges or departments might be considered, as this interaction would also spur important cross-fertilization of ideas. Based on students' poor collective response to advising experiences it would make good sense to move forward with a coordinated plan for improving advising. University personnel might consider the recommendations that were made regarding advising by the PQO Task Force on Advising in March of 1998. Seriously tying teaching and advising to promotion and tenure documents and decisions, as noted in current university planning documents, is also encouraged.

Campus Climate for Diversity: Implications for Practice

What can personnel at MSU-Bozeman and other higher education institutions that enroll predominantly white students, do to move toward more pluralistic campus communities? This was the question primarily on my mind throughout the course of this study.

Structural Diversity: The Challenge

Increasing the numbers of diverse students on campus is obviously the biggest enrollment challenge faced by the institution. A number of efforts are already underway to accomplish this goal, however, it is clear that the goals set forth in the Campus Action Plan for the years 1992-2002 have not been met. While the University has already made special efforts in the recruitment of Native American students, it is obvious that

additional work remains to be done. The Higher Education community is facing tough economic times; choices regarding any expenditures beyond the minimum are difficult to make and many staffs have been doing more with less for quite some time. The value of a diverse student population must be a true concern of the University as, without appropriate representation, the quality of the educational experience of all students is at risk. With very limited diverse populations on campus, the rest of the student body is also lagging behind students on other campuses who are gaining skills and knowledge tied to other ways of knowing.

Primary efforts should continue to focus on increasing access for undergraduate Native American students. Hispanic American students are the next largest minority population in the state, and thus they may prove to be the next group with whom to make enrollment gains. Hispanic American/Latino students are also the largest growing segment of the population in the United States. It is critical that institutions stay at parity with this trend. The University has already surpassed state population percentages in the recruitment of Asian American students however the state population is so low, that there seems no reason to not continue to recruit heavily from this field of students.

Hiring additional admission counselors and continuing to develop strong partnerships with the Tribal Colleges and other two-year colleges in the area would seem to make sense, although, as I write this, I also understand the financial issues at hand. In addition to a focus on increasing the enrollment of students of color, the institution must also develop specific plans for attracting and retaining diverse faculty and staff.

Psychological Climate for Diversity

Any student's perception becomes her or his reality. This is the basis for the importance of attention to the psychological context of this issue. Students' understandings of their experiences and perceptions are critically important to the development of a positive climate for diversity (Hurtado et al., 1999). When an institution faces a lack of structural diversity, it is especially important that students, faculty and staff of color feel a belonging and acceptance on their campus.

Behavioral Diversity Details

As campus constituents continue to work hard to increase the numbers of diverse students on campus, we must think outside the box about how to ensure that all students are gaining experience with diversity. Collaborating with Tribal Colleges and other two-year schools; targeting similar courses and partnering across campuses for a semester or developing a new course in tandem; pairing students via the internet and e-mail; all of these ideas have real possibilities.

Ongoing Review of Policies and Procedures. The ongoing review of all campus-wide policies and procedures with special attention to how institutional practices effect all students, but especially how they impact students of color, is critical to ongoing improvements to daily functioning on behalf of minority students. One important example to be studied is financial aid process and procedure details, in order to ensure that everything that can be done for students of color is being done. For example, aid packages with loans are much less effective at bringing low-income students to campus

and the provision of practical support with complicated application processes might also be in order (Hurtado et al., 1999).

Purposeful Student Connections. Students of color who come to predominantly white institutions often face overwhelming alienation, especially at the beginning of their undergraduate careers – a high-risk time for any new students. The more purposeful connections that can be planned for students of color in advance of their arrival on campus, the better off everyone will be. It is recommended that the University pair students who want to get to know someone from a different background with each other in purposeful ways. Why not pair students year-by-year, for example, a first-year student with another first-year student, to promote and help foster ongoing friendships over time? Ask students on applications for Residence Life if they are interested in living with a diverse roommate or participating in the Diversity Awareness Office. Students, who choose to participate in this opportunity, could also be invited to join a combined group of all students paired this way for initial welcome activities on campus, as well as ongoing activities throughout the year.

