A Racially Divided UIUC Campus?

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Research Question
Is the student body of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign racially segregated? If so, why?

Overview
The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign boasts a rather diverse student body. As of the Fall 2016 semester, enrollment at UIUC consists of 44,800 students, including undergrads, graduate students, and professional students.

Purpose
The purpose of this research is to investigate whether or not students and university faculty believe there is a segregation of races among the student body. Aside from questioning the existence of a racial divide between students, this research also attempts to uncover the reasons for such a divide if proven to be exist through the thoughts of student and faculty. This research is being done with the hopes that the results of this study will help further integrate the UIUC campus and other colleges across the nation. All participants in this research will remain anonymous.

UIUC Student Demographics

- Asian (6,633)
- Hispanic/Latino (3,949)
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (27)
- African American (2,317)
- White (19,721)
- Multiracial (1,175)
- Native American House (NAH)
- International (10,700)

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Methodology

In this research project, I conducted five interviews and distributed an online survey to students. For my interviews, four of them were conducted in each of the four cultural centers provided by the University: the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center (BNAACC), the Asian American Cultural Center (AAACC), La Casa Cultural Latina (La Casa), and the Native American House (NAH). My interview at La Casa was conducted with a university employee; the other three interviews were conducted with student volunteers or employees of their respective cultural centers. My fifth interview was conducted with a university faculty member employed at the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA).

My online survey was distributed to students living in the University’s dormitories and students n a Registered Student Organization (RSO) called the American Advertising Federation (AAF). The survey was given to students via email sent by an executive board member of AAF and three student Resident Advisors (RAs) in the dorms.

Results: Interviews

For my interviews, I will provide a few quotes by the participants that pertain to their thoughts on whether or not a racial divide on campus exists, for what reasons do they think it exists (if so), and why do they think that is.

Native American House Anonymous
Me: Do you believe there is a divide between races on campus?
• “No, I don’t believe there’s a divide, but people are segregated into their own races. People like to hangout with their own race”

Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center Anonymous
Me: Do you believe there is a divide between races on campus?
• “Definitely.”
Me: Why do you think that is?
• “People are more worried about themselves and their privilege – that is white students. There’s even some kind of divide between minorities, but you do see collaboration too like with the cultural centers”

Results: Online Survey

My survey consisted of 11 questions, but I decided to pick the responses of three questions: self-identified race or ethnicity, a numerical rating from 1 (lowest rating) to 10 (highest rating) on the level of segregation on campus, and reasons for the divide between races provided by participants. A total of 11 students participated. All students agreed there was a sense of segregation to some degree. Not all students provided reasons for why they think that is.

Question 1: Self-Identified Race*
• White - 6 students
• Hispanic/Latino - 5 students
• Asian - 3 students
• International - 1 student

*students were allowed to choose more than one option

Question 2: Degree of segregation on campus on a scale from 1 (lowest rating) to 10 (highest rating)
• Rating of 3 - 1 student
• Rating of 5 - 2 students
• Rating of 6 - 2 Students
• Rating of 7 - 2 students
• Rating of 8 - 4 students

Question 3: Why is there a racial divide between students on campus?

Me: (don’t think this is caused by the school but by society.)

Asian American Cultural Center
Me: Do you believe there is a divide between races on campus?
• “Yes, very heavy and large topic to unpack, obviously as a minority, you can see the divide more easily”
Me: Why do you think it exists?
• “International students struggle to assimilate and there’s a privilege – that is white students. There’s even some kind of divide between minorities, but you do see collaboration too like with the cultural centers”

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La Casa Cultural Latina
Me: Do you believe there is a divide between races on campus?
• “In some ways I would say yes and in some no”
Me: Why is that?
• “When a student first gets to campus, they’re immediately reminded of their race and ethnicity. I think in that way, you immediately get segregated, self segregated and otherwise. I think part of that too is a lot of follic fid groups they are most comfortable with and a lot of times that with people of their own racial groups.”

Asian American Cultural Center
Me: Do you believe there is a divide between races on campus?
• “Yes, very heavy and large topic to unpack, obviously as a minority, you can see the divide more easily”
Me: Why do you think it exists?
• “International students struggle to assimilate and there’s a general ignorance to approaching them. Also the history of the university and frat culture. The University established in the 1860s by mostly white people. Frats naturally occurred because students wished to form their own groups. As time progressed, privilege came into effect be of the longstanding of these establishments. A lot of people fail to recognize their privilege and marginalize people of color’s thoughts, ideas and opinions”

Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA)
Me: Do you believe there is a divide between races on campus?
• “It just seems like there isn’t a lot of you know real interaction between people of different races or ethnic backgrounds”
Me: Why do you think that is?
• “I think that the fact we have such a high number of white students and asian students – that are international. I think that