Student Diversity Awareness Series. The following is a listing of general diversity-related topics that I developed throughout the course of analyzing students' responses to my interview questions. These general topics will satisfy needs of the student group as a whole, allowing all who choose to be involved:

General Diversity Awareness Topics:

1. Stereotypes – The Effect of Mass Media
2. Confronting Racist Behavior
3. I Am Me – Individual versus Group Identity

4. Beyond Skin Deep
5. Say What?! Dealing with Disturbing Language
6. Body Language: Exploring Nonverbal Communication
7. Civility On Campus: Play Nice
8. \$\$\$ The Great Divider \$\$\$
9. That's Not Funny: Jokes that Aren't
10. Please Don't Be Intimidated by Me/Us – A Collaborative Student Panel
11. Affirmative Action 101
12. Small Town – Big City: Sharing Our Stories of Geographic Diversity
13. Your Rights as a Bobcat: Nondiscrimination Policies and Procedures

Faculty Diversity Awareness Training. The following are diversity-tied

development ideas for faculty and staff training sessions:

1. The Effect of Small Numbers of Diverse Students on Campus – Implications for Teaching and Learning
2. Classroom Civility – Laying the Ground Rules during Class #1
3. Dealing with Inappropriate Behavior in the Classroom
4. Group Formation Strategies
5. Dealing Appropriately with Gender in the Classroom
6. Nondiscrimination Policies and Procedures
7. Academic Grievance Policies and Procedures
8. Avoiding the Group Mentality When Dealing with Diverse Students
9. Helping Students Ask for Help

Conclusion

As you have seen through reading the stories of the students I interviewed, they all have important thoughts and ideas to share. So many of the implications noted in this chapter come as a result of the shared experiences of students. Many students communicated a willingness to get to know each other; the challenge for university personnel is to make this an easy choice for students to make. The lessons I have learned through the completion of this study, in particular through the one-on-one interviews with students, will always remain with me.

The educational value of diversity is a significant key to keep in mind. As Gurin et al. (2002) noted, diversity is related to a variety of important learning outcomes and these details must not be overlooked. Students who experience diversity gain in areas of active thinking, engagement, and academic skill development. They also develop greater participation and leadership skills based on their experiences on diverse campuses. Diversity improves the quality of education and serves the needs of all students.

Administrators at predominantly white institutions do not have an easy job to do, if they are committed to the educational benefits of diversity. Those who take on the challenge and work hard to make as many positive changes as possible to their campus climates will be serving their students well. The ability to communicate genuine concern regarding the value of diversity to all constituents; students, faculty, staff and community, will result in positive impacts for their institutions. Two critical points must be addressed as students of color are accepted and enroll at predominantly white institutions. The first is that institutions' leaders must accept the responsibility to do everything they possibly can to ensure *all* students a positive educational experience, paying particular attention to the experiences of students of color on their campuses. This is especially the case prior to the development of appropriate structural diversity on any campus. The second is the importance of an ongoing fostering of institutional commitments to the educational value of diversity. Campus leaders, who develop consensus and support across their institutions for an emphasis of inclusion, will reap great rewards in having prepared students well for their diverse futures.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC TABLE

Table 3. Demographic Information for Students Interviewed

		African American (n=8)	Asian American (n=12)	Caucasian American (n=24)	Hispanic American (n=12)	Native American (n=12)
Citizenship	Born in U.S.	7	8	24	9	12
	Naturalized	1	4		2	
	Immigrant				1	
Gender	Female	2	6	12	6	6
	Male	6	6	12	6	6
Experience	First year	5	6	12	6	6
	Mult. years	3	6	12	6	6
Hometown	Rural/town	1	5	10	1	10
	Small city	1	4	13	4	2
	Large city	6	3	1	7	
Residence	Res. Hall	6	9	18	8	5
	Fam. Housing		1	1	2	4
	Off campus	3	3	10	5	5
	Frat./Soror.			2		1
Job	On campus	1	4	5	2	3
	Off campus	1	2	10	6	6
	No job	6	7	10	4	6
Academic Unit	Agriculture			1	1	1
	Arts & Arch.	1	1	4	2	
	Business	2	4	4	1	1
	Ed. & Hum. D.	2	1	4	1	4
	Engineering		4	4	1	2
	Gen. Studies	2	1	1	1	1
	Letters & Sci.	1	1	6	5	2
	Nursing					1

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX B

Individual Interview Guide**Purpose of the Interview:**

To collect data regarding the experiences and perceptions of undergraduate students at MSU-Bozeman regarding the current campus climate and campus climate with specific regard to diversity issues.

Preliminaries

Introduction: Interviewer introduces self and provides background and ground rules for the student being interviewed as follows:

This project is all about investigating what students think about the campus climate at MSU-Bozeman. I'm particularly interested in exploring what your experiences and perceptions are in relation to a variety of diversity issues. What I would like is for you to take this opportunity to share your thoughts and opinions freely. What I am going to do is spend the next hour asking questions designed to get a full picture of your thoughts and feelings. The only ground rules to remember are that there are no right or wrong answers to any of my questions--only your honest opinions. Everything you say is, of course, confidential and the results of this interview will be reported anonymously. Please regard the micro-cassette recorder as an extension of my memory. The tape(s) will help me to represent your thoughts accurately in my research report. Is it all right with you that I record our interview? If at any time you would like me to stop the recorder, please just let me know.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Process

The following interview process will be utilized for each of the interview/discussion questions.

- The interviewer will ask a question.
- The student being interviewed will be given as much time as necessary to completely answer each question.
- The interviewer will utilize probing questions to fully explore the student's answer when necessary.
- Throughout the course of the interview, the interviewer will summarize what she has heard to insure that her understanding of the answer is accurate.

Interview/Discussion Questions

Introductory/Background questions:

Before coming to MSU, what kinds of experiences did you have interacting with people who were of different racial/ethnic backgrounds than yourself?

What comes to your mind when you hear the word diversity?

Academic Environments:

Classroom Interactions

How would you describe the classroom environments and interactions that you have experienced at MSU? **CHANGED TO:** How would you describe the classroom interactions that occur between students during your classes?

(Probes: Do you feel a part of your classes? Do other students help you to feel welcomed?)

Do you feel that white and minority students are comfortable interacting with each other during your classes?

How would you describe the interaction between traditional-aged college students and older students in your classes?

How comfortable are you interacting with students who are of a different ethnicity/gender/age than you are during classes?

How comfortable do you think other students who are of a different ethnicity/gender/age are interacting with you during classes?

Have you experienced and/or observed any situations that you'd describe as instances of discrimination or unfairness during any of your classes?

Faculty Interactions

How would you characterize or describe the faculty-student interactions that occur during your classes?

(Possible probe: How do professors and students speak to each other?)

Would you please describe your one-on-one interactions with professors outside of class?

(Possible probes: Do you feel comfortable approaching your professors? Why or why not? What makes some professors more approachable than others?)

Have you experienced and/or observed any situations involving any of your professors which you'd describe as discriminatory or unfair?

(Possible probe: Are students treated in a fair, consistent manner?)

Other Academic Settings/Experiences/Knowledge

How would you describe the academic advising you've received as well as the interactions you've had with your academic advisor?

How would you characterize the interactions you've had dealing with your academic department professional staff ? (Administrative Assistants and Secretaries etc.)

Are you for or against affirmative action? Why?

What do you think about being required to take 6 hours of core course-work related to global/multicultural topics?

Student Life Environment:

Living Situation/Campus Life/Student Services

How would you describe the environment you live in?

Have you experienced or noticed any situations which you would describe as instances of prejudice, discrimination or unfairness related to your race/ethnicity/gender in your living environment or around campus?

Have you experienced or noticed any situations which you would describe as instances of prejudice, discrimination or unfairness related to another person's race/ethnicity/gender in your living environment or around campus?

Is there a particular group of people on campus with whom you feel most comfortable? Why or why not?

Have you taken any opportunities to get to know a (minority OR white) student since you've been here at MSU? Why or why not?

How do you feel about interracial relationships/dating? Why?

Is there a particular place on campus which makes you feel at home? Why or why not?

Have there been times when you've felt not welcomed on campus? If so, would you please describe them for me?

How would you describe your interactions with the different Student Service Offices on campus?

(Prompts: Bookstore, Registration, Financial Aid, Student Activities, Career Services, Dean of Students, Intramurals, Health Services, ABC, Community Service, Counseling, Resource Center, New Student Services, Women's Center etc.)

Community Environment

How would you describe the experiences you've had off campus around the Bozeman community? (Prompts: shopping, banking, eating out, hair care, etc.)

Culminating Questions:

Is it important to you that the MSU student body consist of students who represent many different or diverse groups of people? Why or why not?

If you could change 3 things about the MSU-Bozeman campus in relation to the things we've been talking about, what would they be?

Are there other things (questions/experiences/perceptions) that you haven't had the chance to talk about during this interview, but which you find important regarding the topic of campus climate and diversity issues here at MSU?

APPENDIX C

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

APPENDIX C

Document Analysis Protocol**Purpose of the Document Analysis:**

To collect and analyze university-level documents important to the understanding of campus climate and campus climate for diversity at MSU-Bozeman.

Collection and Analysis Procedures:

Collection of pertinent university-level documents and written policies related to the research topic:

1. Request for recommendations and materials: Contact individuals representing each of the seven colleges, the Department of General Studies, and Renne Library in order to identify official university-level documents that, from their perspectives, relate to campus climate and/or diversity. To ensure a broad-based collection, also contact the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and Student Affairs Deans and Directors.
2. Develop master list: As replies are received, develop a master list of documents for review.
3. Follow-up: Send e-mail messages to those who do not respond in a timely manner and thank-you notes to those who do respond.

Analysis of written documents:

1. Read and review thoroughly each university-level document as it is received. Note or highlight any detail that is particularly important to the research project.
 - a. Note any new documents that emerge through the reading for retrieval and inclusion in the document analysis procedures.
2. Upon second level analysis, note categories and themes that emerge.
3. Upon third level analysis, pay particular attention to noting important points and broad-based, connected ideas for inclusion in findings chapter.